The Evolution and Revolutions of the Networked Art Aesthetic

Jeanne Marie Kusina
University of Toledo, Philosophy Dept., jeanne.kusina@utoledo.edu

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Abstract
Mail art, artist books, artistamps, assemblings, experimental and visual poetry, Email art, video, and performance art have all, at various times, been considered members of the loosely configured classification known as "Networked art". Yet the common thread associating these diverse media is not the manner of their production, but rather the dynamic way in which they are distributed throughout artist networks. Emphasizing communication and generosity, Networked artists attempt to subvert conventional systems of exchange while also maintaining an intimacy of expression. I will discuss these qualities and how they often evolve from subtle attempts to undermine an allegedly flawed culture into concerted efforts combating social injustice that affect specific political changes. Although Networked art continues to undergo numerous transformations, its principal aesthetic elements remain unchanged and are flourishing in a new era of amplified possibilities.

Key Words
Networked art, mail art, Ray Johnson, correspondence, aesthetics, Dada, Simone de Beauvoir, intimacy, generosity, political art, visual culture

1. Art and the Eternal Network[1]

"Repelled by the slaughterhouses of the world war we turned to art.

We searched for an elementary art that would save mankind

from the furious madness of these times."

-- Jean Arp, Dadaist artist participating in the Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich, 1916

"Networked art" has become an umbrella term used to encompass a wide variety of activities. They include yet are not limited to: mail art, artist books and nontraditional publishing, artistamps, assemblings, experimental and visual poetry, video, performance, and email art. The common denominator among these diverse media is not the manner in which they are produced, but in how they are presented to the world. Networked art is not merely an artistic phenomenon; it is also representative of a unique aesthetic. Emphasizing communication, what has been christened "the eternal network" is a movement not bound by temporal or topical considerations. It is instead united by a desire to circumvent traditional systems of exchange and is known for both a spirit of generosity and an intimacy of expression.

The inception of Networked art may stem as far back as the tin post cards of the Italian futurists or, by some accounts, even earlier to Vincent van Gogh's postal exchanges with his brother Theo. Yet while these historical illustrations are interesting, it appears as though the groundwork for the networking aesthetic truly emanates from Tristan Tzara, Marcel Duchamp and the other Dadaists in the years 1916-1922. Their "anti-art" art set the stage for a revolution that forever changed how and why artists create. As Susan Hapgood

elucidates: "Appalled by the brutality of war, and by the complacent conservatism of the bourgeoisie, Dada artists found subversive, irreverent means to outrage their staid audiences, while at the same time overthrowing the artistic status quo."[2]

All of these things are standard fare for networking artists today. However, despite these similarities, as well as the often-collaborative nature of their projects and occasional use of the postal service as a method of delivery, there lacks in Dada a specific dedication to exchange. Therefore, although the ancestry of Networked art may be traced to these figures, its actual nexus is better positioned with the artist Ray Johnson and the launch of the mail art network.

It is in this network of artists that I recognize the essential elements of generosity. From its earliest roots as an interactive affiliation based mainly on artistic rapport, mail artists exercise a customary munificence that is as intimate as it is wide-reaching. While their exchanges are frequently tangible, the focus is not directed toward the art as an object or image so much as it is on the concept of a symbolic sending. While these artists do claim to experience a sense of personal benefit from what they receive as well as their own sending, they also greatly exceed the boundaries typically found in traditional, closed systems of exchange. Rather, the artists are part of a larger, more complex web of relationships whose work is circulating in a somewhat chaotic or random manner. They appear at times to understand that the rest of the world may not always be in step with their actions, and yet they continue on with the belief that their actions may affect a positive social change.

Given that, as I have previously mentioned, the mail art movement may be considered a pivotal stage in the development of the contemporary Networked art of the twenty-first century, I believe it is appropriate to examine its history and development. At each stage, I will make note of the traits that are demonstrative of its distinct aesthetic qualities.

