

OPUNTIA

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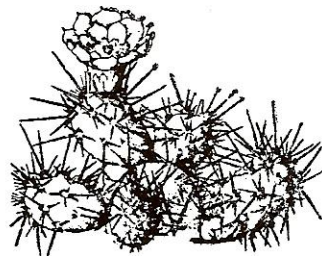


IT JUST WENT OFF
IN MY HAND,
HONEST...

News item: Cambridgeshire man claims his cactus spontaneously exploded and set fire to his greenhouse.

ISSN 1183-2703

[Editor's
remarks
in square
brackets]



OPUNTIA is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount. US\$ banknotes are acceptable in Canada at par value; what we gain on the exchange rate we lose on the higher postage rate to USA. Do not send mint USA stamps as they are not valid for postage outside USA and I don't collect them.

FROM: Jae Leslie Adams
621 Spruce Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53715

2002-05-22

Whole-numbered OPUNTIA's are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, and x.5 issues are perzines.

COVER ART CREDIT: Alert reader Steve Jeffery (44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA, England) not only sent me a newspaper clipping about the exploding cacti they keep over there but also supplied his own illustration.

I discovered mail art rather earlier than I did SF fandom, through the calligraphic community. Letter artists and calligraphers (the first term refers to a broader range of styles) are avid envelope artists. This is a natural development, as addressing envelopes for weddings is probably the most common use of calligraphy in the USA, the bread and butter employment of calligraphic artists attempting to earn a living at their craft.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Joel Cohen, Sugar Irmer, Christoh Meyer, John Held Jr, Chester Cuthbert, Clint Marsh, Diane Bertrand, Lois Klassen, Ken Miller, Babynous Cult, Roman Castenholz, Mark Luchkow, Bill Bowers, Violet Jones, Martha Shivvers, Rodney Leighton, Pascal Lenoir, Henry Welch, Sheryl Birkhead, Ned Brooks, Carolyn Clowes

Calligraphers in the USA tend to collect related art techniques and materials, beyond the more traditional skills of painting and gilding employed commonly in British illumination. Through informal classes I have been introduced not only to the many varieties of hand lettering but to papermaking, marbling, binding,

boxmaking, collage, assemblage, stamp art and stamp carving, screen printing, and so on, which are all quite commonly employed by calligraphic mail artists here.

The democratic implications of copier art (also commonly applied with these other one-of-a-kind techniques) and mail art networks are not so clearly understood in these circles. Yet the calligraphy societies of the USA, and there is at least one in every state, maintain newsletter exchanges. Of course they don't call them fanzines, but they function in exactly the same way as clubzines.

FROM: Joseph Major
1409 Christy Avenue
Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040

2002-05-13

[Re: alternate atomic bomb stories] One other story was written by Fred Pohl around a character created by Cyril Kornbluth. The guy travelled to Africa and met a man who was mining uranium. A special kind of uranium. How his lode got pure U-235 is an exercise left to the reader. The reporter got nervous and left, and shortly after he did, there was this big flash in the direction from where he had just left.

[There were active natural reactors in various parts of Africa several billion years ago, which had enough concentrated uranium

to actually operate as fission reactors. They were discovered because modern miners analyzing the ore found abnormal radionuclide ratios.]

There was a big discussion of alternative A-bombs on a newsgroup, and someone pointed out that the Germans didn't have a plane with enough capacity to carry an A-bomb. Did Chris Scott (HITLER'S BOMB) go into that?

[I quickly skimmed the ending and the German plane carrying the atomic bomb against London was actually a British plane, a Short Stirling. The idea was to fake their way into England as an RAF plane returning from a raid.]

FROM: Harry Warner Jr
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

2002-05-15

I've never had much ability to write comments on fanzine art because I'm word-oriented whenever I look at periodicals. This isn't a unique malady, because every so often some fanzine editor publishes a lament over the failure of illustrations to create much reaction in locs. I look at fanzine art and enjoy some of them but I can't think of anything to write about them more specific than my pleasure at their existence.

