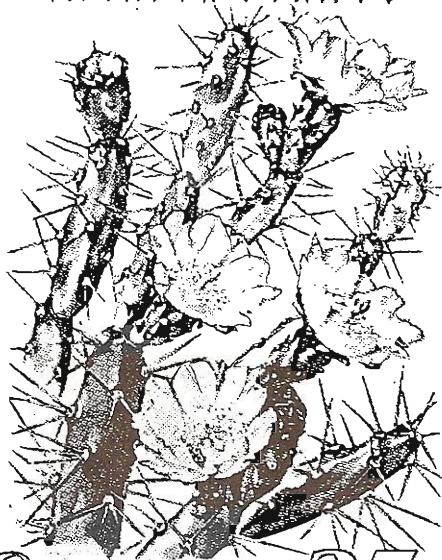


OPUNTIA

46

INVADER PLANTS



Ciskei 35c

Auricl Batten

Opuntia aurantiaca

D1.4 1993

ISSN 1183-2703

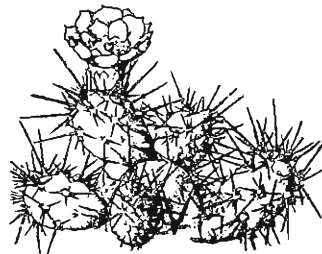
OPUNTIA is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the 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.

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

ART CREDIT: Postage stamp of *Opuntia aurantiaca* issued Ciskei in November 1993. Designer of the stamp was Mrs. Auriol Batten, South Africa.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Diane Bertrand, Chester Cuthbert, Teddy Harvia (c.o.a. to 12341 Band Box Place, Dallas, Texas 75244-7001), Picasso Gaglione (c.o.a. 5033 North Mozart Street, Chicago, Illinois 60625)

**LETTERS
TO THE
EDITOR**
[Editor's
remarks
in square
brackets]



FROM: E.B. Frohvet
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506
Ellicott City, Maryland 21042

2000-05-10

My experience with convention running was similar to Lloyd Penney's. Every year after the con I wrote a detailed, several-page report on my department; what was done right, what could have been improved. To the best of my knowledge these reports wound up unread, and I saw people make the same errors I had warned against. This is one of the reasons I dropped out of conrunning.

In my experience, con running seems to be a skill learned almost entirely through apprenticeship and on-the-job training. Thus the perennial problem we see at Worldcon year after year, reinventing the the wheel because something obvious was either not passed on or was ignored.

FROM: Henry Welch
1525 - 16 Avenue
Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017

2000-06-05

I am continually astounded by the amount of convention material Garth Spencer is able to dredge up. Even when I was chair of First Contact, it was all but impossible to get more than a one-paragraph report from department heads. At least I was able to handle the critical departments of hotel liaison and treasury.

FROM: Guy Miller
2951 Archer Lane
Springfield, Ohio 45503-1209

2000-05-14

I didn't realize that there has been so much info published about convention organizing. Seems that the American Amateur Press Association and National A.P.A. hosts just arrange place and events, no small tasks, and hope people attend. Usually there's a registration fee and an auction. The auction profits go to defray convention expenses, and the rest into the treasury. Any extra costs the Association assumes unless the host insists on covering it. Anybody falls and breaks his whatever is his lookout. It's worked so far.

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

2000-05-10

One of the more noted sociological works of the past few years is Robert D. Putnam's BOWLING ALONE: THE COLLAPSE AND REVIVAL OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY. The title example is "more bowlers, fewer bowling leagues"; more participants, fewer organizations. Putnam goes on to describe a general dearth of volunteer organizations. How is this relevant to fandom? In fanspeak, the number of clubs capable of putting on a local convention, never mind a Worldcon, is declining while the number of attendees is increasing.

There was a stir a few years ago with a proposal that the Worldcon get a professional manager. While no one specifically cited the WSFS Inc., the general attitude was relevant; 'professional' management would turn the Worldcon into WorldCreationCon (the pathetic Trek event Carolyn Clowes mentions in her letter was a Creation Con) or World*Dragon*Con. Neither of these would be any good.

Yet as long as fans want to have a 24-hour anime program, a.s.b. party suites, bardic circle filk amphitheatres, full-scale LARP arenas, Sensurround amplification for the masquerade, and somewhere in there a

wide section of hallway for the fanzine lounge, while scorning the idea of organization (cf. Tom Feller's tale of the hostility towards con helpers, Lloyd Penney's recounting of how all his work on the dealers' room went for naught, and Milt Stevens' discussion of sneaking in), this future is going to be harder to avoid.