2. Ray Johnson and the New York Correspondence School

While studying at the legendary Black Mountain school, Ray Johnson not only absorbed the foundations of his artistic techniques but also developed a lifelong attraction to Zen philosophy, particularly in regard to the appreciation of chance. Yet his career as an artist did not formally commence until he relocated to Manhattan in the early 1950s. At that time he initiated the destruction of all of his previous works in order to begin again from a blank slate.

Johnson had always exhibited a penchant for writing clever, witty letters and post cards that he frequently illustrated for friends. He often included elements of collage in both his artwork and these personal missives. His growing dissatisfaction with the official art world, with its institutional hierarchies and gallery elitism, led Johnson to seek new outlets for his artistic expression. In keeping with the nature of collage, he freely took images from popular culture and the art of others and then transformed them into a unique vision all his own. Johnson then employed the U.S. Postal Service as his primary means of distribution, starting with a small circle of artists and friends, and eventually branching out into a wide network that included hundreds of individuals from a variety of disciplines and locations. As a result, what came to be known as the New York Correspondence School, and then the New York Correspon*dance* School (to indicate the dance-like relationship among partners) was born.[3] Johnson's mailings, which were as

prolific as they were engaging, represent a fundamental move away from the paradigm of art produced to sell or own. This was art to give, send, and potentially lose or destroy by the very process of mailing. In this regard, there was always an element of chance or risk involved in the process. However, Johnson was not only generous with his own works; he also elicited generosity from others by first sending them a work and then urging them to "add and send to" someone else. In these actions an artist lacking critical reputation, perhaps residing in a distant location, might be instructed to add something to Johnson's work and then forward the piece to a celebrated artist or public figure. This process also worked in reverse, but the main goal was to triangulate a connection between these otherwise unconnected individuals. In a sense, it also served to level the playing field between the known and the unknown, destroying the division between the famous and the fan as they are drawn into mutual participation in the artistic process.

Johnson created a symbolic exchange, yet at the same time overrode the urge to keep and covet. Longtime correspondent, friend and archivist, the author William S. Wilson describes being forced to accept the transient nature of Johnson's art in spite of an initial reaction, commonly elicited in those who received it, to retain and preserve the works for themselves or others, "With the loss of the original I, or we, gained an implication: Conserve this! Restore this! What are the consequences of trying to resist perishing? When I declined to mail that beautiful object, planning to wait for a curator to visit, Ray mailed another film-still in an envelope with loose sand, some of which was irretrievably lost even as I opened the envelope. So I mailed both envelopes to London, exposing them to experiences very like the course of ordinary life, a course that can be hurtful if resisted, yet can become radiant if it is assented to. Ray thought of mail-art as more like fireworks than precious objects in a sanctuary of art. And if his mail-art evaporated or disappeared, its vanishing made a gap that could call forth newer mail-art, fitting seamlessly into a later event. He didn't keep fresh eggs around until they were old."[4]

Ray Johnson, *Untitled* (Denver Art Museum), c.1993, 11x8 1/2 inches. Courtesy of the FaGaGaGa archives.