Mail art doesn't appeal to me, partly because of the commenting handicap, partly because of fear that I'll get into trouble from that source. All of these mail art participants, most of them in distant corners of the world, whom I know nothing about, any of which might feel the urge to produce child pornography or terrorist propaganda. If I received them, my name on mailing lists could cause me much embarrassment when authorities staged a raid or crackdown. I had my mail opened for a while because a fanzine publisher was caught dealing in drugs and his mailing list was mistaken for a list of his customers.

[I suspect I might have had my name added to a list when Canada Customs opens some of the zines I get (and a big hello to any CSIS agent reading this; keep up the good work!).]

FROM: Joseph Nicholas 2002-05-15
15 Jansons Road, Tottenham
London N15 4JU, England

There's no reason at all to expect anyone active in one fandom to move over into another, no matter how closely associated they may appear to be. For example, not many fans of Formula 1 Grand Prix racing are also followers of Rally Driving, even though both involve motor cars being driven at high speeds along predetermined routes.

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The usual response of this kind is moans about the alleged balkanisation of fandom. This strikes me as little more than the hankering of those who were here first for things to be back the way they were, with them as default leaders and everyone else subscribing to the One True Way. There is no reason why everyone should defer to those who were here first, and accept their model of fandom as the only correct one. Indeed, the very fact that there are so many fandoms is surely indicative of their vitality and capacity for re-invention.

The term 'fanzine' was in use elsewhere for many years before Gunderloy came along. It was being used by the followers of punk bands back in the 1970s, and all he would have been doing in his reviews was recognizing a de facto usage.

FROM: Lloyd Penney 2002-05-16
1706 - 24 Eva Road
Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2

I find that fandom, while reading a very liberal literature, full of speculation limited only by our imaginations, is very conservative and stodgy when it comes to politics and tradition. They're not nearly as adaptable as you might think. I tried to introduce fandom to zines like Brant Kresovich's FOR THE CLERISY or the late Cliff Kennedy's DRIFT, with mixed success.

THE COLOUR OF ALGAE

by Dale Speirs

Algae In Fiction

There are any number of novels and short stories about carnivorous plants, but botanical fiction generally shies off algae. Of course, this is not a particularly exciting subject. Dinosaurs are popular with children and adults alike because they're bizarrely shaped, big, noisy, and chew on the characters as well as the scenery. People do not buy horror paperbacks to be frightened by a story about algae devouring innocent lumberjacks in the backwoods of Nova Scotia.

"By gar, Rodney! Dat algae, she jus' done eat my chainsaw!" "Stay calm, everybody", Rodney shouted to the foresters, his manly beard jutting defiantly at the repulsive microbes, "I called the Prime Minister and he's sending a fleet of Sea King helicopters from the Royal Canadian Navy to attack those dastardly unicells". "We're doomed", moaned Pierre."

The most obvious suspect for algal fiction is the red tide algae, the various species that secrete some of the most deadly toxins known. One novel using this subject is THE LORD'S PINK OCEAN by David Walker (DAW paperback, 1973). This is a post-apocalypse story set after a algal tide has turned the oceans

and rivers of the world pink with toxins. Technology is rapidly receding into garbled mythology by the third generation of survivors, who have regressed to primitive agrarians.

The main characters in this novel have survived because their small valley is spring-fed from above, and protected from below by a waterfall that prevents the algae from spreading upstream into the valley. Civilization intrudes again, for the algae cannot survive in Arctic waters, which remain pure and still support fish as food, nor in the lakes of the Canadian Shield, also too cold. Missionaries are now spreading out looking for isolated enclaves of survivors elsewhere. The Inuit shall inherit the Earth, if the Russians don't grab it first.

In the closing pages, we learn that the algae were purpose-bred in a laboratory to clear polluted waters. They were so ruthlessly efficient that they had to be contained in high-security pools, but eventually escaped and made the world pink and toxic. There is a note of hope though, as occasional patches of blue are seen in the ocean, often swamped out by the pink, but returning. The global ecosystem is readjusting, and the pink may go away.

Sometimes algae is the main subject, and sometimes it is just a Hitchcockian MacGuffin that could have been something else. An example of incidental use of algae is the murder mystery

THE FAST DEATH FACTOR, by Virginia Crosby (Council Oak Books, 1990). A college president has been found dead. Unpopular with the entire faculty, he is one of those people for whom the mystery is not why he was murdered but why it didn't happen much sooner. The police quickly narrow down the list of suspects to everyone who knew him.