FROM: Harry Warner 2000-05-11
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

The National Fantasy Fan Federation is a very healthy and active group today with several hundred members, making it possibly the largest continuing fan organization in the USA. It publishes regularly two good-sized, well-edited, and informative fanzines, THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN, which contains reports from the various aspects of the organization, con reports, and book reviews, and TIGHTBEAM, which emphasizes letter from members.

I feel a bit overwhelmed by the revelations in Garth Spencer's article, because I had no previous knowledge that such a wealth of highly specialized fan publications existed on this topic of running cons. I imagine it would be very difficult to assemble a large collection of these publications, because most of them seem to have circulated among those whose main fanac was conventions rather than fanzines.

FROM: Andrew York 2000-05-29
Box 201117
Austin, Texas 78603

I've not really been involved with running any SF conventions. However, I found Garth Spencer's information quite interesting. Much of it parallels my experience in running Mensa gatherings, though some of the particulars have quite a different twist.

I have to weigh in on the side of having some practical experience in running a convention available or on the con committee. Establishing a successful convention without some historical reference and/or anecdotal experience is all but impossible.

As for the professional conventions that bring in a big name media star, yes they charge a good fee. Their non-guest programming usually is poor, at least in my experience, but I'm not there for that. I'm there for the guest and if I feel the fee is reasonable, then I'll pay it. Until the guest arrives, a good book or chatting with friends is a good diversion.

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

2000-05-16

Convention runners have to hope for the best and be ready to handle the worst. In the meantime, you must be pleasant and welcoming, the way you would want others to greet you when you arrive. At the two Ad Astras I chaired, I spent much of the Friday afternoon and evening greeting people and welcoming them to the convention, while keeping an eye out for problems and messes, and being available to handle situations or answer questions.

After a couple of years, I got to rest on my laurels; my official title was Chairman Emeritus. The first year I was the CE, I found myself bored. I'd tidy up the flyer table. I'd talk to friends in the dealers' room, and unconsciously tidy their merchandise table. After the position of CE was deemed unnecessary, I took other positions on the committee that kept my hands and mind occupied.

Garth Spencer mentions [my wife] Yvonne's THE PARTY TIMES. Its intent was more specific than Garth details. It was meant to coordinate three promotional parties to be held in support of the Winnipeg in '94 Worldcon bid. It was sent to party organizers and all other interested people who wanted to help. It did what it had to do, got everyone organized and coordinated, and made

those parties quite successful. It also managed to toss about some ideas that made running the parties a little smoother.

Carolyn Clowes probably refers to the so-called Star Trek conventions staged by Creation Entertainment. These events are professionally staged and advertised, and are often scheduled to land squarely on a fan-run event to try to ruin it. Some years ago we attended one of these Creation Cons at a hotel in downtown Buffalo, New York. There was a single registration table with someone to take your money and stamp the back of your hand. A room was lined with tables of cheap Trek merchandise, and an access door at the end of the room was used to shuttle people in for silly contests, slide shows, and promotional films. At the end of the day, the actor would come in, say a few words, and leave within 15 minutes.

That would often be it, and the whole thing would be done by 6:30 pm. Given that we were used to much more at a convention, we felt ripped off, left the show early, and treated ourselves to a good dinner. Creation used to do business in Canada, but after one fan notified the government that this organization was probably not paying any taxes, Creation quickly left. It has never come back, to no one's regret, not even the hardcore Trekfen, who finally realized they were being ripped off.

FROM: Garth Spencer

2000-05-06

-6-

Box 15335

Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 5B1

I'm not convinced SF fandom is as much a backwater as you describe it, but it leans strongly in that direction. All sorts of other interests absorb potential neos.

No continuity in Canadian fandom? As well as the usual discontinuity between regions, there are regional discontinuities between fannish generations in a given place. Across Canada, though, some developing stories appear, especially since certain fannish institutions were founded. The Auroras, the Convention, and the Canadian Unity Fan Fund, that is.

2000-05-09

[I have not implied] that One Rigid Plan has to be followed everywhere. [Convention guidelines are like algebra.] You put differing input into one side of an algebraic equation, you get different output on the other side. That is my idea of a rule. People who hold different types of conventions or in different places or at different times have to do some things in different ways. But you still have to advertise, you still have to pay bills, and you still have to scare up volunteer labour. Above all, you have to ask yourself repeatedly what you're trying to do, and what resources or options exist to do it.

FROM: Terry Jeeves

2000-06-22

56 Red Scar Drive

Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England

I was puzzled by the piece on mail art. What is mail art? I've never heard of it before. Postcards? Drawings on the envelope?