From its nascent days as an underground movement, mail art has become a phenomenon that knows no global boundaries and has seemingly limitless manifestations. There are as many variations on what constitutes mail art and correspondence or collaborative activities as there are participating artists. This is, again, why "Networked art" has become the definition du jour to encompass them all. Yet in every incarnation the basic aesthetic values of mail art remain. For example, there is a very simple credo that "senders receive." This is not to be confused with sending an article for the sole purpose of getting something in return. Quite the contrary, most active mail artists send so much and so often that they can scarcely keep account of what went where and to whom. Nonetheless, in a more general sense, there is an almost karmic element to this art, which ensures that those who give of themselves will be found by others of like mind. In a sense, and with homage to Johnson, everyone becomes a "fan" of everyone else, making connections without hesitation and responding in turn.
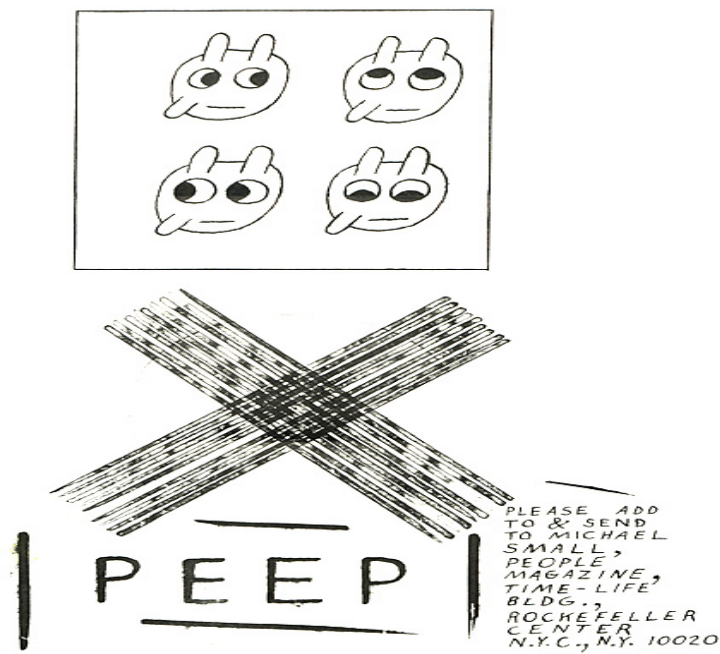
Ray Johnson, *Untitled (PEEP),* c. 1992, 8 1/2 x 11 inches.
Courtesy of the FaGaGaGa archives.

While on the surface these activities could be mistaken for egoism, I argue that just the opposite is true. A great deal of Networked art is sent with only minimal identification of the sender. The work is frequently collaborative in nature, with no specific reference to who contributed any particular element to the totality of the piece. In addition, a fair number of Networked artists can and do become well-known and respected critically, yet they are still willing to distribute artwork that could otherwise garner high prices on the open market. Ladislav Guderna, Martin Guderna, and Ed Varney convey that what Networked artists seem to value above all is the connection or communication involved over the property exchanged, "Mail art continues to be an important and vital communication medium. . . because it is so necessary. Within a seemingly humble exterior, mail art embodies the actual realization of global communication and cooperation on a person to person basis. Mail art is a concrete example of the spirit of mutual understanding thru communication which is the foundation of the dream of global peace and

prosperity."[5] While these authors describe Networked art in unusually idealistic terms, they do capture the principal intentions associated with an aesthetic movement that is focussed on the notion of communication and not on self-promotion.

3. Networked Art in Relation to Culture

The motivation behind these ingenuous exchanges varies by artist, but a common thread that appears to unite many of them is an artistic alienation from society at large. Art networkers often regard the human condition in light of what they view as a Kafkaesque bureaucracy in contemporary life. Yet instead of turning away from these systems, they embrace their mechanisms and use them as subversive tools to subtly "throw a wrench into the system." Addressing mail art's relationship with the culture at large, Craig J. Saper remarks, "Rather than dismissing modern culture in favor of a transcendent escape from the society of spectacles, red-tape tangles, or even mass-marketed religions, the artists involved in intimate bureaucracies have reconfigured quintessential forms of our often bureaucratized lives to provide new interpretations of contemporary future cultures."[6]

