



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

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

Catherine S. Gaines

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Archives of American Art
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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Arrangement.....	3
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Names and Subjects	3
Container Listing	5
Series 1: Letters, 1957-2012.....	5
Series 2: Writings, 1983-1991.....	10
Series 3: Subject Files, 1970s-2012.....	11
Series 4: Mail Art Projects, 1986-2012.....	12

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	John Evans papers
Date:	1957-2012 (bulk 1970-2012)
Identifier:	AAA.evanjohn
Creator:	Evans, John, 1932-
Extent:	7.1 Linear feet 1 Gigabyte
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of John Evans, 1957-2012, bulk 1970s-2000, measure 7.1 linear feet and 1.00 GB and document the collage artist's involvement with mail art. The vast majority of letters are from mail artists, often with embellished envelopes and include and a digital version of Collected Essays by John Held, Jr. Writings include a thesis about mail art by Marya Trianfellos. 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. Born-digital records were processed by Kirsi Ritosalmi-Kisner in 2019 with funding provided by Smithsonian Collection Care and Preservation Fund.

Preferred Citation

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

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Biographical / Historical

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 Contents

The papers of John Evans, 1957-2012, bulk 1970s-2000, measure 7.1 linear feet and 1.00 GB and document the collage artist's involvement with mail art. The vast majority of letters - many with embellished envelopes - are from mail artists. There is also a digital version of Collected Essays by John Held, Jr. Writings include a thesis about mail art by Marya Trianfello. 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 Senger, 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:

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Letters, 1957-2012 (Boxes 1-6, OV 8; 5.3 linear feet, ER01; 0.111 GB)
- Series 2: Writings, 1983-1991 (Box 6; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 3: Subject Files, 1970s-2012 (Boxes 6-7; 0.8 linear feet, ER02-ER03; 0.889 GB)
- 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 Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Collage
Mail art

Types of Materials:

Illustrated letters

Names:

Ackerman, Blaster Al, 1939-2013
Arenella, Roy
Banana, Anna, 1940-
Behmenburg, Christa
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, 1945-1997
Evans, Donald
Evans, James
Evans, Walt
Gaglione, Bill
Held, John
Higgins, E. F., 1949-
Janssen, Ruud, 1959-
Johnson, Ray, 1927-
Jorgenssen, Tod
Kasnowski, Chester
Kaufmann, Peter W.
Kawara, K. (Japanese)
Küstermann, Peter, 1950-
Leigh, Michael
Miller, David M.
Morilla, Robert

Pittore, Carlo
Plunkett, Edward M. (1922-2011)
Random, S. (Steven), 1954-
Rocola, Robert
Rosenberg, Marilyn K.
Senser, Andreas, 1942-1989
Spiegelman, Lon
Tavenner, Pat
Tisa, Benedict J.
Tostada, John
Trianfellos, Marya
Von der Burg, Sonja
Warren, Robert Penn, 1905-

Container Listing

Series 1: Letters, 1957-2012

5.3 Linear feet (Boxes 1-6, OV 8)

0.111 Gigabytes (ER01)

Scope and Contents: 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. There is a digital version of Collected Essays by John Held, Jr. 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.

Arrangement: 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 1, Folder 1	A, Miscellaneous, 1980s-1991
Box 1, Folder 2-5	Ackerman, Dr. Al/Blaster, 1980s-1990s
Box 1, Folder 6	Andre, Michael, 1990s-2009
Box 1, Folder 7-10	Anna Banana/Banana Productions , 1990s-2011
Box 1, Folder 11	Arenella, Roy, 1990s-2003
Box 1, Folder 12	B, Miscellaneous, 1965-2012, undated
Box 1, Folder 13-14	Bleus, Guy/The Administration Centre 42.292, 1970s-2000s
Box 1, Folder 15-17	buZ blurr, 1980s-2012
Box 1, Folder 18	C, Miscellaneous, 1975-2008
Box 1, Folder 19-22	Richard C., 1970s-2012
Box 1, Folder 23-25	Caldera, Leslie/Creative Thing, 1975-2012
Box 2, Folder 1-3	Caldera, Leslie/Creative Thing, 1975-2012
Box 2, Folder 4	Chew, Carl T., 2011-2012

Box 2, Folder 5	Cleveland, Buster, 1980s-1998
Box 2, Folder 6	Cohen, Ryosuke, 1980s-2012
Box 2, Folder 7	Cracker Jack Kid/Chuck Welch, 1990-2012
Box 2, Folder 8	Crozier, Robin, 1975-1980s
Box 2, Folder 9	D, Miscellaneous, 1962-2012
Box 2, Folder 10	D'Angelo, Jerome, 1980s
Box 2, Folder 11	Irene Dogmatic/Dogmystique/Dogmatique Mysticky, 1975-1999
Box 2, Folder 12	Dorenfeld, Morris David, 1993-2000s
Box 2, Folder 13	Dreva, Jimmy, 1970s-1980s
Box 2, Folder 14	E, Miscellaneous, 1980s-2000s
Box 2, Folder 15	Evans, Donald, 1971-2003
Box 2, Folder 16	Evans, James, 1980s
Box 2, Folder 17-22	Evans, Walt, 1980s-2000s
Box 3, Folder 1	F, Miscellaneous, 2000s-2010s
Box 3, Folder 2	Fa Ga Ga Ga, 1990s
Box 3, Folder 3	Ferguson, Frank, 1980s-2010s
Box 3, Folder 4-5	Fine, A. M., 1970s-1980s
Box 3, Folder 6	G, Miscellaneous, 1970s-1980s
Box 3, Folder 7	Gaglione, Bill/Picasso Gaglioni, 1990s-2012
Box 3, Folder 9	Held, John, Jr., 1980s-2012 Notes: Includes born-digital records, see ER01
Folder ER01	Where the Secret Is Hidden, Collected Essays (1979-2011), John Held, Jr., 2019 0.111 Gigabytes (One computer file)
Box 3, Folder 10	HICO, 1970s
Box 3, Folder 11-12	Higgins, E. F., III, 1970s-2012

