

CABARET
VOLTAIRE

FLUKUS
WEST
SAN
DIEGO
AND
SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA

MAIL
ART

Edited by

ARZU OZKAL + MILA WALDECK

CARBOLT

To the Mail Art community past and present.



Cabaret Voltaire: Fluxus West, San Diego and Southern California Mail Art

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Arzu Ozkal
Mila Waldeck

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Cabaret
Voltaire

Cabaret
Voltaire

Evre Aug '77

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Ken Friedman

FEBRUARY 3, 1977

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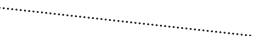
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Cabaret Voltaire**No. 5 (Fall 1978)**

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CABVOLT



*Cabaret
Voltaire*

Dadaismusz

6266 MADELINE STREET, APT. 97
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92115

Introduction

Arzu Ozkal

This book is about a social networking movement from the 1960's: The International Mail Art Movement or Correspondence Art. It intends to be the first extensive review of the graphic minutiae created by San Diego State University (SDSU) alumna Ferrara Brain Pan¹ focusing on informal art networks and their extension into digital media.

Fueled by post-structuralist critiques of meaning, permanency and authorship, this book intends to inspire many cultural producers to learn about artists for whom dialogue and exchange were primary means for art making. The readers will hopefully develop their own models for informal exchanges, and build more marginal—online/offline, temporal—platforms for creative inquiry and experimentation. Discovering *CabVolt* No:1 at SDSU's Special Collections encouraged us to bring this book into being, and share the story behind the author of this short-lived yet highly significant publication.

Pan drew upon a legacy of creative practitioners who utilized the postal system to send and receive art, such as American artist Ray Johnson, who began such work in the 1960s. When Pan

¹ Correspondence and publications printed before 1996 use the name Steve Hitchcock

Exchange with Ferrara Brain Pan

The Mail art project *Cabaret Voltaire* emerged in 1977 as a xerox-printed magazine made in San Diego, California. In a sense it was tiny: it measured nearly 4 × 5 in (10 × 12.5 cm) and five issues were produced. On the other hand, *Cabaret Voltaire*, also known as *CabVolt*, was broad: over 180 artists participated with artworks, contributions, and correspondence mailed from 20 countries. *CabVolt* creator Ferrara Brain Pan tells us how this mix of little and broad happened.

Mila Waldeck: *How did you build the list of Cabaret Voltaire contributors? Did the list change over the editions?*

Ferrara Brain Pan: I started with a xeroxed mailing list that Ken Friedman had given me. He may have also given me a spare copy of a zine or two with addresses in it. As I remember I just sent out invitations to a bunch of addresses from the list (all of them probably) and I got a lot of mail back. I used almost everything people submitted for the five issues although there were a few times I chose not to print stuff that seemed of poor throwaway quality. Everyone who had works printed in the first issue was invited to send in stuff for the next issue, and so on, it just grew and spread that way, and I got stuff from people I had never invited because people who'd sent me stuff spread the word around and shared my address with their contacts.

MW: *Was Cabaret Voltaire mailed to the contributors only, or to additional readers as well? How many copies did the contributors receive? Was there any other form of circulation?*

FBP: The only copies that I sent out were to contributors and also prospective contributors, and in trade for other zines that

The Show Goes On: *Cabaret Voltaire* and *CabVolt*

Emily Hage

Steve Hitchcock's *Cabaret Voltaire*, or *CabVolt* is a performance of sorts, inspired by the Dadaists' emphasis on the interdependence between performance and print. Considering this Mail Art zine in dialogue with 1970s punk zines, we find that they together fostered cross-fertilization and interaction and maintained a tension between materiality and ephemerality, mediation and liveness.

CabVolt is one of dozens of zines—underground, amateur, small-circulation publications—published in the 1970s and 1980s by affiliates of Mail Art, also known as Postal Art and Correspondence Art, the worldwide collective that used the postal service to circulate their pieces. Linked to Ray Johnson and his New York Correspondence School, it grew out of the Fluxus movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Hitchcock and other Mail Artists were attracted to what they understood to be Dada's nonsensical, in-your-face, anti-status quo dissidence. Mail Art publications, sometimes called “dadazines,” included other titles like *The New York Correspondence School Weekly Breeder* (1972–1973), edited by Tim Mancusi and Steve Caravello, *West Bay Dadaist* (1974–1975; later *Quoz?*), edited by Charles

Playing Cards: Music Notation, Intermedia, and the Audiability of Graphic Design

Eric Smigel

“We have eyes as well as ears, and it is our business
while we are alive to use them.”

—John Cage, “Experimental Music” (1957)

INTERMEDIA AND MUSICAL ICONOGRAPHY

The “New Music International” issue of *Cabaret Voltaire San Diego* showcases a dazzling assortment of eccentric postcards with renderings of music notation, musical instruments, and other references to the visual culture of sound. Ranging from lyrical and wistful to boisterous and irreverent, the compilation of postcards resembles a series of independent vignettes, cabaret songs, sultry dances, unsavory jokes, and magic tricks—like a sequence of graphic design nightclub acts traveling by mail. The satirical and somewhat campy quality of the volume is announced by the cover, which is a grainy, photocopied film still of the Three Stooges, the classic slapstick comedy team from the 1940s. The trio are seen in front of a brick wall playing makeshift musical instruments: Curly is beating a large tin box with a wooden mallet; Moe is making a forceful effort to blow through the stick of a rubber plunger as if it were a trumpet; and Larry has taken up a curved metal

