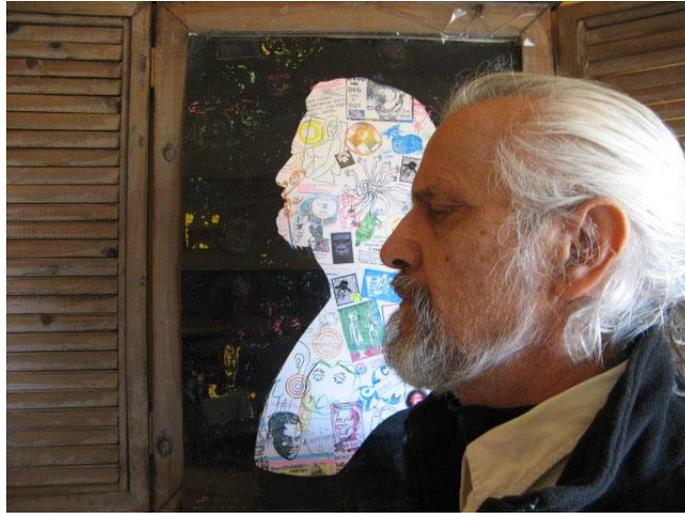


Theatricality and artistic object in the mail art interview with César Reglero

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This work is structured in three themes blocks: mail art's nature, his artistic subject and the social and political situation in which the mail art is developed so his projection, we have tried with this interview diffuse the mail art's norms to everybody and expose some questions to César Reglero (Taller del Sol), a popular artist in the network with more of fifteen years old, he's an respected authority in this area. We hope with the lecture of this work refresh a new ideas to grow the debate about the actual art.

Quite sunday in the toon at the penthouse where Reglero lives in El Vendrell (Tarragona-Spain). I have a speack with Carlos the singer poet, an old sea wolf. Isabel Jover enjoy after his last picture work and remember to us the existence of a grape juice bottle in the cook. César Reglero put the juice in a couple of glasses. We are ready ...

NATURE

RF In this times anybody knows the anti-market like a mail art's characteristic, it have a conceptual association with the pre-industrial societies; however, the mail is a mass media inserted in our post-industrial society. In this way the mail art has a paradoxical nature ...

CR The mail art, it's true, is envelope through the post mail and it suppose at least spend to stamp and to paper, ... every occidental artist can pay it, but we are speaking about a international movement and there is so many places in the world that this spends cannot are paid. If we watch the expo' s mailings the mail artists are emplaced in concretes zones: Europe has the more participation, all North America, Australia, some Asia countries like Japan, ... In Central America and South America the participation begins to decrease, with the exceptions of Argentina and Brasil. There is hardly in Africa and in Arab area, also in this countries the information arrive very slow. It needs a minimal level economical recourses to make mail art, I don't take the label "universal" to this artistic movement because yet exists in the planet so many zones where the people don't know how is mail art. Although the mail art take the elements created by the environment and the system, often to combat it.

The mail art destroy the system since your interiority, just employing the system's recourses...

The mail art can't able to isolate from his social conditions, it works with the recourses and conditions more nears. The mass media say every artistic norms, all over the venal art, say that is right or no, and after go the companies, the galleries, etc. You can think the mail art must be against to mass media. It's wrong. The mail art likes not is isolate, but enjoy your ideas in front of venal art: no selection, no venality, no censured. The exquisite artist hardly should accept this norms because maybe he expose with other persons without an historical artistic and neither if his work is not sell, this is the reason because the mail art is transgression but not at isolate of the mass media. It must not isolate. His nature is the communication. His pure nature is the transgression.

There is some persons who think the mail art is a pseudo-arte because it don't have selection elements.

This subject is employed very much to combat the mail art, normally is employed for the exquisite artist who care all his works. This is not a trouble for the mail artist. The mail art trouble is basically the creative communicational fact (don't mention his artistic quality), in spite of it, a mail art exhibition reunites so many professional artists, there are many fine arts teachers in my own Mail Art Archive-Museum¹, and also there is babies, an amateur or an person rare to art. The mail art evaluate the creativity, it demands a entertainment space and friendly, it's the reason because there isn't artistic evaluations, only is value the intuition to create communicative situations. The no venality and the no selection stimulate a creative freedom. Well, I can say that the media quality in the mail art is excellent, also the mail art works have little particularities on your concept that make it very interesting.

One of the mail art characteristics is the no copyright, in contrast to venal art, where one artist can take plays of others artists to make his play himself, how is legitimated this appropriation from a point of view artistic?

