

SUPPORT WOMEN ARTISTS NOW



**PARTICIPATING ZMAG MEMBERS
IN ACTION**



March 27, 2021

Swan Day Celebration 2021 ZMAG Call Out/Art Call

ZMAG is a mail art group sensitive to barriers and was created around the pillar of inclusion. Every member is encouraged to freely articulate and express thoughts and impressions from their unique perspective. This year, ZMAG is celebrating SWAN DAY on March 27, 2021 (Support Women Artists Now) by inviting ZMAG members to share mail art on the theme of inclusion/exclusion, or any mail art imagery and writing created by a ZMAG member.



Maintain the Hope and the Light

Theo Nelson



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"Seasonal
Greetings!"

Tiny blue dot,
Travelling through
The vastness of space,
In a lovers' embrace
With the Sun.

A cosmic dance
That is never ending,
Our eternal journey
Brings us the cycle
Of life.

Twice a year
We reach a point,
Where Day and Night
Kiss, and then drift
Apart once more.

Springtime in the Rockies

©2021 Theo Nelson



To:

Kathleen -

144 kisses thus far

in the cosmic dance. :)





“Free motion stitched photographs printed onto my hand made papers. I use what I find while out walking as inclusions to the paper. Photography and fibre arts merge to capture the beauty found unexpectedly in everyday places.“

Gerda Osteneck



sugar and spice and everything nice

Michelangelo Mayo

Mail Art Networks and Women's Issues

Michelangelo Mayo

The ability of women to see the world in a different context make women's contribution to art irreplaceable. Their unique approaches to creativity are more often marginalized and unheralded. The female experience is one that has been unappreciated in history and society- from women's contribution to science (e.g., Hedy Lamarr's inventions of radio-sonar jamming and traffic lights, Madam Curie) to human rights and social rights (e.g., Elizabeth Peratrovich's efforts to push Alaska's Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945 and Zitkala-Sa's preservation of Native American culture through her songs and writings). Although there are many movements that shed light to women's issues and struggles, these efforts can still be acknowledged as short in goals and, in some cases, a failure. Moreover, the past mistakes seem to creep back from obscurity to contemporary events once again as demonstrated by the #metoo movement.

Joining art groups such as mail art networks present many opportunities to advance women's issues. First, a network of mail artists can reach larger audience and diverse groups of people across the globe. Members can expand their messages and exchange collective interest amongst themselves great with ease and minimal effort. International exhibitions and exchange collaborations are venues for exposure of one's works. Furthermore, each participant can also enrich their experiences with issues that affect other women from other parts of the world. Diversity in culture is relative. Women of different heritage and races have different concerns. Their issues may vary from other nations or creeds. Mail art networks provide a symposium for these needs.

Second, women's contributions may benefit from being referenced more and often in projects, exchanges, and exhibitions. The influences of great women in art and in other fields should be incorporated in discussions and in art projects; this may help introduce and educate people about their merits. Moreover, the role of women in art should be expanded and not be relegated to serve tokenism. Every artist in all spectra of sexuality should freely share their thoughts and creativity with regards to feminine issues. Such is an attainable goal because the totality of the human experience traverses beyond the borders of gender politics and cultural restrictions.

Third, as a collective, mail art networks enable individuals to discover other emerging artists. By corresponding among members of the group, one can find mentors to enhance their techniques, experience, and point of views. It harkens back to the idea of Ray Johnson and the first mail art network of artists who are independent from galleries and cliques. The chance of corresponding with members who may become influential in the future and teaching new artists that may inspire new movements are both worthwhile endeavors. In many instances, there are many organizations and mail networks that are inclusive of all artists and are supportive of women's issues. Likewise, even few are dominated by artists specifically for feminist reasons like Guerrilla Girls which was formed in New York, 1985 to advance gender and racial equality. Nevertheless, there has been existing kinships that intertwined between many groups that members of one group may also share membership with many other groups.