[Mail art is a zone of the Papernet where people exchange art in the form of decorated envelopes, customized postcards, or items enclosed in an envelope such as homemade trading cards or detourned clippings. A popular sport is to mail items unwrapped such as a beach ball with stamps and mailing label, although lately the postal administrations have been cracking down on this. Detournement is where you take a comic strip or photo, preferably something commercial such as a newspaper comic strip, and replace the existing dialogue with something else. It can be pretty funny to have Charlie Brown in "Peanuts" spouting Marxist slogans or Andy Capp discussing the implications of quantum mechanics with his wife. Mail art can also be used as propaganda, although it should get its point across with humour. There are also assemblings, which are like apas, except everyone sends in x number of copies of homemade art instead of zines. Many mail art listings are for un-juried shows, where everything is shown and the contributors get back a listing of who entered.]

FROM: Milt Stevens
6325 Keystone Street
Simi Valley, California 93063

2000-07-31

CON-VERSION 17
by Dale Speirs

I didn't work on any concons between the 1984 Worldcon and the 1999 NASFIC. The big change in convention running between those two dates could all be ascribed to computers. In 1984, I typed hundreds of letters on a manual typewriter. Somewhere in the middle of the process, June Moffatt revealed she had access to word processing at work. Since all my letters contained some boilerplate, word processing was a gift from heaven.

Goshwowboyoboy! My typing fingers were eternally grateful. I don't recall how we did it, but in 1984 we were already beyond the point of typing all the mailing labels by hand. Only a few years earlier, some poor soul at each con had that unenviable job.

In 1984, we had Apa 84, which was a monthly compendium of meeting minutes and department progress reports which were circulated to the entire concom and other interested parties. By 1999 you could do the entire thing by e-mail. E-mail also replaced a lot of time that had to be spent on the telephone. Websites are another big help. People can now get information from convention Websites, so they don't have to write to the concom, and the concom doesn't have to respond.

Calgary's annual SF gencon was held at the Metropolitan Centre downtown on 4 Avenue SW, on the weekend of August 11 to 13, 2000. Guest of Honour was Mike Resnick, Artist GoH was Julie Lacquement, Canadian GoH was Candace Jane Dorsey, Science GoH was Dr. Thor Osborn (husband of Lacquement), Media GoH was Mike Dale, and Toastmaster/Fan GoH was Michael McAdam.

No Room At The Inn.

Con-Version had a change of venue this year, more than just the usual hotel shuffle. Calgary, the petroleum capital of Canada, is booming, with all the attendant problems that an over-heated economy brings. The demand for hotel space is so high in Calgary that the convention not only had to change from its regular post-Stampede July weekend to August, but to a non-hotel site called the Metropolitan Centre. The Metropolitan Centre is in the downtown core and is a boardroom/auditorium rental space, formerly a multiplex movie theatre. It was renovated several years ago and is commonly used by the surrounding petroleum corporations for meetings. If you are a petro-executive, you can buy and sell West Texas Intermediate crude oil and finish a plate of lemon chicken at the same time.

Don't forget your wireless laptop.

Quote Unquote #1

"I would urge those dressed in costume that may 'reveal' more than usual, to please keep in mind that you are downtown, and bring with you either a coat or cloak." (Blair Toblan, Security, in Progress Report #2)

Friday

2000-08-11

Being pre-registered, I had my convention badge and goodie bag in about 30 seconds. It would have been 15 seconds, but the fellow on the desk was serving the guy ahead of me.

I found a chair in the lobby and sat down to rummage through the goodie bag. Some peculiarities immediately became evident. No pocket guide for the programming. Other con-goers were tearing out the appropriate pages from the programme book, but as I keep them intact for futurity, I instead spent about a quarter hour jotting down the panels and events I wanted to see in my pocket notebook.

The video room only ran at night, as it was used during the day for panels. The panel rooms were spread over two stories connected by a narrow staircase originally used for the old theatre balcony. Crowds constantly elbowed past each other in the stairs and narrow hallways.

A better dealer bourse than in some past years, with lots of books evident. There were 36 tables in the bourse. I blew \$40 on pulps before the bourse was even officially open. Nice to see more than just the usual button sellers and media SF toys in original packaging.

Quote Unquote #2

GoH Candace Jane Dorsey: *"I became 'Canada's Jane Dorsey' as soon as spell checkers came along. I became a typo!"* (in the August 3, 2000, issue of FFWD, page 10. FFWD is a Calgary giveaway tabloid).