The mail art is born in the appropriationisme. We must remember to Ray Johnson, who created his plays with the contribution of his friends, when he send a pictures with the object to complete its inside a postal circuit². So the mythe of the only play is debated. This characteristics grows and takes root and makes an alternative way to venal art value fifty years after yet, even the mail art is considered the artistic movement more massive existent today on the planet³. I put the example of the two exhibitions commissioned by me: in every one have taken part more of the 600 artist. One of its was against Sarajevo war in 1993 ("Sarajevo Ferida overta", with the collaboration of the group Music for the Peace), in middle of war time. More of 600 authors in 40 diverse nations amounted 1100 works. The same result when we commissioned with AUMA one exhibition in agree for the freedom in the fines arts education respect to Humberto Nilo and for the Pinochet prison in 1998. Now we are in year 2000: Amnistía Internacional, Auma and Taller del Sol commissioned a postal exhibition and again the same result. This is very difficult it happen in other movement, but the mail art is in the world fifty years ago, and it's a transgression in very things. One of them is the appropriationisme, it's take an elements of a play and adding its to other, it's a damage to originality concept in the traditional thinking. It's no an ideas rob, but a solidarity act where you put your contribution to keep alive the creative spirit forever.

THE ARTISTIC OBJECT

¿What are the difference respect from artistic object between visual poetry and mail art? I ask it to you because there are many people that thinks mail art is a kind of visual poetry in card format

Although, it not the case, because the two begin in diverse parameters. Mail art is an artistic movement that use the mail post as canal to change the art plays, your bases are very concretes in spite of this bases are not writes, meanwhile visual poetry is an artistic movement based in the physical plays. In mail art all the artists search the communication through the mail post, it's the recourse more cheap, and it have a supranational

projection, mail art even can elude dictatorial regimens to offer an open door to freedom through a letter. Inside this group the visual poetry is a subject that you can be able to canalise through mail art, so mail art is not visual poetry but reunites all kind of artistic disciplines: picture, music, sculpture, cinema, theatre, etc. The confusion with visual poetry appears because the most of the visual poets in Spain have used and use the mail art to change your ideas. The post is a ideal canal to allow also elude the officials codify.

The label "art" is OK for some of this works when are more similar a semiotic experiments than an art play, for example the unchained letters?

I don't go to identify what is art and what is not art, I'm only against that persons that don't make art because is troubled if that they make is art or not., in this way your creativity is aborted. The mail art not is only communication between the artists, but the interactions with more persons produced by the post mail. I put the example of the story of a bread portion send to me by an artiste with the occasion of a mail art exhibition -an object perfectly normalized and a nice object aesthetical. I received in person this play just in the author's hands, because this mail had been return to her after an hard debate around the post regulations. Well, this story made the end and the time run until a few weeks ago in a morning I open my P.O. Box and I find it an eggplant. This vegetal had arrived to my P.O. Box with the help of all that postmen who before in the time were censured by that bread's story. I say all this story because the first artist that sent the bread generated an unchained actions (without limits) which last act is the eggplant story, it made take part in the scene to an actors system determinate firstly strange to world art -the postmen- but they assume and become the play also. All a play theatre enveloped during ten years. This experience can be art if you consider it art. But this is only an example of pure mail art, the mail art itself can able to generate theatrical actions of surprising results, in the way of the performance art.

The post codify take a artistic participation in the mail art play, this system represents, in the communication process, the referent logic sphere, who have been taken like artistic but it is an extra-artistic element, with an hazardous logic. How think the mail artist about this hazardous, it have a surrealist origin or it's simply a collective kind of sarcasm?

When the author incorporates the hazard in his creative elaboration' s play is nourishing the joking face of the reality, one of the essentials notes in mail art. In effect, the artist incorporates icons with the aim to make confusion with the officials mails, to make confusion, for example, to postman. Or make a sign overbooking to make hard the postal identification. This examples are plays. And in this play the postman must accept the play' s norms. In all along of my experience there is no postman in Tarragona with odious to me, by opposition, they have put your humour sense, because they go out of your lineal way.

The mail art is been canalised through the new technologies like fax or electronic mail (the snail art), ways in which the hazard and the stamp disappears, so the communication is impoverishing?

No, more right it's enriching. I put the example of the postal project against Pinochet in 1998⁴. In this year I began to use the Internet for first time, and I thought use it to give agility to the project. Through the electronic mail I invited twelve artists (Padín, Tartarugo, Braumueller, Elías Adasme, José Emilio Antón, Montse Fornos, Fernando García Delgado, ...) All them accepted my invitation. It had been enough two days to organize an urgent call (AUMA: Urgent Action of Mail Art⁵). The first part of this project was the reunion of signs favourable to Pinochet prison; by electronic mail we was able to account 400 signs in two days. After, so Pinochet process was delayed in the time, we can realise the exhibition-call but with the advise to transmit it also to persons without access to Internet. There was not the obligation to send by mail post but the people sent your plays by it. In this way we received around 100 plays and by Internet 60 electronics images only. Now we are in 2003 year. Taller del Sol organize an images exhibition on-line against the Irak war, because the urgency required it (there was not the possibility of "analogical" cards). We received at the beginning around 300 electronics images. Now, through this electronic way you can able to contact with a great quantity of persons from all over the planet in very brief time. The both manifestations, mail post and electronic mail are

compatibles because the two are inside the mail art since this ways respect the mail art parameters: no selection, no venality, no dvolution, etc. The communication, is obvious, not is impoverishing, but it is enriching. The mail post icons are keep and grows a new kind of icons: the electronic icons.