Fourth, the technology of the digital age makes it possible to preserve artists' work better. Art works in cyberspace can be catalogued, exhibited and shared using blogs, Instagram, Facebook, etc. Special projects and collaborations can be organized easily and can be spread exponentially to many participants in a brief time with or without physical space for exhibition. Moreover, communication via Zoom, Facetime, and other virtual conferencing application makes real-time interaction with members possible. For those who seek commercial gain for their artworks, there are virtual galleries and portfolios where people can order their works. Afficionados and clients can access and procure artworks through these websites. The traditional infrastructure of gallery-artist model has been updated and forever changed by the restrictions and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, the importance of archiving and publications of art works and information about artists cannot be emphasized enough. Having visual and written works that are published in magazines, books, or websites can enhance the reputation of an artist. The richness of these records has been the backbone of modern art history. Where would Vincent van Gogh be without the publication of his letters to his brother Theo through the efforts of his sister-in-law, Johanna Gezina van Gogh-Bonger? His works have become more relevant after years of struggle to get recognition. Most of his life's works and iconic paintings were also saved and cared for until their installment into the permanent museum, a legacy of a master artist donated to the city of Amsterdam. This could have not been possible without the outstanding effort of a woman. Succinctly, Mail art network can be a haven for resources dealing with women centric art works and literature.

Composed in Dialogue
with Wild Woman
by Mary Mackey

To Ms. Hexagonal Spectacles
by The Sticker Dude, Joel Cohen

TO MS. HEXAGONAL SPECTACLES

(Mary Mackey)

I carried you and your poet's wild woman with me,
months
In adoration: with her for the golden purple
sunsets of northern New Mexico, nights in
Colorado, hitching through Tennessee
In my blue bag she became my mother, my guide,
yin energy afire
Eighty-five percent of my new friends were
women
I wear more jewelry now and a women's press pin
in my hat
I forgot my masculinity,
it becomes androgyny
I'm soft, soft, softer they tell me:
feminists, lesbians,
men in men's movement.
And I imagine you, 39 or so, bitter, living
somewhere in the Midwest,
When they tell me you're reading tonight at
Intersection, San Francisco, and you're from
Berkeley!
And then you in person,
a bubble in video flood light,
a radiant reflection of my feminist American
dreams in hexagonal spectacles!
I'm mesmerized, your this side, your "other side,"
your piercing eye poetry with a scalpel
I'm drawn, I'm drawn, I'm drawn
are you in my karass,
a lover, a teacher,
a leader, a guru?
And I'm vulnerable, defenseless,
you could devour, worse yet,
undress me with your pen
And leave me standing in
The Library of Congress.



mid 1970's Vancouver National Women's Day

Photo by Gerda Osteneck

An Enraged Mail Artist Objects

What women *do* want: The ability to dress comfortably, speak out, walk safely through the streets, or through the park, get out to the car without fear, be recognized for our intelligence, to be able to laugh when something is actually funny, to have the power to say, "No, this is wrong" without being shunned or demoted or punished. We do **not** want to be judged by our cup size or the makeup on our faces.

We **do** want to be accepted as artists without being ghettoized by the placement of our gender as a qualifier in front of our chosen medium. We **do** want to send MailArt without harassment and without Dicklash. Don't get us wrong. Sex is good, if both people are into it. The human form, in all of its variations, is a beautiful thing. Celebrate nudity respectfully.

Photo by G. Osteneck 1974.



By and large the MailArt community is an exhilarating life-affirming community, but there are some posts that are deeply offensive. This collaboration piece is intended to spark a public discussion about what is unacceptable content. I've received the occasional Add & Pass sheet with dubious images from different male artists letting most of them slide but commenting on the worst of them until I was bombarded with 55 Add & Pass sheets containing prurient, even pornographic images from Moreno Menarin. This pile of blatant hatred informed my decision to stop participating in making my mark on any of them. I don't want to blindly participate in someone else's offensive ranting or become a censor of myself, or anyone else. Enough. I **do** want to use my time to make art, not to analyze the intent of an Italian man, or any man for that matter. There are numerous other forms of collaboration that are artfully satisfying. Live and Let Live.

Gerda Osteneck

Silence is NOT an Option

The Historical events of recent years, e.g. #MeToo, and Black Lives Matter, have convinced me that oppressive people - in this case targeting women in the MailArt movement - must be confronted. We need to speak up against abrasive material that goes beyond artistic freedom and is actually another form of Hate Speech.



I've long felt uncomfortable, even offended by receiving, and guilty for passing on MailArt pieces that I've thought were exploitative of women. Often I took to covering up the lewd, smutty material. One artist whom I'm sure has been criticized by others sometimes even writes "Moreno is not sexist", next to his artwork which doesn't negate it's sexist nature.

Gerda's letter hit me where it hurts. Many other mail artists have decided not to participate in Add & Pass sheets. I wonder about the nature of their objections. One recently made a postcard depicting all of his collection shredded. For too long I've remained silent, thus this collaborative piece emerges.

The Sticker Dude, Joel



Pink As A Barrier To Inclusion, Based On A True Story

Kathleen McHugh



Window, 2021

Karen Chew