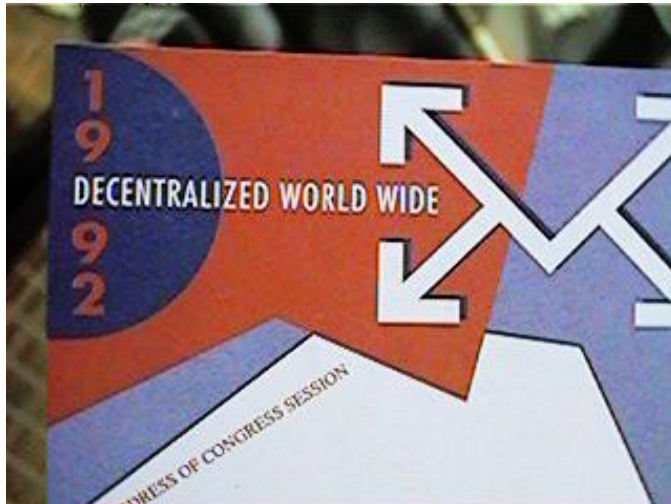


*Received from Peter W. Kaufman – Major Congress Coordinator –  
CH 8123 – Ebmatingen – Switzerland – 8-1-2003*

**To all Netlinks of the DNC '92**

## **DECENTRALIZED WORLD WIDE NETWORKER CONGRESS (DNC'92)**



**10 Years have passed since DNC'92. The Networker, a new Role perception as stated by Mister HR Fricker as a specification for statements and congresses.. I ask myself, did open relation systems for the interchange and cooperation in art and mail art as well as in other**

**culture institutions on a communal, regional and international level develop? What are the results? I'd like to know from netlinks important for the DNC'92, which results, positive or negative, they can see, their highlights and frustrations, their perception of their role as networker as of today and possible visions for the future. All contacted netlinks, other active participants of the DNC'92 and art institutions will receive documentation with the results. Please answer within the next 2-3 months. Many thanks in advance, yours former Congress Coordinator DNC'92, P.W. Kaufman.**

*Answer from TAM-Publications – Ruud Janssen – P.O. Box 10388 –  
5000 JJ Tilburg – Netherlands – 17-1-2003*

**Ten years have passed and lots of things have happened. In 1992 the congress year was the successor of the Congress year 1986 in which I participated as well. The first intense meetings happened there. In 1992 I was mentioned as “TAM Computer Sessions”. I had my analogue TAM-Bulletin (a magazine with all kind of**

information on mail-art) transformed into a Bulletin Board Version, and was making things available through the computer network that was common before the Internet took over. Besides some regular congresses where I met other mail-artists physically, the electronic meeting was also explored. Only few mail-artists were possible to take part. Only computer-users like Mark Bloch (PAN), Charles François (RATOS) and Rod Summers (VEC) were up to this challenge. Actually in those years (1991-1995) I had an intense relationship with one of those mail-artists that lived in Russia. Lots of congresses devoted to meeting her and other friends as well. That relationship ended but enriched my thoughts and visions about networking and what it could be.

Meeting people electronically has now become common. The Internet really got available here in Europe in 1995. In 1996 I started my own site which is still operational. The sending of texts in envelopes isn't done anymore by lots of mail-artists. They publish their texts on the Internet and others read, download and print the texts. This electronic world flourishes while the old analogue world still survives and envelopes still go around the world. The postage however has risen. The phone bills and costs of access to Internet are becoming lower year by year. The electronic communication has taken over the world.

Still, I use both worlds (analogue and digital) when I communicate. Also in the Mail-Art. In 1995 I started my mail-interview project in which I wanted to know how other mail-artists were seeing the changes. Not only questions by envelope. Also faxes, e-mails and personal visits to deliver a question or to get an answer. The personal visits always were the best. Since 1992 I travelled to Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden, USA, Greece, Denmark, England and always included visits with mail-artists to get a better idea of who the other one was and why he/she got involved in mail-art. Those mail-interviews got out of hand a bit. I started about 74 of them. In the beginning published booklets of each interview (about 20 pages including visuals). After 40 booklets (and a total of five thousands booklets) the hardcopy mail became expensive year by year. So publishing these

**interviews on the Internet was the next step. First with the kind help of Jas W. Felter in Canada the interviews were placed at his site. Here it also shows that the collaboration internationally has become quite easy because of the Internet. Later on I arranged my own site that way that all interviews would fit there, including the unfinished ones. One Interview booklet got specially printed by Joel Cohen in New York, USA in an edition of 3000, the Interview with Guy Bleus. Also an example of how 3 mail-artists can collaborate in the new electronic age without sending each other snail-mail. The electronic communication however resulted in large boxes with booklets that are widely spread into the network. Actually I still have hundred of those booklets here for interested people. The complete text –off course- is also available online.**

