MAIL-ART ON WIKIPEDIA

(selection)

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org

When the electronic telecommunications network known as the Internet gave rise to e-mail art, conventional mail-art artists came to refer to the international postal service as the 'paper net' or snail-mail net. When a group of these artists are in some way linked through their works they are collectively referred to as a Mail Art Network or the Eternal Network.

The Mail-Art Network concept has roots in the work of earlier groups, including the Fluxus artists and the notion of 'multiples' or artworks manufactured as editions. Most commonly, Mail-Art Network artists have made and exchanged postcards, designed custom-made stamps or 'artistamps', and designed decorated or illustrated envelopes. But even large and unwieldy three-dimensional objects have been known to have been sent by Mail-Art Network artists, for many of whom the message and the medium are synonymous.

Fundamentally, mail art in the context of a Mail Art Network is a form of conceptual art. It is a 'movement' with no membership and no leaders.

Mail artists like to claim that mail art began when Cleopatra had herself delivered to Julius Caesar in a rolled-up carpet (although this was neither mail nor art). However, perhaps the initial genesis of mail art was in postal stationery, from which mail art is now typically distinguished (if not defined in its broadest sense). The first example of postal stationery was the pictorial design created by the English artist William Mulready (1786-1863) for mass printing-press reproduction on the first stock of prepaid postage wrappers or envelopes produced for the launch of the Penny Post in Britain in 1840.

MAIL-ART

SHORT STATEMENTS ABOUT MAIL-ART BY RUUD JANSSEN

Mail-Art Websites

"Thinking"   Ruud Janssen 5/12-2003

MAIL-ART WEBSITES

A lot has changed in the Mail-Art network. Mail-Art sites have been published in the last decades. The evolution of the web has also caused a growth and evolution in this electronic archive of data. Mail-Art was sometimes a closed circuit but with these websites that has changed.

BEFORE THE WWW

The Internet started a long time ago. Even before the WWW protocol electronic communication was possible. Only a select group had access. The first communication platforms were the BBS (Bulletin Board Services). Mark Bloch (USA), Charles François (Belgium), Chuck Welsh (USA) and Ruud Janssen (Netherlands) all were experimenting with these systems on a early stage (see also: http://0100101110101101.org/texts/eyestorm _copy-en.html where they write:

"It seems inevitable that the 90s will be tagged as the decade in which Internet Art was born, and because this will probably be at the expense of earlier endeavor, it is worth remembering that some artists were exploring electronic networks before version 1.0 web browsers became available. List servers and Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) - such as alt.artcom, or Ruud Janssen's Mail-Art BBS based in Amsterdam - were active in the mid and late 80s, while even earlier forays into telematics and satellite relays can be traced to artists like Roy

Ascot or even Nam June Paik. Nevertheless, it is (or was) the 90s that bore witness to an explosion in global networking, and it was the 90s that saw a massive growth in artists' use and exploration of the internet's electronic spaces."

FIRST WEBSITES

The first websites were static ones. Geert de Decker claims to have started the first one. I started my first website in 1996. In those days you needed to know the HTML-language and some basic computer skills to put things like these online. It was a one-way communication structure. The publisher controlled the content. Visitors could only read and with a bit of luck leave messages in a guestbook

Do you have a website? Do visitors react to what you have placed there? Can Mail-artists find you information and does it bring you more communication?

FORUMS AND GROUPS

The online communities offer software that makes it possible to publish a forum. People can leave messages, and others can react. There is a moderator that can be active or even passive. It is a communication platform, but the last years it seems that in mail-art they aren't that popular anymore. An exception is www.nervousness.org that still is very active.

BLOGS

A new form of websites came with the BLOGS. A single person leave messages over the time and visitors can react. Also group-blogs are possible. Members can publish and react to each other. The blogs can include text, pictures and even videos. The capacity most Internet users have available allows the videos to be even quite large. Sometimes I see the blogs as a form of digital exhibitionism….

INTERACTIVITY

Normally a site is a complete structure made by the publisher. A lot of new tools make it possible to add interactivity on a website. People can leave their data, can publish their images, can publish the texts. The structure stays the same mostly. In new website software more variations will be possible. Not a lot of mail-artists experiment with webcams yet. Communication that is instantly isn't the medium most 'traditional mail-artists' value. The time-factor is needed

FUTURE?

The new tools for building websites gets more and more professional. The computer-skills aren't the problem anymore as long as you understand the "basic computer-language".. Building a good-looking website needs creativity again, and the new mail-art sites I see popping up are made by the new generation and look very professional. But what remains a question is of course the content of a mail-art website. Are we allowed to judge the quality of mail-art or is all accepted as mail-art?. Mail-art is a concept. The artworks that are the result of this concept is something else.