Cause of death is initially supposed to be cardiac arrest. Further investigation reveals poisoning by ingestion of a superb Sauternes wine flavoured with the exotoxin of *Anabaena flos-aquae*. Said species is a blue-green alga that causes toxic blooms in water. And a bottle of said toxin is missing from the Dept. of Chemistry storeroom, whose security procedures were minimal at best. If you seek to hurry someone on to the next plane of existence, then fake a heart attack in the victim with extracts of red tide.

Genocidal Algae.

When microscopic life first evolved on Earth several billion years ago, it lived in a methane atmosphere. Green algae evolved later and were successful because they released a deadly toxin from photosynthesis called oxygen. They were so successful that they eradicated their competitors and went on to alter the Earth's atmosphere to an oxygen/nitrogen mix. Larry Niven took up this idea in his 1980 short story "The Green Marauder" [18]. Set in a futuristic tavern regularly visited by aliens, it is a story narrated to

the barkeep by an alien who has spent much of her life travelling at relativistic speeds. She tells the barkeep that when she last visited Earth, it still had a methane atmosphere. It also had an advanced civilization, sentient beings who built their cities to be earthquake-proof but paid no mind to those small patches of green scum growing in the ocean. By the time they realized the danger of oxygen-emitting algae it was too late to control them. Their civilization and all the methane ecosystems were lost, and after 1.5 billion years, no trace remained of them in the rocks. Only the one alien remembered them.

The Red Tide.

Red tides produce neurotoxins that accumulate in filter feeders such as shellfish. The red algae *Dinophysis* causes poisoning at as little as a few hundred cells per litre of water. About 300 species of algae can cause red tides, although only 40 or so are toxic. The blooms of red algae are highly variable in timing and scale [1]. A recent study published in 2001 suggests one reason why red tides are seemingly random. Using space satellites and chemical analysis of seawater, it was shown that red tides off the Florida coast vary with dust storms in the Sahara desert [15]. In years with severe red tides, there are also numerous dust clouds blowing out of the Sahara into the central Atlantic. The windblown sand acts as a fertilizer, since it adds iron and organic

elements to the seawater, which is normally quite deficient. This triggers growth of toxic dinoflagellate algae, and hence red tides.

Red tides increase as pollution increases. The earliest written reference to a red tide is from the Bible, in Exodus 7:20-21, which was written about 1000 B.C.: “... *all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that were in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river.*” These days, about 2,000 humans are poisoned annually by red tides, with a 15% mortality rate [8].

Evidence of toxic algal blooms is found in the fossil record. It is believed that a number of bone accumulations from Pleistocene ice age deposits in Germany are the result of large mammals coming amiss of the algae [17]. In other words, “Don’t drink the water” was valid advice a million years ago, contrary to those naive ecofreaks who think nature was pure before the coming of humans. The fossil record shows that up until 60 years ago, red tides were of a different character than today’s, and less frequent. Ocean sediment core samples show prehistoric red tides back to 10,500 years ago were single species blooms and controlled mainly by climate. As pollution by humans reached the oceans, blooms increased considerably and were multi-species [19].

Historically, little work was done on red tide control, but as coastal fish farms increase, so do bloom control methods.

Chemical control is not at all successful, but China and Korea have both experimented with using fine clay particles, which bind to the algae and sink it to the bottom [1]. Research is currently underway in the use of bacteria to control red tides [16]. A basic law of ecology is that when a population of any species reaches a certain density then predators or pathogens will take notice and begin to control them. A given red tide does not last forever and will eventually be controlled by using up its nutrients or by natural controls. Some species of bacteria commonly found in ordinary sea water have algicidal effects, and biologists are working on isolating and mass-producing them for red tide control.

Red Snow.

It was remarked in 1819 by a team of Arctic explorers that: “*Part of the red snow we have seen bottled in a state of solution, and even after all the amazing accounts given in the newspapers on the subject, it is likely to remain a matter still sub judice* ...” [2]. That it was sub judice was shown by a simultaneous argument going on in Italy that year about falls of red snow. The disputants could not agree if it was caused by red algae or dust [3].