CabVolt Magazine, Mail Art and Industrial Music: A Lost (and Found) Connection

Alexandre Alves

INTRODUCTION

Between 1976 and 1980, during the height of the Punk era, the dynamics of Mail Art caused a series of coincidences within pop music, art, and design. A lot of novelty came during this period: punk rockers, fanzines and gig-goers, as well as brand new music made with electric instruments, such as synthesizers, erupted in Europe, especially in the U.K. It was the time when Kraftwerk, a quartet formed in Dusseldorf, decided to put their ideas into keyboards (once dominated by progressive rock bands), synths and drum machines. Their first album, *Kraftwerk*, was released in 1970. Although, the band had significant attention since *Trans-Europe Express* (1977) and *The Man Machine* (1978) – the two records which signalled a new direction in pop music (Buckley, 2012), they became huge in the 1980s.

These acts were already preparing the first steps to the post-punk movement and its variations, such as New Wave, New Romantic, No Wave, among others. Inspired by the German pioneers of electronic music, and the punk aesthetics – the

Preguntas a Clemente Padín

Enero, 2019. Montevideo, URUGUAY.

Mila Waldeck: *¿Como usted comenzó y prosiguió su contacto con los poetas y artistas en Latinoamérica que en los años 60 editaban libros y periódicos, y que posteriormente emplean técnicas de arte correo (por ejemplo Edgardo Antonio Vigo, Guillermo Deisler y Dámaso Ogaz)?*

Clemente Padín: En mi caso todo comienza a raíz de un bloqueo comunicacional con nuestra precedente generación. Nosotros pertenecíamos a la generación de los 60 y ellos a la del 45, una generación brillante y por lejos la más productiva y creadora de nuestra historia. Hay que admitirlo: Juan Carlos Onetti, Ángel Rama, Mario Benedetti y muchos más en todos los géneros del arte. Sin embargo, una generación muy celosa de sus espacios, que no nos permitía salir a la luz: controlaban las galerías, las editoriales, las páginas literarias y culturales, etc., etc. Por ello decidimos crear nuestro propio sello editorial: *Los Huevos Del Plata*, revista-fanzine que nace en 1965. Lo mismo ocurría en toda América Latina. En la Argentina nacen *Opium*, *El Lagrimal Trifurca*, *W.C.* y *Hexágono 70* de E.A. Vigo, en Chile de Guillermo Deisler, en Venezuela *La Pata De Palo* y *El Techo de la Ballena* de Dámaso Ogaz, *El Caimán Barbudo* en Cuba, en Brasil *Punto* de Wladimir Dias-Pino y así en toda la región. Así casi todas esas publicaciones se convirtieron en la base social del nuevo arte que traíamos entre manos: la poesía experimental, el arte correo, el happening, la performance, las instalaciones, el video arte y otras formas artísticas surgidas sobre todo en el Fluxus Art de los Estados Unidos.

MW: *Usted creó las revistas Los Huevos de Plata y Ovum. ¿Tú podrías explicar las diferencias entre la una y la otra? ¿Como ocurrió el cam-*

Mistakes and Errata: “Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?”

Arzu Ozkal

Any recorded history reflects the values and choices of the archiving institution. Museums and special collections arbitrate what is worth preserving or should end up at a swap meet. Publishers decide what knowledge shall be disseminated. The public trusts these institutions to filter errors, and organize knowledge by differing nature and importance.

Cultural gatekeepers and mediators—such as publishers, film studios, gallery owners, critics or reviewers—can be defined as those involved in the mediation between the production of cultural goods and the production of consumer tastes.¹

The cultural consumer is lucky that artists and designers find alternative production and distribution methods, and bypass the gatekeepers of cultural production; canons of taste. Yet, discarded or ignored works can resurface years later, and gain recognition long after being rejected. Fortunately, independent presses such as *Valiz*, *Dark Matter*, and *Printed Matter*, etc. ded-

¹ Passage found in “Cultural Mediators and Gatekeepers” written by Susanne Janssen and Marc Verboord.

Exchanges with Ken Friedman

Part I

February 4, 2018.

Arzu Ozkal: *San Diego, California has the reputation of being relatively conservative, and culturally not so exciting. When we look at the 60s and 70s, with Kaprow, Fluxus West, and the Antins, things seem quiet radical. How do you remember San Diego, CA?*

Ken Friedman: There are many layers of culture to explain this. San Diego was always relatively conservative. The decision of the University of California to build a campus in the La Jolla area of San Diego did not change the basic conservative social structure of the area. It brought some distinguished scientists, schools, and artists to the area — but these were at La Jolla, a special community where people sharing different contradictory and overlapping patterns might live. Some were conservative wealthy, other culturally adventurous with a partial taste for there New York avant-garde, the professors who lived their own life separate from the conservative politics of the county, and so on. You'd need to talk with a long-term San Diego / La Jolla sociologist to understand the forces at play. I moved to San Diego with my family long before the University of California — I got there in 61 or 62. It was a pleasant city, but bland and mild. Quite conservative then. Even the Democrats were centrist and conservative — when they got elected.

The military bases and installations were major forces in San Diego County—Mirimar, the Naval Base, The Naval Air Station, The Marine Corps Recruiting Depot, the Camp Pendleton Marine Base