Research For SF And Fantasy Writers

This panel was a full house. Starting off was Katie Harse, who is a PhD candidate in 19th century speculative fiction. She said that good fantasy requires as much research as hard SF to get the facts and consistency. Rebecca Bradley, a Calgary archaeologist with three published fantasy novels, said that serendipity during research may alter the final form of the book. One should nonetheless have a basic story before starting research. Random research, although fun, gets you nowhere for an intended novel. A good author does not make up rules arbitrarily for the book. Not that anyone is paying attention to this common sense in Hollywood or the New York City publishers.

Barb Galler-Smith, an online writer, said that readers can tell when an author is wrong about the details of a story. This interferes with the enjoyment of the story. For her, the best research method was to ask people in a particular field. Most people are keen to help with information about their jobs. Bradley followed on by warning not to get too carried away with details, citing one story where a character was said to be jumping a 1.67 metre wide ditch. Harse said that at some point you have to quit researching and start writing. Resist the temptation to add just one more fact.

The novelist J. Brian Clarke, speaking from the audience, warned about one seldom-mentioned danger of writing near-future fiction. It may be obsolete or irrelevant by the time the book appears in print.

Quote Unquote #3

“Like almost everyone else in North America, he is currently at work on a novel.” (ConVersion programme book, in the guest biographies)

Retinal Scanning Display: Be A Borg Today

Thor Osborn works for a Seattle company called Microvision, which specializes in helmet and heads-up displays for aircraft

pilots and surgeons. Unlike other displays, which project onto a screen, the retinal scanning display beams the light directly into the eye, using low-power, eye-safe lasers. Not hologrammatic or virtual reality, but using the retina as the actual display screen. Surgeons can see CAT scans and X-rays directly imposed on the patient, for easier cutting and sewing. Drivers can see road maps without taking their eyes off the road. Soldiers can get tactical scans coupled directly to both their eyes and their guns, enabling them to aim just by looking at the target.

Star Trek Redivivus

I was surprised to see a listing for a Star Trek party on Friday night, having supposed that Trekkies were extinct in Calgary or nearly so. I attended the scene, as a constable might put it, to verify the circumstances. USS Astra was celebrating by opening their five-year time capsule. The evening celebration would have been more convincing had anyone actually been wearing a Star Trek uniform. Not a Klingon in sight. Instead, half the women were in Renaissance gowns, and the other half cross-dressed as Men in Black. This suggests something but I can't think what. The menfolk were either in Babylon 5 gear (straight up, none of them in dresses) or the universal denim and T-shirt.

There was cake and champagne, and good rowdy fun. The time capsule was an old pipeline pig,

duly cut open and emptied. (A pipeline pig is a large cylinder inserted into oil pipelines and pumped through. It normally contains sensing gear to check for leaks.) From the time capsule were pulled photos, and a CALGARY HERALD newspaper dated 1995-08-21.

A batch of letters was pulled out by the club president. Cries from the audience of "Read it!". So he does. More cries from the audience: "Out loud, you idiot!". So he does. Very haltingly. I have English-as-a-second-language immigrants working for me in the Parks Dept. who could have done a better job. And from that scene I departed.

Quote Unquote #4

"Lost and Found: Any items found in the con area will be taken to Con Ops and can be claimed there. Any items not claimed by the end of the con will be sent into hyperspace." (ConVersion programme book)

Publishing On The Web

2000-08-12

The panelists agreed that the problem is not technical but getting payment. The greatest difficulty is copyright protection in foreign countries. Just try getting a Russian ISP to shut down a site full of scanned novels.

Mike Resnick, a man of definite opinions, said professional writers are plagued by startups who want electronic rights for next to nothing. Some legitimate on-line publishers are now actually paying for content. Resnick said he used to tell other writers it wasn't worth the bother trying to hang on to electronic rights since publishers couldn't make money from them anyway, but now the rights are worth money. He reiterated several times in several ways during the panel that the billions of fiction words available for free on the Internet aren't worth reading. The good stuff costs money but is hard to locate.

Novelist Dave Duncan mentioned publishing on demand, and showed a copy of one of his novels done that way, professionally done with colour cover. The main problem with demand printing is that it is more expensive to the reader, even though it is supposedly cheaper to the publisher. Resnick said that publishers could profit from a book that only sells 800 copies but can't afford the cost of trying to locate them in a sea of 75,000,000 readers.

How Anthologies Are Put Together

Paula Johanson said that she used to think editors rude, until she took over the TESSERACTS anthology and had to read the slush pile. Candace Jane Dorsey felt the labour of going through the slush pile was worth it to find one good story from a new writer.

There were a few horror stories told, such as an acquaintance who submitted 150 stories, all bad of course, and expected that at least 100 would be selected “because we’re such close friends”. One that I can relate to is inappropriate submissions; I’ve had people plaguing OPUNTIA with bad fiction and worse poetry ever since a British writers magazine got hold of my address and listed my zine as accepting poetry and fiction. Fortunately I collect stamps, and can always use paper to start my fireplace.