In the popular literature, red snow was always a reliable space-filler. Say, for example, in an 1842 issue of SATURDAY MAGAZINE [4], back before we had television to convince us that

a group of bad actors pretending to be stranded on an island was reality. The Victorians who read that issue in 1842 could marvel at such wonders like red snow as a more educational matter.

By the late 1800s, microscopic studies had demonstrated that algae caused the red snow. One account of red snow in the Wasatch Mountains, published in 1882, was mentioned it was caused by the algae *Protococcus nivalis* [5]. Nonetheless, as late as 1931, an expedition had to be mounted to the Forbidden Plateau area of Vancouver Island to disprove the idea that the red snows seen from the distant valley below were caused by alpine flowers thrusting through the spring snow. The expedition discovered that the snow was red down 2 metres, although handfuls picked up from the surface were white while untouched snow was red [6].

There did, however, appear to be some connection between dust and algae. A paper read to an 1852 meeting of the American Philosophical Society noted that red snows seen in the Arctic seemed to be associated with windblown dust. It was surmised that the dust provided nutrients for the algae, and the more dust, then the brighter the red [9]. This was not far wrong, as modern studies show that snow algae get their nutrients not only from dust settling out of the atmosphere onto the snow but also out of the snowflakes themselves [13]. Each snowflake has to crystallize around a nucleus, usually a dust particle, and usually

incorporating some nutrient elements.

It is now known that about 350 species of red snow algae exist. They use the red pigments to protect against bright sunlight, while non-red species grow deeper in the snow. At mating time (yes, algae mate like animal microbes) the algal cysts swim up through the melting snow, then drift back down to the ground after mating as the snow melts away [10]. Snow algae are found from pole to pole; in the Antarctica they form an important part of the ecosystem in pack ice [14].

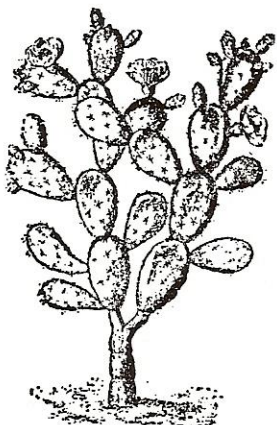
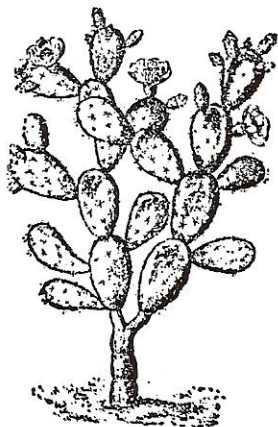
Take A Deep Breath ...

How does the algae get into mountaintop red snow? How does it reach isolated beaches to bloom as a red tide? Spores are always floating about in the air. An average spot of atmosphere will have at least 3,000 algae per cubic metre, and 62 genera of algae have been identified from air samples [7]. It may well be that algae are allergens, causing hay fever as much as the local ragweed.

There are three types of photosynthetic organisms, each evolutionarily distinct from each other, having branched from a common origin 3 to 5 billion years ago. The largest group are green plants, both land and algae. The red algae are a distinct lineage in their own right, and the third group is an obscure lineage called the glaucophytes [11].

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MAIL ART LISTINGS.

Make Your Own Euro: (Angela and Peter Netmail, Box 2644, 32383 Minden, Deutschland) About our new money, the European euro. Size is postcard, A6 only, strictly. Technique free, in colour. Exhibition during our Euro Art Festival, September 11 to 16 at Mail Art Mekka Minden's Culture Centre BUZ. Free colour catalogue to every participant in 2003. Deadline is August 31, 2002.

Pied Pipers Of Today: (Christa Behmenburg, -10-
Max Planck Str. 64, D 85375 Neufahrn, Deutschland)
For a documentation and exhibition of cartoons, caricatures, photographs, paintings, collages, etc. of the Pied Piper I need contributions from artists all over the world. The exhibition will take place in the old town of Hamelin and afterwards in Berlin, in 2003. All techniques. Size: postcard. No return, no jury. Each contributor will get documentation. Deadline: end of 2002.

Alchemy Tarot: (Alain Valet, 50 rue Scheuer, 6700 Arlon, Belgium) Size and technic free. No deadline. All participation will be illustrated in next issue of SOL E LUNA, sent free to all participants.

