



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

**A Finding Aid to the John Evans Papers, 1957-2012,
bulk 1970s-2012, in the Archives of American Art**

by **Catherine S. Gaines**

June 17, 2013

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Creator:	Evans, John
Title:	John Evans papers
Dates:	1957-2012, bulk 1970-2012
Quantity:	7.1 linear feet
Abstract:	The papers of John Evans, 1957-2012, bulk 1970s-2000, measure 7.1 linear feet and document the collage artist's involvement with mail art. The vast majority of letters are from mail artists, often with embellished envelopes. Writings are a thesis about mail art by Marya Trianfello. Subject files concern art stamps, mail art shows and events, Ray Johnson's death and memorial tributes to him. The most thoroughly documented mail art project, "John Evans Fake Collages," is of unknown origin. In addition, there are a few items relating to projects conceived by Evans and more substantial documentation of projects initiated by Christina Behmenburg, Leslie Caldera, Ryosuke Cohen, Peter W. Kaufmann, Angela and Peter Netmail.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated by Margaret Evans, widow of John Evans, in 2013.

Processing Information

This collection was processed to a minimal level and a finding aid prepared in 2013 by Catherine S. Gaines. The Archives of American Art has implemented minimal processing tactics when possible in order to increase information about and access to more of our collections.

Minimal processing included arrangement to the series, subseries, and folder levels. Generally, items within folders were simply verified with folder titles, but not arranged further. Folders within boxes were not numbered. The collection was rehoused in archival containers and folders, but not all staples and clips were removed.

Preferred Citation

John Evans papers, 1957-2012, bulk 1970s-2012. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original material requires an appointment. Use of archival audiovisual recordings with no duplicate access copy requires advance notice.

Ownership & Literary Rights

The John Evans papers, 1957-2012, bulk 1970s-2012, are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Biographical Note

John Evans (1932-2012), a collage artist in New York City, was an active participant in mail art.

After attending the Art Institute of Chicago, Evans moved to New York in 1963. He was a member of the Neo-Dada community and interested in Fluxus events. Meeting Ray Johnson and a few other mail artists at a party introduced Evans to mail art and led to many long term friendships.

Between 1964 and 2000, Evans produced a daily collage of found objects collected from the street, pasted onto a sketchbook page, enhanced with watercolor, and stamped with the date. Each collage included the image of a duck's head known as "Ursuline Duck," a reference to his friend Ursule Molinaro (1914-2000). The collages were, in effect, a diary that recorded everyday life and referenced his exhibition activities. *John Evans: Collages*, a monograph published in 2004, reproduced 364 collages representative of his style over time. His largest mail art project, "Fake John Evans Collages," spanned several years and was in progress at the time of his death.

John Evans died on October 5, 2012 following a heart attack.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Evans, 1957-2012, bulk 1970s-2000, measure 7.1 linear feet and document the collage artist's involvement with mail art. The vast majority of letters - many with embellished envelopes - are from mail artists. Writings include a thesis about mail art by Marya Trianfellous. Subject files concern art stamps, Ray Johnson's death and subsequent memorial tributes, mail art shows and other events. The most thoroughly documented mail art project, "John Evans Fake Collages," is of unknown origin. In addition, there are a few items relating to projects conceived by Evans, and more substantial documentation of projects initiated by Christina Behmenburg, Leslie Caldera, Ryosuke Cohen, Peter W. Kaufmann, Angela and Peter Netmail.