I agree not only with Saper's allegations regarding culture but also with many of the examples he later cites as evidence of using the tools and trademarks of "the system" to usurp the system itself. In Networked art, rubberstamps have become a means of both democratizing art by making it accessible to everyone while at the same time allowing some individual artists to produce works on the scale of a small assembly line. Artistamps, or faux postage, use the medium of the mail to express a message in a manner other than the ordinary, humdrum, plain envelope and stamp. On certain occasions, artists even create their own "countries" or "principalities" from which these stamps are issued. Anarchist tendencies are certainly in evidence, but the motivations behind these acts point toward a desire to foster human interaction in areas where it seems to be absent. Instead of opting out of a societal system they disagree with, network artists choose to *opt-in* with the creation of a new entity in line with their values and codes. Still another form of expression can be seen with the TTPO, an acronym which stands for either "test" or "tease" the post office. Placed inside this category would be a wide variety of three-dimensional objects ranging from a mundane household item to an extravagant sculpture, always mailed *sans* container. Once again, it is not the artifact being mailed that is considered "art"; rather, it is the act of mailing it that is viewed as significant. This is a recurring theme that is also advocated by many artists sending envelopes and cards. In effect, and especially with the TTPO, the minor disruption of an official government agency such as the post office is turned into a slyly subversive act. It is generally only a small "glitch" in the system but it may be considered part of the artistic intention because a third party is (somewhat unwittingly) drawn into participation. That is, the postal worker becomes part of the performance, which is not complete until delivery is made to its intended recipient.

In light of these acts, I would like to return to Networked art's affinity with Dadaism. Considering network art's passionate dedication to analyzing, archiving, and writing about itself it might, like Dada, be considered a movement by manifesto. It is my contention that both Dada and Networked art have specific, philosophic goals aimed toward undermining the current cultural norms of the day. Even as they frequently proclaim to be without

any formal aesthetic, and adopt such hyphenated negations as "anti-art" or "anti-establishment", their real desire is to compel others into a reassessment of aesthetic values. However, in order to make this parallel, I must also open Networked art up to the same criticisms faced by Dada. First and foremost, Dadaism is all too frequently dismissed as merely an art era not worthy of philosophical considerations. Yet often when Dada is given a philosophical glance, it fairs no better. Simone de Beauvoir is just one commentator on Dada, but she sums up numerous common objections with her discussion of what she interprets as an incoherent, continuous negation of itself, by itself. Of Dada and its psychoanalytic offshoot Surrealism, she warns of suicide, deterioration of mind and body by drugs, and that, "Others succeeded in a sort of moral suicide; by dint of depopulating the world around them, they found themselves in a desert, with themselves reduced to the level of the sub-man; they no longer try to flee, they are fleeing."[7] Conversely, I assert that Dada, though it is purported to be a philosophy of nihilism is actually much closer to extolling de Beauvoir's own belief in freedom than she realizes.

To begin with, the extreme measures endorsed by Dada must always be considered against the backdrop of the First World War with all of its carnage and disillusionment. Dada calls for an end to all culture, art and aesthetics, as well as values and morals. At the same time, it does so within the context of culture, art, and, at least in the sense of reacting to and then rejecting them, morals. A Duchampian readymade may make a mockery of high art, but it is presented as art just the same. Furthermore, there is also a cheeky insolence and mischievous *joie de vivre* underlying the participants' actions, such as leaving much up to chance elements and placing an emphasis on games, that betrays their claims of total negation. It seems as if, out of their anguish, there essentially arises a new creativity. This creativity is a dynamic rejection of the confines of society and is, in sum, a freedom even by de Beauvoir's standards. For, according to de Beauvoir, freedom must meet three main criteria for it to be held in highest regard: an individual must accept one's freedom, assume it by a constructive movement (that is, by doing *something*), and generate "a negative movement which rejects oppression for oneself and others."[8] I believe that Dada, although accused of attempting to overthrow culture, was acting instead in a Nietzschean sense by attempting to overcome culture. Although their methods were rebellious, they were based upon a desire to cast light upon what they considered to be a tarnished society. In the end, Dada is a paradox unconcerned with being a paradox, and herein lies its liberating force.