Arthole: (Boog, Box 1313, Lawrence, Kansas 66044) @RtH*Le is a new correspondence assembling magazine. To participate, send 5 to 20 copies of your two-dimensional (more or less) graphic work, 5.5" x 8.5" (A5) in size. The size of your @RtH*Le will depend on the number of works you send, based on an arcane formula known only to the publisher. Please allow 2 cm (3/4") on short side; two-sided is good. Each copy of @RtH*Le will be unique. It will include mail art news and information, artistamps, original works from other artists around the world, personal correspondence (usually), and whatever else the publisher feels like including.

World Storage (Daer Pozo Ramirez, Jose Marti 78, Buenaventura, Holguin, 82 600 Cuba) I'd like to ask you for examples of your play for World Storage and I also invite you to display your work in my country. Here you have a friend.

Comforters: (Lois Klassen, Box 74540, Vancouver, British Columbia V6K 4P4) Send me quilt squares (6" x 6") to be used on the top of comforters that I am making for displaced people (refugees). The comforters, also known as blankets or quilts, will be distributed by the Mennonite Central Committee, the Red Cross, and the Red Crescent societies. The squares can incorporate artwork but they must be washable and durable; poly-cotton is the best material. Send as many as you want because each comforter needs 130! I will return photos and periodical documentation about the project.

Erik Satie: (Jean Hugues, 46 Rue de Gesvres, 60000 Beauvais, France) Do you like his music? That French composer was born in Honfleur in 1866. He worked with the greatest; Picasso, Picabia, Braque, Cocteau, Rene Clair. He influenced artists as prestigious as Debussy, Ravel, or Stravinsky. In his most famous creations, you can find 'Les Gymnopedies', 'Les Gnossiennes'. Please send me your mail art in A4 sheet size (21 cm x 30 cm), Any technique allowed.

Think Here: (Jose Roberto Sechi, Av. M29, N° 2183, Jd. Sao

Joao, Rio Claro SP - 13505 - 410, Brazil) Mail art magazine. Drawing, design, painting, engraving, gluing, rubber stamp, writing, poetry, visual poetry, photograph, etc.. In black and white, please, maximum 13 cm x 8 cm (horizontal format). Theme free, no return, no jury, no deadline, documentation to every 18 participants.

Stampzine: (Picasso Gaglione, 5033 North Mozart Street, Chicago, Illinois 60625) STAMPZINE is edited and published by Picasso Gaglione and friends. It is an assembling collection of rubber stamp art, featuring the handstamped works of international artists. To contribute, send 75 handstamped copies of 8.5 x 11 rubber stamp artwork. All contributors will receive a free copy.

The Tree Of Poetry: (dott.ssa Tiziana Baracchi, Via Cavallotti, 83-B, 30171 Venezia-Mestre, Italy) The Tree of Poetry is a very uncommon species of plant; it is an American maple which is in Venezia-Mestre in 83/B Cavallotti Street, Itinerari '80 Centre. Giancarlo Da Lio dedicated this tree to poetry in a lot of artistic performances. Below its fronds, sheets with verses, in plastic envelopes to preserve from rain, hang down. The poets read their lines in the shade of the tree. Painters and sculptors put their works on walls and grass. Itinerari '80 is an artistic movement; from different trends many excellent artists gather strength around Giancarlo Da Lio. Moreover, as well as

they work, they must manage their work making use of everything and everywhere. Well, it is necessary to show works not only in the official galleries, but above all in the alternative art spaces: where people go and come, on the road, in the shops, in the gardens too; so the Tree of Poetry was born and is growing. Do you want to send your mail art or mail poesy?

Photo Exchange: (Scott Garinger, Box 321, El Segundo, California 90245-0321) Will trade photographs, any subject.

Collage d'aujourd'hui: (Dianne Bertrand, Art terre, 9109 Deschambault, Saint Leonard, Quebec, H1R 2C6) Mail art collage.

Brain Cell Fractal: (Ryosuke Cohen, 3-76-I-A-613, Yagumokitacho, Moriguchi-City, Osaka 570, Japan) Send 150 stickers or some other type of small mail art image. These are collated into a collage on an 11" x 17" poster, and a copy sent back to each contributor, along with a list of names and addresses of those participating.