Evans's mail art correspondents include: Dr. Al Ackerman (Blaster), Anna Banana (Banana Productions), Roy Arenella, Guy Bleus (The Administration Centre 42.292), buZ blurr, Richard C., Leslie Caldera (Creative Thing), Carl T. Chew, Buster Cleveland, Ryosuke Cohen, Chuck Welch (Cracker Jack Kid), Robin Crozier, Jerome D'Angelo, Irene Dogmatic (Dogmmystique/Dogmatique Misticky), Morris David Dorenfeld, Jerry Dreva, Donald Evans, James Evans, Walt Evans, Fa Ga Ga Ga, A. M. Fine, Bill Gaglione (Picasso Gaglione), John Held, Jr., HICO, E. F. Higgins, III, Rudd Janssen, Dianne Jenkins, Ray Johnson, Tod Jorgenssen, Chester Kasnowski, On Kawara, Gene Laughter, Michael Leigh (A.1. Waste Paper Co., Ltd.), David M. Miller, Minoy, Mohammed, Robert Morilla, Art Nahpro (Paul Jackson), Carlo Pittore, E. M. Plunkett, Steve Random, Robert Rocola, Marilyn K. Rosenberg, Andreas Senser, Skooter, Smegma (Scarlatina Lust, Alex Torrid Zone Igloo, Pardon My Myrth, Alexander Josef Hirka), D. C. spaulding, Lon Spiegelman, John Tostada (Tostdada, Oh Boy Mailart!), Pat Tavenner (Mail Queen), Third Story, Benedict J. Tisa, Sonja Van der Burg (Afzed), Whitson (Peter Whitson Warren), and Robert Warren.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 4 series:

Series 1: Letters, 1957-2012 (Boxes 1-6, OV 8; 5.3 linear feet)

Series 2: Writings, 1983-1991 (Box 6; 0.2 linear feet)

Series 3: Subject Files, 1970s-2012 (Boxes 6-7; 0.8 linear feet)

Series 4: Mail Art Projects, 1986-2012 (Box 7, OV 8; 0.8 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Archives of American Art under the following terms:

Subjects:

Collage
Mail art

Types of Materials:

Illustrated letters

Names:

Arenella, Roy
Banana, Anna, 1940-
Behmenburg, Christa
Blaster, Al
Bleus, Guy
Caldera, Leslie
Chew, C. T., (Carl T.), 1948-
Cleveland, Buster, -1998
Cohen, Ryosuke, 1948-
Crozier, Robin
D'Angelo, Jerome, D.
Dorenfeld, Morris David
Dreva, Jerry
Evans, Donald
Evans, James
Evans, Walt
Gaglione, Bill
Held, John
Higgins, E. F., 1949-
Janssen, Ruud, 1959-
Johnson, Ray, 1927-
Jorgensen, Tod
Kasnowski, Chester
Kaufmann, Peter W.
Kawara, K. Japanese
Küstermann, Peter, 1950-
Leigh, Michael
Miller, David M.
Morilla, Robert
Pittore, Carlo
Plunkett, Ed, 1922-
Random, S., (Steven), 1954-
Rocola, Robert
Rosenberg, Marilyn K.
Senser, Andreas, 1942-1989
Spiegelman, Lon
Tavener, Pat
Tisa, Benedict J.
Tostada, John
Trianfello, Marya
Von der Burg, Sonja
Warren, Robert Penn, 1905-

Series Descriptions/Container Listing

Series 1: Letters, 1957-2012

5.3 linear feet; Boxes 1-6, OV 8

Most letters are from other mail artists. Many are about correspondence art and the artists' careers. Letters from some artists who became close friends focus on personal and family news. Other letters contain invitations to exchange work, exhibit, or participate in mail art projects. Enclosures are frequent and include found objects, a wide variety of printed materials, and a few small artifacts.

Letters are alphabetized by name of sender. Miscellaneous files for each letter of the alphabet contain letters from correspondents represented by fewer than 5 letters; within each folder, material is in rough alphabetical order. Throughout this series, envelopes precede their contents and the address sides of post cards and aerograms face upward. Letters without envelopes, empty envelopes, and separated enclosures are placed at the ends of folders. Researchers must take care to maintain the order and should notify reference staff if the arrangement appears to have been disturbed.