It is this force that networking artists are tapping into today. Nevertheless, they are still asked to justify their actions to a contemporary culture that is every bit as eager to dismiss the endeavors of Networked artists as they were those of the Dadaists. After all, what interest do art magazines and journals have in lending credence to a movement that takes pride in thumbing its nose at the art establishment? When media coverage is given, quite often the emphasis is not placed on the aesthetic qualities or ethical implications of art exchanged freely. On the contrary, Networked art's aesthetic values are often turned against it. To illustrate, another common mail art principle is that all art received for a mail art call will not be subject to a jury and will be displayed without censorship. For their contributions the artists will be provided with documentation that is, at the very least, a list of participants and their contact addresses. This documentation creates an opportunity

for future networking among individual artists. However, the generous and egalitarian nature of these principles is generally not praised by outside observers but is often chastised as being without monetary value, open to works of questionable quality, and nothing more than an aberration from or imitation of "real" art. Meanwhile, an untold story pertains to how many established and revered artists have secret or lesser-known mail art pasts, that these artifacts are often situated within exhibitions associated with other movements (such as Conceptualism, Neo-Dada, and Fluxus), and how often these items are hoarded by collectors.[9] Regardless of this, and as is characteristic of Networked art, press coverage is hardly shunned by artists and is seen as another opportunity to infiltrate the bureaucracy at large. During periods when the mainstream press does not come calling, small, independent publishers do the work in their place by bringing Networked art to a larger audience and lending it critical legitimacy. Due to such efforts, some of Networked art's more active participants who were previously limited to underground followings are gaining visibility and becoming known to wider audiences.

buZ blurr is an artist who has weathered many storms and public censures of Networked art in his over thirty years of involvement as a contributor. Nonetheless, he has never backed down from a critic and has only reinforced the tenacity of the deep philosophical convictions that run among Networked art devotees. If any artist could be held up as the refutation of an inherent nihilism, then blurr would be exemplary. He is tirelessly devoted to capturing the human spirit and then sending it on into the world. In addition to his postal activities, buZ blurr is a master of railroad graffiti. Yet what is graffiti if it is not an act of destruction, a blight on the landscape of public and private property?
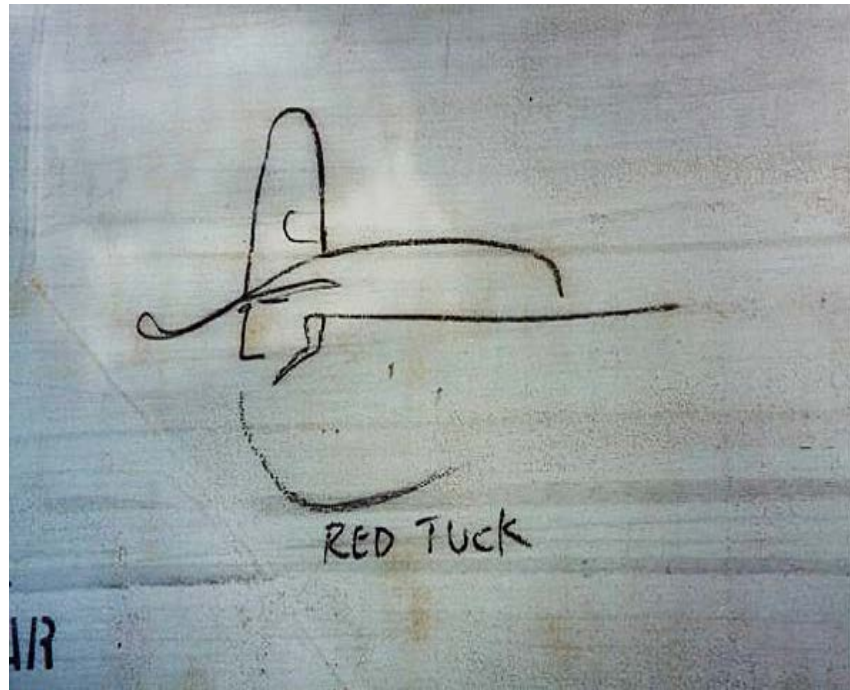
buZ blurr, *Red Tuck (on boxcar)*, 1991. Photo by J. Kusina