**Somehow this mail-interview project was also a change point for me. It became an intense correspondence with old friends and also new friends. Besides that I also reached for the roots of mail-artists and interviewed people who are no longer with us like: Ray Johnson, Norman Solomon, Edgardo-Antonio Vigo, and Robin Crozier. I discovered that some mail-artists have a deep background while others were very empty indeed. An interview could also end with the publication and breaking of the contact. Other extremes are there as well; that an interview results in a life-time relationship.**



**The positive aspects of the electronic Internet world is that communication is fast, cheap, contains colour and videos. The negative aspect is that it is mostly a bit empty and the depth of the correspondence is not always great. There is also a new breed out there. Newcomers that are missing something in their life and turn to the Internet for communication. Actually discover there the old-fashioned mail-art world because it is nowadays fully documented on the Internet. Finding the first addresses and start**

to mail out there first bits and pieces. Because of my own (intensely visited) site I regularly get envelopes or postcards from people I never heard of before.

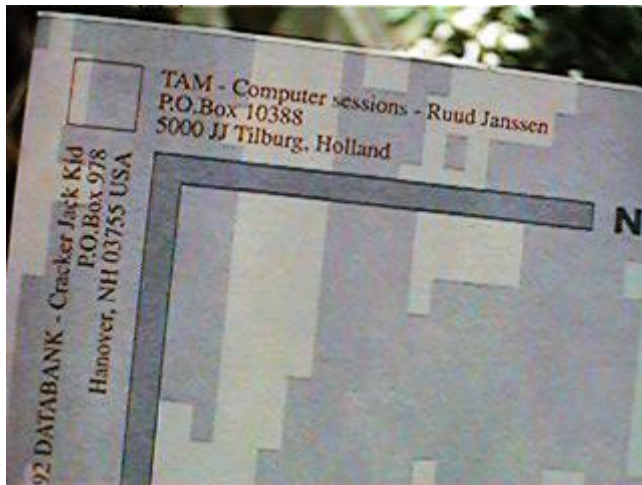
The printed mail-art magazines have disappeared mostly. Only a few survived. Also new ones appeared and disappeared. The online groups like the one at Yahoo! Have taken over the sharing of information. If someone starts project and publishes this on the Internet it is spread quick and widely. Off course only the select online community will discover this. I must say that the printed invitations I get in my P.O. Box are mostly for the 'better' projects with a better concept then the online ones. It is so easy to start a project nowadays without giving too much thought about how it will evolve, will be exhibited or will be documented. The mail-art though "all can participate", and "all is art" also have destroyed the quality of some/most projects. Yes, I am a bit pessimistic about that.

The new bread of mail-artists has never heard of Ray Johnson. They mention the rules, or sometimes mention "there are no rules" in mail-art. The historic knowledge of mail-art is only preserved by some. The archivists, the writers, and the ones that are alive.

As I write this I know that Honoria (Texas, USA) is working hard on her thesis on how the Internet has touched the Mail-Art community and how it has been affected. Something I focussed on also in the vast volume of Interview-questions I sent into the world and which got retuned to me and were published in those over 2000 pages of paper with answers to those questions.

The role of a networker is to network. Not only in the ART-world but also in the common world these terms are used now. We don't have meetings anymore, we network. We use our network. Life and art are integrated. Now more than ever. The traditional art, like painting on canvas, is only done by a select group. And to be honest, that is the art that will end up on walls and in museums.

**Will Mail-Art leave any traces other than piles of paper in archives that slowly rot?**



**You asked about frustrations as well. Quality. I am looking for quality in my work and in improving myself. I discovered that the mail-art principle doesn't cherish that. The better the work you send out, the more replies you get, the less time you have for each piece you want to create.**

**Every mail-artist will fall into this trap. I did as well. Now I focus on higher quality. That means I don't answer all I get in. Only send in something that is good enough for my standards, and invest more time for less art in the shortened life I still have. A concept that works since I am now making the best works ever (in my eyes off course). Time will tell where all that will end. As a networker it isn't easy to alter the network one is in. One can only change networks by looking for new contacts and breaking old contacts.**

**Maybe this text has become somewhat incoherent. So be it. It has been years since I have written about mail-art and explained my thoughts as they are now. This is a first step. Maybe there will be more. I am looking forward to see the results of others, how they see the changes. Haven't heard from lots of them for years. Have they all retired? Is retiring from mail-art returning to a 'normal and settled life' and are the mail-artists the ones that are searching for something that is missing in their life? If you consider yourself a mail-artists, try to answer that last question.**

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