Box	Folder	
1	1	A, Miscellaneous, 1980s-1991
1	2-5	Ackerman, Dr. Al/Blaster, 1980s-1990s
1	6	Andre, Michael, 1990s-2009
1	7-10	Anna Banana/Banana Productions, 1990s-2011
1	11	Arenella, Roy, 1990s-2003
1	12	B, Miscellaneous, 1965-2012, undated
1	13-14	Bleus, Guy/The Administration Centre 42.292, 1970s-2000s
1	15-17	buZ blurr, 1980s-2012
1	18	C, Miscellaneous, 1975-2008
1	19-22	Richard C., 1970s-2012
1	23-25	Caldera, Leslie/Creative Thing, 1975-2012
Box	Folder	
2	1-3	Caldera, Leslie/Creative Thing, 1975-2012
2	4	Chew, Carl T., 2011-2012
2	5	Cleveland, Buster, 1980s-1998
2	6	Cohen, Ryosuke, 1980s-2012
2	7	Cracker Jack Kid/Chuck Welch, 1990-2012
2	8	Crozier, Robin, 1975-1980s
2	9	D, Miscellaneous, 1962-2012
2	10	D'Angelo, Jerome, 1980s
2	11	Irene Dogmatic/Dogmystique/Dogmatique Mysticky, 1975-1999
2	12	Dorenfeld, Morris David, 1993-2000s
2	13	Dreva, Jimmy, 1970s-1980s

2	14	E, Miscellaneous, 1980s-2000s
2	15	Evans, Donald, 1971-2003
2	16	Evans, James, 1980s
2	17-22	Evans, Walt, 1980s-2000s

Box	Folder	
3	1	F, Miscellaneous, 2000s-2010s
3	2	Fa Ga Ga Ga, 1990s
3	3	Ferguson, Frank, 1980s-2010s
3	4-5	Fine, A. M., 1970s-1980s
3	6	G, Miscellaneous, 1970s-1980s
3	7	Gaglione, Bill/Picasso Gagliani, 1990s-2012
3	9	Held, John, Jr., 1980s-2012 includes 1 CD
3	10	HICO, 1970s
3	11-12	Higgins, E. F., III, 1970s-2012
3	13	I, Miscellaneous, 1970s-2012
3	14	J, Miscellaneous, undated, 1979-1980s
3	15	James, Inex, 1980s
3	16	Janssen, Rudd, 1990s-2012
3	17	Jenkins, Dianne, 1980s, undated
3	18-22	Johnson, Ray, 1960s-1995
3	23	Jorgensen, Tod, 1979
3	24	K, Miscellaneous, 1970s-1980s
3	25	Kasnowski, Chester, 1984-1985
3	26	Kawara, On, 1983-2006
3	27	L, Miscellaneous, undated
3	28	Laughter, Gene, 1984-1985

Box	Folder	
4	1-5	Leigh, Michael/A.1. Waste Paper Co., Ltd., 1980-2012
4	6	Lionelli, D., 1957-1965
4	7-8	M, Miscellaneous, 1972-2012
4	9	Massa, Jacques, 1985-1986
4	10	Miller, David M., 1983-1988
4	11	Minoy, 1984-1985
4	12-13	Mohammed, 1970s-1990s
4	14	Morillo, Robert, 1980s
4	15	N, Miscellaneous, 1970s-2012, undated

4	16-17	Naphro, Art/Paul Jackson, 1980s-2000s
4	18	O, Miscellaneous, undated, 1993-2012
4	19	Olson, Richard, 1979-1982
4	20	P, Miscellaneous, 1980s-2012, undated
4	21	Phillips, Stephen, 1969-1971
4	22-23	Pittore, Carlo, 1980s-2000s
4	24	Plunkett, E. M., 1970s-2012
4	25	R, Miscellaneous, 1980s-1990s, undated
4	26-27	Random, Steve, 1980s-2000s

Box	Folder	
5	1	Rocola, Robert, 1984-1992
5	2	Rosenberg, Marilyn R., 1980-2001
5	3-4	S, Miscellaneous, undated
5	5	Senser, Andreas, undated
5	6	Skooter, undated
5	7-9	Smegma/Scarlatina Lust/Alex Torrid Zone Igloo/Pardon My Myrth/Alexander Josef Hirka, undated, 2000s
5	10	Spaulding, D. C., undated, 2000s
5	11	Spiegelman, Lou, 1978-2001 <i>Oversized material housed in OV 8</i>
5	12	T, Miscellaneous, 1978-2005
5	13	Tavener, Pat/Mail Queen, undated, 1973-1983
5	14	Third Story, 1976-1977
5	15	Tisa, Benedict J., 1980s-1990s
5	16	Tostada, John/Tostdada/Oh Boy Mailart!, 1990s-2012
5	17	U, Miscellaneous, 1996-2008
5	18	V, Miscellaneous, 1965-1990s
5	19-20	Van der Burg, Sonja/Afzed, 1980s
5	21	W, Miscellaneous, 1987-2012
5	22	Warner, Robert, 1980s-2005