Following in the tradition of the hobos and the railroad workers of the nineteen thirties and forties, blurr's elegant, delineated portraits are the antithesis of desecration. His sparse style is clearly recognizable as his own, and his prolific portraits are often accompanied by a few words or phrases that imbue the works with a

poetic dimension. Still, when the engine leaves, the boxcars follow and away go blurr's artworks, "mailed" just like envelopes on their way to parts unknown. Many of his works are never heard from again, while some find their way back to him years after their creation. Often the images are altered by rust, which he welcomes as a silent partner in his process. Of his graffiti work blurr comments, "The main appeal of the railcar icon is its anonymous nature, whereby observers can project their own fill-in scenarios to an unknown author's work. It is freely given but in a Dada Absurd way, the language somewhat an aggressive challenge on the train of thought."[10]

Much attention is now being paid to buZ blurr, particularly because of his stenciled portraits, which emerged from photographs taken for his Caustic Jelly Post mailings. But his philosophy remains unchanged, and in what he has dubbed Surrealville, Arkansas, he continues to make art as he always has and carries on life as (un)usual.

4. The Risks of Intimacy in a Public Arena

With as much consideration as I have devoted to the public dimension of Networked art, I believe it is also important to comment on the interior aspects that accompany it. In Saper's aforementioned discussion of artists in relation to bureaucracies, he employs the expression "intimate bureaucracy".[11] Saper is far from being alone in associating intimacy with Networked art. It would be incorrect to assume that because of the wide range of exchange involved in these artistic activities that somehow intimacy or any substantial relationship with others is absent from the process. In actuality, just the opposite is true and this is what sustains the network. Sharla Sava examines this claim with reference to Ray Johnson, "To casually situate Johnson into the cool professionalism of the art world, however, is to misunderstand the intimacy of his mail art network. 'I don't just slap things in envelopes. Everything I make is for the person I'm writing to.' Johnson's act of ongoing self-distribution was never indifferent to its recipient."[12]

Sava stresses the importance of interpersonal relationships among mail artists. This is what separates the art of communication from the empty promise of the chain letter. Underneath the elaborate sets of codes, puns, references, jokes, and even occasional jabs, lies a true commitment to receiving and responding to the transmissions of others. Many of these works become intensely personal, but at the same time they are given without strings. That is, they are sent through the mail with the understanding that, even if the work does arrive, the recipient may in fact just send it on to someone else. Recipients are often just as likely to alter an artwork or even go so far as to cut it up and recycle the elements as they are to retain any of the pieces in their possession. Even those who do actively archive the works they receive are eventually faced with the problem of diminishing space, and the pieces are often boxed up and either sold or donated to a third party such as museums or other collectors.

On the matter of selling Networked art, there is a mantra among mail art adherents that "mail art and money don't mix."[13] This aphorism is superseded by the one rule under which all others fall: that there are no rules. Namely, the selling of Networked art does occur on occasion despite a preponderance of admonishments against it. It is for this reason that Networked artists must not only accept the psychological risks associated with intimacy, but also be generous enough to let go of any personal connection to their work.

Even the artists themselves come and go, for only the network is deemed "eternal" and unending by those who contribute to its web of interconnectivity.

It is not my intention to draw a strict dichotomy between the public and private aspects of Networked art. The two are very much linked together. Nor am I claiming that the building of intimate artistic relationships is of a private nature and precludes participation in social awareness or issues of justice. Quite the contrary, I propose that intimacy and generosity actually encourage interaction in these arenas.