Artist Trading Cards: (Chuck Stake, 736 - 5 Street NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1P9, Canada) ATCs are works of art created on 64 mm x 89 mm card stock. They are the same size as hockey trading cards, but the similarity stops here. Cards may depict anything, be 2-D or 3-D, they may be original, a series, an

edition, or a multiple.

Cards are signed on the back by the artist and, if necessary, an edition number is included. ATCs are paintings, drawings, collages, photographs, rubberstamp works, mixed-media, etchings, found images, recycled works of art, assemblages, etcetera. The only stipulation is that the card fits in the standard plastic sheets that hockey cards are normally stored within.

ZINE LISTINGS

by Dale Speirs

[The Usual means \$3 cash (\$5 overseas), trade for your zine, or letter of comment on a previous issue. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada or overseas (the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount) or mint USA stamps (which are not valid for postage outside USA). US\$ banknotes are acceptable around the world.]

28 Pages Lovingly Bound With Twine #4 (The Usual from Christoph Meyer, Box 106, Danville, Ohio 43014) Typed and handprinted, bound with twine instead of stapled, this is a demonstration that one does not need desktop software to put out a zine. Items in this issue include letters to and from corporations about defective products, reference librarians, the progression of a writing career, and a mysterious found photograph.

The Ten Page News #29 (The Usual from Owen Thomas, Box 9651, Columbus, Ohio 43209) Zine reviews, some commentary, and a teachers' convention report.

Vanamonde #453 to #457 (The Usual from John Hertz, 236 South Coronado Street #409, Los Angeles, California 90057) Weekly single-sheet apazine with commentary on a wide variety of topics.

Twisted History (US\$4 from Dale Jensen, 2317B Carleton Street, Berkeley, California 94704-3316) Chapbook of free-verse poetry.

Indy Unleashed #12 (The Usual from Owen Thomas, Box 9651, Columbus, Ohio 43209) Reviewzine of various zines and comics.

Warp #53 (The Usual from Montreal SF and Fantasy Association, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montreal, Quebec H2X 4A7) Media SF clubzine, nicely produced, with photographs throughout. Lots of news, convention reports, letters of comment, and reviews (including a plastic model kit of the International Tin Can, er, International Space Station). A feature in this issue is "Recipes from the Middle Ages", although not 100% medieval. I noticed the Quail in Blankets recipe had the instruction "*Evening before, make the dough and set aside in refrigerator*". However,

altogether an interesting read. How come WARP doesn't win the Aurora instead of some obscure Trekzine whose members bloc vote?

The Thought #130 (The Usual from Ronald Tobin, Box 10760, Glendale, Arizona 85318-0760) Essays and letters on various aspects of modern politics. I particularly enjoyed John Wright's list of why we need governments to protect us from laundromat operators.

Wabe #5 (The Usual from Jae Leslie Adams, 621 Spruce Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53715) The theme of this issue is collecting, with essays about various things collected (such as paperclips of celebrities), and hazards along the way (such as angry moms ripping up comics). Also some articles on fan funds, and letters of comment.

The New Port News #203 (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720) Apazine with general commentary on a wide variety of topics.

Statement #293 (The Usual from Ottawa Science Fiction Society, 456 Gladstone Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 5N8) Clubzine with news and notes, reviews, and letters of comment.

Alexiad #2 (The Usual from Lisa and Joseph Major, 1409 Christy Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040) Reviewzine of books. Not capsule reviews of the latest bestsellers, but rather history, military, and the better class of fiction.

Covert Communications From Zeta Corvi #9 (The Usual from Andrew Murdoch, 508 - 6800 Westminster Highway, Richmond, British Columbia V7C 1C5) A checklist of SF awards, zine and book reviews, and letters of comment.

Tobes Stole My Brain! (Cash donation to TAFF via Claire Brialey, 26 Northampton Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7HA, England) One-shot zine on behalf of Tobes Valois for his campaign to win the 2002 Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund. This fund pays for an SF fan to visit the other side of the Atlantic, alternating each year between Europe and North America. This year it is the westbound race, and Valois hopes to grace North America with his presence. This zine is an anthology of fannish writings and humorous testimonials in support of him.