Although the theatrical action who generate the mail proposition disappears ...

No, it's no right because the mail art spirit is the creativity. You can create theatrical actions by e-mail, you need only an idea, simply a phrase. For example: an invitation to other artists to make meetings guided by the utopia, and then show this experience through photographical documentation, this documentation would become in plays art, in mail art ... The creativity is the same, only the media will have been changed but not the action.

THE MAIL ARTIST INTO THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

The network spirit is based in take conscience and be transmission of a links world in permanent activity, where the system is superior ever to him. It's a pioneer in the concept of the actual globalization?

Evidently. But globalization on the letter. Mail art is a healthy globalization based in the friendship activity, open for all and creative.

A symbol of this globalization is Internet. You have refresh your plans work and use it to publish plays and ideas with the help of the digital review BOEK861 (prolongation of your Museum-Archive), review directed for you.

This review appears in the Paper Age and now is become on-line (except some cases very rares). The BOEK on-line appears when the software engineer Jaume Bobet Cortada offer me be the webmaster. He have known taken my ideas to making the web, creating a web page very interactive, one of the keys for the confection of the BOEK. The review has the way to introduce plays by everyone artist in real time from everywhere on the planet, and so every artist have available your own images gallery. It contains plays and critic articles about mail art and visual poetry and experimental art in general. We have made forums and we are searching new models. We pretends that our web can be of utility for the public and the artists in general. For example, Rafael de Cózar decided publish your essay "Poesía e imagen" in BOEK when the edition was finished (appeared in 1991⁶), it have had a great repercussion because only then your press have thought edit the work newly. In this manner a book vital for the story of visual poetry inexistent in the book shop is available for the great public. Cózar, also, have gave indication to your university pupils to collect your articles published in BOEK. In short, the digital publication make easy the interaction and it is in integral agreement with the network spirit.

The entry of mail art in the academy can be a danger for this movement if mail art is annulled for the market which it likes combat but what's the inconvenience if the sponsor of a mail art exhibition is a public institution (with public money)?

No problems if the mail art parameters are respected. The problems begin when there is a venality aim. Some gallery in the past have organized expositions making plays selection and put them a prize but you can not elude the mail art spirit. It's no mail art. It's other thing.

There is a sector between mail artists that think the presence of mail art in handbook art and others theoretical books suppose the adulteration of this discipline –but I don't go to evaluate the artistic and the critic consideration derived in this fact-. Maybe this artists suspects in it a try of generate a canon in mail art, do you think a danger the optical critic?

The only danger I see is commercialised the play. You can not say to anyone don't study the mail art. If there is since the university themes, seminars or courses about the mail art it like means the interest of the people about this way of art. And other things are the lucrative aims or the wrongs, ...Vittore Baroni have write and edited your guide about the mail art⁷ but he says himself that with the profits of it are for the edition cost of this book. Other example: sending the stock of catalogues in an exhibition to pay the costs of organization, ... The most important is a catalogue free for all the participants, if then the exhibition commissary likes cover the cost put on sale the books, he's justified. While there are the most important elements there are another less in importance and it admit a flexibility. After of all, every one make the things under your own responsibility.

The mail art has airs of social and political denounce, maybe we would must recuperate an space with less worry.

It's no correct. Mail art don't mean combat. It happens that mail art is approaching to solidarity cause in reason to his characteristics, but there are an infinity of subjects very remotes of theme social or political. This theme is one more in an dilated list, but this calls-exhibition often are the more published and with a massive participation.

¹ He speaks about Taller del Sol Mail Art Archive-Museum of Tarragona (the only in Spain), fond and directed by him since 1998.

² The newyorker Ray Johnson invited to your friends to participate in the pictures composition created firstly by himself in postal cards that Ray Johnson had sent through post mail.

³ An evidence of it is the book edited by Guy Bleus titled **Mail Art 2003. Hommage aux fondateurs, ½ siècle de Mail Art**, a bok who contains the authors' s play more representatives, some of them: Johnson, Vigo, Padín, Baroni, Gu. Deisler, Anna Banana, Groh, Aguiar, Ferrando, ...

⁴ Remember in that year this dictator escaped to United Kingdom where he joined immunity in his process under the excuse of a season in health repose. At the actuality Pinochet have not been judged yet.

⁵ In Spanish original AUMA: **Acción Urgente de Mail Art**.

⁶ Rafael de Cózar: **Poesía e imagen**, El carro de la nieve, Sevilla, 1991.

⁷ Vittore Baroni: **Guida dell'arte postale. Introduzione al network**, AAA Edizioni, Viareggio, 1997.