5. The Politics of Networked Art

Clemente Padin is a living illustration of how the aesthetic principles employed in Networked art can in fact influence changes in the political spectrum. A respected visual poet, artist, and activist, Padin was committed to protesting the horrific injustices perpetrated by the Uruguayan government beginning in the late 1970s. The atrocities committed at that time include the oppression, coercion, and torture that are so often associated with dictatorial regimes. In spite of this, the fascist administration still had the powerful financial and military backing of the United States government. Padin resisted the repressive forces by publishing booklets and staging art events. Anonymously, he also mailed post cards adorned with artistamps that brought attention to the plight of his people to recipients all over the world. When his protesting efforts were exposed, Padin was arrested and sentenced to four years in prison. After serving two years and three months of his imprisonment, he was released through the aid of an American senator. Yet Padin attributes his liberation to his "friends" in the mail art network, most of whom he had never met. These artists became dedicated to sending art and messages on his behalf. Without the campaign of mail artists, who first needed to spread the word amongst themselves and then to the appropriate political powers, Padin believes he never would have been freed from prison at such an early date.[14]
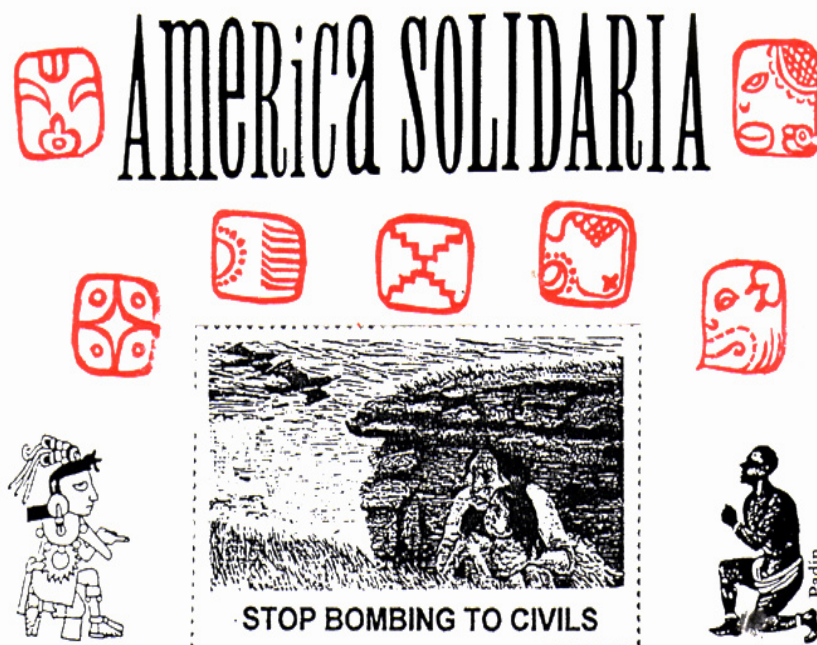
Clemente Padin, *Untitled (America Solidaria)*, 4 x 6 inches, 2004. Courtesy of Reid Wood.

Padin is not the only political prisoner to have been affected by mail art. Prior to the collapse of Communism in the former Soviet Union and East Germany, numerous artists risked their lives and their livelihoods to exchange mail art from behind the iron curtain. Even if today's Networked artists are not faced with the Dadaist reality of a world war, they are acutely aware that there are always injustices in need of attention; and they are rarely content to sit idly by. Instead they create an intimate fellowship of artists and writers and attempt to reach underdeveloped and oppressed nations, where even the postal system may be a luxury that few can afford. Padin, for his part, is still extremely active in the network, and continues to devote much of his art toward efforts for peace and justice. Of his history he modestly states, "My small drama is insignificant to the suffering of thousands and thousands of Uruguyans but I just can't understand why there are still people who ask me why I make a political issue out of art. . . "[15]

While the art works of Padin, Mark and Mel Corroto (a/k/a FaGaGaGa), Luc Fierens, Annina Van Sebroeck, and others are almost explicitly political, many Networked artists' work is significantly less politically motivated. Some consciously avoid political statements, while still others participate in the network simply for personal enjoyment. But the general tone of the network remains overwhelmingly nonjudgmental and generous, regardless of artistic purpose. Within the Eternal Network there seems to be room for and admiration of any number of approaches.