Box	Folder	
6	1-3	Whitson/Peter Whitson Warren, 1975-2000s
6	4	X-Z, Miscellaneous, 1983-2010
6	5	Unidentified, undated

Box	
OV 8	Oversized Letter from Box 5, Folder 11, 1984

Series 2: Writings, 1983-1991

0.2 linear feet; Box 6

Writings by Evans include a book review of *Correspondence Art* by Michael Crane, circa 1984. A brief essay, "Correspondencing by Tattoo," in which he recalls meeting Ray Johnson and being introduced to other mail artists at a party. His tattoo of a knife became a topic of conversation that led to friendships with some of the artists and, eventually, to becoming a mail artist.

Based on written materials and interviews with mail artists and others with knowledge of the subject, Trianfello's thesis, "A Mail Art Experience" includes an essay about the history, definition and forms of mail art and documentation her mail art project's conception and execution. A note accompanying the thesis thanks Evans for his participation and indicates the project may be expanded.

A few writings by others are found scattered among the letters (Series 1).

Box	Folder	
6	6	By Evans, 1983-circa 1984
6	7-8	Thesis, "A Mail Art Experience" by Marya Trianfello (M.A., New York University, 1990), 1990-1991

Series 3: Subject Files, 1970s-2012

0.8 linear feet; Boxes 6-7

Among the periodicals are (*Tacit...*), an Italian publication titled *Bambù*, and an issue of *New Observations* devoted to mail art. Ray Johnson exhibition catalogs dated prior to 1995 and after 2000 are found in the file titled Mail Art Shows and Events.

Additional art stamps by many artists and a few small periodicals are found scattered throughout the letters (Series 1).

Box	Folder	
6	9-11	Art Stamps, 1980-2006
6	12-15	Johnson, Ray - Death and Memorial Tributes, 1995-2000
6	16-20	Mail Art Shows and Events, 1970s-2000s, undated <i>Includes 1 sound cassette; 2 CDs</i>

Box	Folder	
7	1-2	Mail Art Shows and Events, 2000s
7	3-4	Periodicals, undated

Series 4: Mail Art Projects, 1986-2012

0.8 linear feet; Box 7, OV 8

Condolence notes to the Evans family are enclosed with several pieces of "Fake John Evans Collages" received soon after his death in 2012.

John Evans' projects are followed by those of other artists, alphabetized by name of artist. Both volumes of "Fake John Evans Collages" were received in 3-ring binders which were dismantled for better storage. The original order of

each volume has been maintained. In addition, announcements of mail art projects initiated by others and stray pieces of mail art from Evans' projects are found scattered among the letters (Series 1).

Box	Folder	
7	5	Evans, John, Miscellaneous Mail Art Projects, 1986-1994
7	6	Behmenburg, Christa, "rats and mice - think twice," 2001
7	7	Caldera, Leslie, <i>Kurt Schwitters: 100 Years of Merz, A celebration of Kurt Schwitters' birth with images by artists from around the world</i> , 1987
7	8	Cohen, Ryosuke, "Brain Cell No. 287-No. 300," 1994 <i>Oversized material housed in OV 8</i>
7	9	Kaufmann, Peter W., "World Wide Networkers Congress, 1992," 1993
7	10	Netmail, Angela and Peter, "Congratulations," 2005
7	11-14	"Volume 1: John Evans Fake Collages," 2007-2011
7	15-18	"Volume 2: John Evans Fake Collages," 2008-2012
7	19-21	"John Evans Fake Collages," 2006-2012

Box	
OV 8	Oversized Mail Art Project by Ryosuke Cohen from Box 7 Folder 19, 1994 from Box 7, folder 19