

vittore baroni

Vittore Baroni (Forte dei Marmi, 1956) is an Italian music critic and explorer of the counter-cultures. Since the mid-1970's he is also one of the most active and respected promoters of the planetary circuit of mail art. He has written or edited various books on aspects of the "networking cultures" that anticipated Internet, among which is the mail art guide *Arte Postale- Guida al network della corrispondenza creativa* (AAA Edizioni, Bertolo, 1997). In the past three decades he has organized many exhibitions, events, publications and collective projects in the fields of mail art, audio art, visual poetry, underground comics and street art, including 100 issues of *Arte Postale!* mail art magazine. He was the originator of seminal networking projects such as the TRAX modular system (1981-1987), the multiple names Lieutenant Murnau and Luther Blissett, the Stickerman project and F.U.N. (Funtastic United Nations, since 2001).

Contact: E.O.N. Archive, Via C. Battisti 339, 55049 Viareggio, Italy

vittorebaroni@alice.it



Vittore Baroni introduces three artists who participated in *Arte Postale!* magazine:

Guglielmo Achille Cavellini

In 1977 I noticed on the pages of *Flash Art* magazine an advertisement that portrayed a man with futuristic glasses and promised free books about his work to anyone interested. This man soon became my port of entry into the bizarre world of Mail Art. Born in 1914 in Brescia, Northern Italy, Guglielmo Achille Cavellini also known as GAC started out in the art world in the Forties as a collector, mainly of international abstract art. In the Sixties, he devoted more and more time to his own artistic production, that included many reinterpretations, in a Pop art vein, of old and contemporary masterpieces. In 1970 GAC started a semi-conceptual project of self-promotion, presenting himself ironically as the ultimate art genius and mocking the mechanism of the art system. This “self-historicization” was pursued through the postal distribution of huge quantities of his own publications (intended as “home exhibitions”): books of memories, catalogues of art works, artist’s stamps, stickers, postcards, etc. GAC’s ironical activities collided and mingled with those of the wacky international postal art circles, and he became in the Eighties a legendary character for the global mail art community. Issue 5 (1980) of my mail art magazine *Arte Postale!* was completely devoted to Cavellini, and he often participated in my publications and projects. Sharing a strong spiritual kinship with the avantgarde traditions of Dada, Futurism and Fluxus, GAC’s work is nevertheless ruthlessly bold and original, as a conceptual statement and through a varied range of multimedia assemblage paintings and sculptures. The artist, who corresponded with thousands of artists around the world, died in 1990, much too soon to see his work celebrated (as he had carefully planned) by the most important art institutions of the world in 2014, the year of his Centenary.

Piermario Ciani

Born in 1951 in Bertolò (Udine, Italy), Piermario Ciani was a photographer, graphic designer, publisher, performer and cultural agitator. Though he never considered himself a “mail artist”, he organized several mail art projects and made many thoughtful and lasting contributions to the field of postal art, such as the popular logo he designed for the *1992 Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress* (a stylized envelope with arrows pointing in four different directions), a powerful icon that represents the spirit of openness and interactivity of the mail art network. Ciani started to exhibit his optical paintings in 1976, but soon turned to photography (mainly of local rock bands), xerography (he favoured nude studies) and multimedia projects. His graphic work has been presented in leading international magazines such as *Design Journal*, *Linea Grafica*, etc. He has produced performances and installations of technological art, like *Mixer Tribale* (1987) for the Graz festival in Austria. He created the virtual rock band Mind Invaders and was one of the founders of the Luther Blissett “multiple name” project. With me (Vittore Baroni) and Massimo Giacomoni, Ciani created the networking project/label TRAX (1981-1987), and in a quarter of a century of collaboration we also founded together the publishing firm AAA Editions (1996-2006) and launched in 2001 the F.U.N. - Funtastic United Nations project, devoted to the art and cultures of imaginary countries. Ciani’s life came to an untimely end in 2006. I dedicated to his works in 2007 issue 91 of my magazine *Arte Postale!*, of which he was a frequent participant.

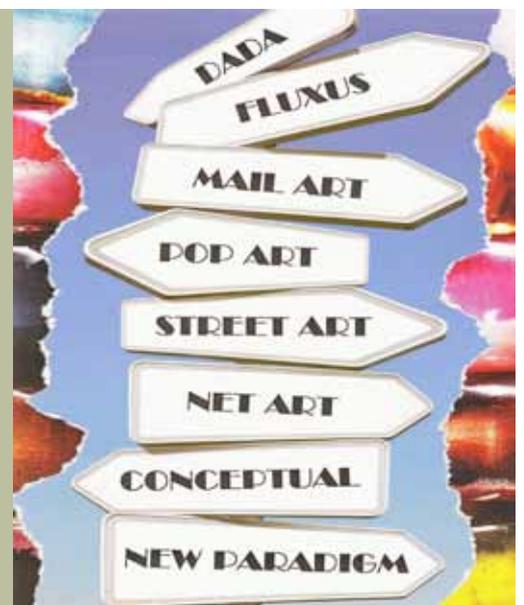
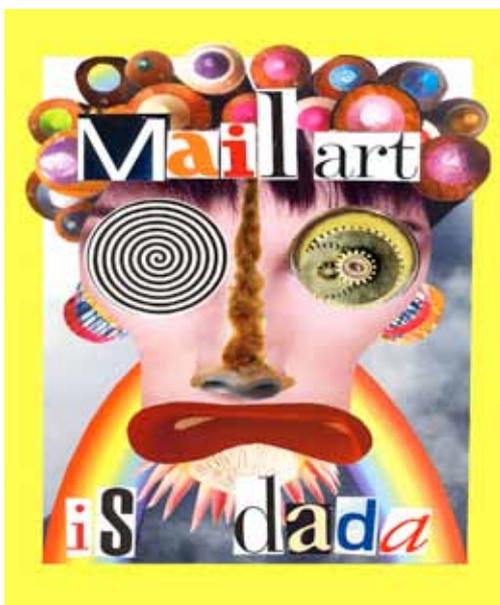
Günther Ruch

Born in 1942, Günther Ruch has been living in Geneva, Switzerland, since 1970. He is an artist, graphic designer, performer and art publisher. Since 1975 he has been extremely active in the international Mail Art circles: in fact he was one of my early contacts, when I started my own correspondence activities in the late Seventies. Since 1973, he has been running the edition “out press”, and between 1983 and 1988 he was the editor of *Clinch*, one of the best known “assembling magazines” of the mail art network, similarly to my own *Arte Postale!* Ten issues on various themes have appeared, displaying in each copy of the magazine a huge number of manual interventions (glued in postage stamps, rubber stamps, stickers, folded pages, holes,

etc.), all done in a neat and effective graphic style. I devoted to Ruch and his *Clinch* project a small chapter in my book *Arte Postale* ("a guide to the network of creative correspondence", AAA Editions 1997). Very accurate in his correspondence files, Ruch was able to calculate that in the years 1973-88 he had mailed out over seven thousand letters to eight hundred contacts in sixty different countries, participating to over two hundred mail art exhibitions and events and four hundred publications. The author has also worked in the fields of concrete and visual poetry, film, performance, sound poetry, copy and stamp art. He has been a co-initiator of the first decentralized *Mail Art Congress* in 1986 and published the documentation of this landmark networking project. I met Günther in two different occasions, at distance of years, and in both circumstances we made together a "Blinddrawing" performance (drawing on the same large sheet of paper with blindfolded eyes).



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