Box 3, Folder 13	I, Miscellaneous, 1970s-2012
Box 3, Folder 14	J, Miscellaneous, 1979-1980s, undated
Box 3, Folder 15	James, Inex, 1980s
Box 3, Folder 16	Janssen, Rudd, 1990s-2012
Box 3, Folder 17	Jenkins, Dianne , 1980s, undated
Box 3, Folder 18-22	Johnson, Ray, 1960s-1995
Box 3, Folder 23	Jorgensen, Tod, 1979
Box 3, Folder 24	K, Miscellaneous, 1970s-1980s
Box 3, Folder 25	Kasnowski, Chester, 1984-1985
Box 3, Folder 26	Kawara, On, 1983-2006
Box 3, Folder 27	L, Miscellaneous, undated
Box 3, Folder 28	Laughter, Gene, 1984-1985
Box 4, Folder 1-5	Leigh, Michael/A.1. Waste Paper Co., Ltd., 1980-2012
Box 4, Folder 6	Lionelli, D., 1957-1965
Box 4, Folder 7-8	M, Miscellaneous, 1972-2012
Box 4, Folder 9	Massa, Jacques, 1985-1986
Box 4, Folder 10	Miller, David M., 1983-1988
Box 4, Folder 11	Minoy, 1984-1985
Box 4, Folder 12-13	Mohammed, 1970s-1990s
Box 4, Folder 14	Morillo, Robert, 1980s
Box 4, Folder 15	N, Miscellaneous, 1970s-2012, undated
Box 4, Folder 16-17	Naphro, Art/Paul Jackson, 1980s-2000s
Box 4, Folder 18	O, Miscellaneous, 1993-2012, undated
Box 4, Folder 19	Olson, Richard, 1979-1982

Box 4, Folder 20	P, Miscellaneous, 1980s-2012, undated
Box 4, Folder 21	Phillips, Stephen, 1969-1971
Box 4, Folder 22-23	Pittore, Carlo, 1980s-2000s
Box 4, Folder 24	Plunkett, E. M., 1970s-2012
Box 4, Folder 25	R, Miscellaneous, 1980s-1990s, undated
Box 4, Folder 26-27	Random, Steve, 1980s-2000s
Box 5, Folder 1	Rocola, Robert, 1984-1992
Box 5, Folder 2	Rosenberg, Marilyn R., 1980-2001
Box 5, Folder 3-4	S, Miscellaneous, undated
Box 5, Folder 5	Senser, Andreas, undated
Box 5, Folder 6	Skooter, undated
Box 5, Folder 7-9	Smegma/Scarlatina Lust/Alex Torrid Zone Igloo/Pardon My Myrth/Alexander Josef Hirka, 2000s, undated
Box 5, Folder 10	Spaulding, D. C., 2000s, undated
Box 5, Folder 11	Spiegelman, Lou, 1978-2001 Oversized material housed in OV 8
Box 5, Folder 12	T, Miscellaneous, 1978-2005
Box 5, Folder 13	Tavener, Pat/Mail Queen, 1973-1983, undated
Box 5, Folder 14	Third Story, 1976-1977
Box 5, Folder 15	Tisa, Benedict J., 1980s-1990s
Box 5, Folder 16	Tostada, John/Tostdada/Oh Boy Mailart!, 1990s-2012
Box 5, Folder 17	U, Miscellaneous, 1996-2008
Box 5, Folder 18	V, Miscellaneous, 1965-1990s
Box 5, Folder 19-20	Van der Burg, Sonja/Afzed, 1980s
Box 5, Folder 21	W, Miscellaneous, 1987-2012

Box 5, Folder 22	Warner, Robert, 1980s-2005
Box 6, Folder 1-3	Whitson/Peter Whitson Warren, 1975-2000s
Box 6, Folder 4	X-Z, Miscellaneous, 1983-2010
Box 6, Folder 5	Unidentified, undated
Box OV 8	Oversized Letter from Box 5, Folder 11 , 1984

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Writings, 1983-1991

0.2 Linear feet (Box 6)

Scope and Contents: 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, Trianfellos' 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.

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

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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Subject Files, 1970s-2012

0.8 Linear feet (Boxes 6-7)

0.889 Gigabytes (ER02-ER03)

Scope and Contents: 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. There are two digital audio recordings attributed to Ray Johnson's memorial tributes.

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

Box 6, Folder 9-11	Art Stamps, 1980-2006
Box 6, Folder 12-15	Johnson, Ray - Death and Memorial Tributes, 1995-2000 Includes born-digital records, see ER02-ER03
Folder ER02	Orfeo, a one-act opera composed by Elodie Lauten, libretto Michael Andre, Digital Audio Recording, 2004 0.296 Gigabytes (Eight computer files)
Folder ER03	The Best of New Hype Jazz, Anthology 1993-2004, Digital Audio Recording, 2004 0.593 Gigabytes (Nine computer files)
Box 6, Folder 16-20	Mail Art Shows and Events, 1970s-2000s, undated Includes 1 sound cassette
Box 7, Folder 1-2	Mail Art Shows and Events, 2000s
Box 7, Folder 3-4	Periodicals, undated

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Mail Art Projects, 1986-2012

0.8 Linear feet (Box 7, OV 8)

Arrangement: 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).

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

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

Return to Table of Contents