Random Electrons #1 (The Usual from Jim Caughran, 24 Prestwick Crescent, Willowdale, Ontario M2H 1M9) An extended discussion between a number of people about the benefits and dangers of e-zines. It is cheaper and easier to put up an e-zine, but there is a considerable lack of privacy due to search engines. A Papernet zine is not easily located by an outsider, but

anyone can run their name or your name through Google, as a result of which you may face a libel suit or be called into the boss' office.

Ethel The Aardvark #102 (The Usual from Melbourne Science Fiction Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) Clubzine; this issue starts off with historical accounts about the club, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Also convention reports and letters of comment.

Snake Den #16 (The Usual from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741) Apazine for a group specializing in Lovecraft and his circle. This issue is a set of extended book reviews of recent publications relating to weird fiction of the better class.

The Knarly Knews #93 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-8763) Genzine with mostly letters of comment, some reviews, and a few pieces of commentary.

Shouting At The Postman #47 (The Usual from Ken and Mary Miller, Box 101, Newtown, Pennsylvania 18940-0101) This issue is a diaryzine about Mary's complicated pregnancy and the premature birth of a daughter, who had to be kept in a hospital incubator. Little Francesca survived the crisis and is now at home.

Mail Art's Eternal Network: A Fountain Of Youth by Vittore Baroni (Ragged Edge Press, 2001) is a chapbook that discusses the general history and development of mail art. The network of mail artists is an outgrowth of the rejection of the art galleries and auction houses, with their incestuous system of pretentious drivelism. Mail art is also part of the Papernet, a two-way method of communication rather than the one-way routes of mass media. Like just about any avocational subculture (to borrow a term from Prof. Robert Runté) there is dispute over when it began, but as with most subcultures, one can define its origin from the date of self-awareness and its modern form. In the case of mail art, this places its birth in the 1960s.

Mail art has developed its ethical guidelines, such as “doc to all” (that is, documentation to all participants, which can range from just a list of participants to a show catalogue), no charge to participants, no jury, and no returns. It has managed to remain mostly underground because the art galleries can't make money from it and the critics generally can't find it. That is not the same as being invisible, for there are numerous books and periodicals about the subject.

From here on, I interject my own opinion about the future of mail art. Although there has been the usual fuss about “The Internet will destroy us”, which also has other subcultures in a flutter of insecurity, the evidence of the last few years is now demonstrating

that the Papernet will not become extinct anytime soon. In my opinion, the greater threat is the passivity generated by mass media. Why go out to a club meeting, whether of stamp collectors or aquarists, when one can sit at home and play video games or watch television? Mail art and zines demand active participants who create things of their own. It is the supply of active participants which will ultimately determine the future of the Papernet.

As Baroni points out, networks are two-way. Mass media is not a network. The phrase “television network” is an oxymoron. Mail art is a network because everyone is both a sender and a receiver. One-to-many, such as broadcast media, cannot be a network, and can only exist with a large passive audience. Many-to-many, such as the Papernet and the Internet, is a network, and can exist with a small group of active participants.

The Papernet is very economical and does not incur great expense. The Internet requires a large initial capital expense and is trending towards increased operating expenses as ISPs can no longer afford to subsidize free access for all. A paper zine continues to exist once printed; an e-zine vanishes the instant the Web site rental is unpaid or new technology prevents old storage methods from being read. Gallery art depends on large discretionary incomes, whereas mail art squeaks by on postage stamps and scrap paper.

Date/Time Properties



Date & Time | Time Zone

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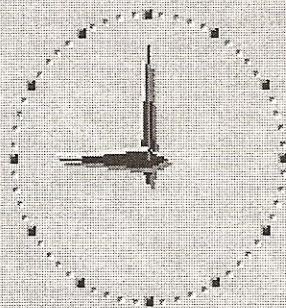
June

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World Wide Party #9

Founded by Benoit Girard and Franz Miklis, the World Wide Party is held on June 21st every year. At 21h00 local time, everyone is invited to raise a glass and toast fellow members of the Papernet around the world. The idea is to get a wave of fellowship circling the planet. Now more than ever for 2002. Let Dale know how you celebrated, whether by publishing a zine, doing mail art, or whatever. Doc to all (if mail art, it must be photocopyable and no larger than 8.5 x 5.5).