6. Networked Art Enters the Twenty-First Century

As I have discussed, Networked art encompasses a wide range of dialogic, artistic encounters. Its aesthetic relies on an ethic of symbolic exchange, rooted in generosity and sustained through intimacy. Perhaps even the official bureaucracies that these artists are so fond of tweaking may be showing signs of changing under its spell. More established art institutions are admitting to an appreciation for mail art and exhibitions are becoming more frequent. The Whitney Museum of American Art as well as the Wexner Center for the Arts have each held major retrospectives of Ray Johnson's work.[16] The government of Argentina now recognizes a sanctioned Mail Art Day. In addition, in May of 2003 the Belgian government issued a mail art postage stamp designed by Guy Bleus that is, at long last, officially legal for use as postage. A press release from the Centre of Attention in London recently announced a call for artists to participate in its digital World Wide Web log or "blog," describing their organization as, "A network of operatives covering the globe. The show aligns and deploys art world practitioners using the power of digital technology to survey the art scenes from across the world. Surveillance enables us at the Centre to provide an alternative version of events and to challenge the hegemony of those who persist in setting our agenda."[17] It appears as though the digital age, far from hindering networking activities, is actually enhancing the possibilities for artists attempting to break new ground in their work while establishing or maintaining communication with other artists with the same goals.

Perhaps Networked art may be viewed as the first response team of the avant-garde, and even as history begins catching up to where Networked art has been, Networked artists are already moving into the future. Although it has not yet overtaken society at large, Networked art continues to do its part in creating its own society with its own idiosyncratic, volatile, and ultimately liberating

philosophical convictions. It is a thriving and complex network whose commitment to symbolic exchange allows individuals to function as hubs within a larger web that dynamically alters itself to meet its own needs. It is not merely reactive, but proactive, as it employs a dedication to generosity that benefits both the sender and the receiver, without assigning obligations on either end. Furthermore, although the work is often highly intimate, it is nonetheless sent off into the network as a forgotten gift that may or may not be displayed publicly, archived or lost, kept or sent on by its receiver, or ever heard from again. It is a risk that these artists are willing to take based upon an art form that always favors creation and giving over possession and commerce.

Endnotes

[1] I am very grateful for the comments and suggestions made by those in attendance at the XVI International Congress of Aesthetics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (July 18-23, 2004) where an earlier, abbreviated version of this paper was presented.

[2] Susan Hapgood, *Neo-Dada: Redefining Art* (New York: The American Federation of Arts, 1994), p. 2.

[3] The term "New York Correspondence School" was actually coined by the artist Ed Plunket, an early and active participant in the emerging network.

[4] William S. Wilson. Letter to Jean Kusina, October 6, 2003.

[5] Ladislav, Guderna, Martin Guderna, and Ed Varney, "Editorial," Originally published in *Scarabus* (Canada), 1(10): 1984 and reprinted in *Mail Art: An Annotated Bibliography*, John Held, Jr. Metuchen, (New Jersey and London: Scarecrow Press, 1991), p. 261.

[6] Craig J. Saper, *Networked Art* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 16.

[7] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman. (New York: Citadel Press, 1948), pp. 54-55.

[8] *Ibid.*, p.156.

[9] Of the three movements cited, Fluxus is the least likely to protest this association since numerous Fluxus artists have crossed in and out of networking activities over the years. By many mail artists, Fluxus is generally considered to be a source of inspiration not unlike Dada.

[10] buZ Blurr, Letter to Jean Kusina, September 16, 2003.

[11] Craig J. Saper, *Networked Art* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 16.

[12] Sharla Sava, "Ray Johnson's New York Correspondence School: the Fine Art of Communication" in *Ray Johnson: Correspondences* catalog from the exhibition at the Wexner Center for the Arts (Paris and New York: Flammarion Press, 1999), p. 125.

[13] This is an often-repeated maxim in the mail art world that is commonly attributed to the artist Lon Spiegelman.

[14] Clemente Padin, "My Vacations in Freedom," *New Observations* (Summer 2002), p.18.

[15] *Ibid.*, p.18.

[16] *Ray Johnson: Correspondences* was first held at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, January 14-March 21, 1999 and then later exhibited at the Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, September 17-December 31, 2000.

[17] Press release sent from Pierre Coinde of the Centre of Attention, London, England to Jean Kusina and others, September 13, 2003.

Jeanne Marie Kusina

University of Toledo, Philosophy Dept.

2801 W Bancroft MS 510

Toledo, OH 43606

jeanne.kusina@utoledo.edu