Writers At The Improv

Always one of the most popular events at ConVersion is this one, staged by the Imaginative Fiction Writers Association (IFWA), a Calgary workshop group. IFWA members take audience suggestions of words and write a sentence using that word, or what is more expected, a pun. After time is called, each sentence from the six contenders is read out loud. The audience votes on their favourite, and in this manner a semblance of a short-short is built up. The M.C. of this event, IFWA member Tony King, remarked that it was a bit of silliness for people who can’t afford the cover charge at Yuk Yuk’s comedy club.

I copied down the resulting deathless prose as it was built up, and present herewith. The underlined words are the ones suggested by the audience.

Deathless Prose

Suspended on a fraying string over a lava pool of snapping groishes, Alisha thought this was the worst hangover of her life. At least she was getting paid the full cast rate [word suggested was castrate] after years of working as an extra; Extreme TV was paying more these days, but it was also more dangerous.

The groishes latched onto a shock of Alisha’s long gold hair and she screamed “Cut! Stand in!”. As the hairdresser fussed in on a crane to scrape the groishes teeth larva out of her ‘do, the director told her the bad news that her stand-in, Lar va, had taken himself to Tibet for transmorgification.

“Well, you can kiss my ass ... Teroid! [asteroid] Darling!” Alisha interrupted her rant as her leading man, Teroid Planar, made his entrance. Teroid complained that he’d had to macerate by himself in the dressing room, and he was not pleased. “You could at least learn to use the language correctly”, Farrah moaned [pheromone] as she adjusted the script. “I don’t think that’s the word you wanted.”. Teroid turned to make a sharp retort when the William Shatner (TM) hair glue suddenly gave way, sending his wig flying toward the groishe pit.

Little did they know, groishes were enraged by blasphemy against William Shatner, their god,

and answered the falling wig with a fireball of exploding mousse. With superhuman strength, the transmorgified Lar Va flew in from the house where his university frat resided [fraticide]. Remembering that Shatner had made his start as an actor in antiquated Shakespearean plays at Stratford, Lar Va expostulated while chewing on a slice of fire-retardant watermelon: “To be ... or ... not ... to be. That ... is ... the question.” [The IFWA writer who wrote this brought the house down with his perfect imitation of Shatner’s bite-the-words-off-one-at-a-time style.]

The groishes, stunned by the brilliance of the impersonation, rose up out of the lava pit and swallowed their own fireball. The resulting implosion sucked Farrah, the director, and Alisha into an alternate universe where they starred in “Star Drek: The Next Degeneration”.

Earth And Mars

Moving from the ridiculous to the sublime, my next panel was by astronomer Roland Dechesne and J. Brian Clarke. ConVersion always gets a good turnout for science panels, and this was one no exception. Dechesne remarked that the building blocks for organic life are strewn throughout the galaxy, with numerous kinds of molecules and heavier elements seen in space. The search for life on Mars has a particular significance for the all-or-none hypothesis. If Earth is the only planet in our solar system

with life, it may be that life is unique to this planet in the entire galaxy. If life is discovered on Mars or elsewhere (such as a Jupiter satellite), then twice or more in one stellar system means that it almost certainly is common throughout the galaxy. The odds are improving. At one time it was believed that oxygenated biospheres are so rare as to reduce the chances of finding other life. Now we are discovering life in extreme biospheres here on Earth, such as deep-sea vents or gold mine bedrock, with high pressure, heat, and anoxia.

Guest Of Honour Speeches

Mike Resnick, the main GoH, was a no-show because he had to catch an early flight back to Cincinnati Sunday morning. Candas Jane Dorsey gave the longest speech, obviously heartfelt and intensely nationalistic. She first became serious about Canadian SF at V-Con, Vancouver. Dorsey had been asked to appear on “Mounties, Sled Dogs, and Rockets”, and was told that it was just a joke panel, don’t worry. She did worry, because Canadian SF dates back to 1881, but each succeeding generation forgets the authors of the previous one. Dorsey has made it her mission to remind each crop of new SF fans that there is a long history behind them. She announced that she is editing a new reprint series to restore lost classics such as “Strange Manuscript Found In A Copper Cylinder” and bring them back to general attention.

THE HISTORY OF ARTIST TRADING CARDS

A Collaborative Cultural Performance.

by M. Vanci Stirnemann

Artist trading cards (ATCs) are created on 64 x 89 mm card stock, the same size as traditional hockey cards. Cards may be 2-D or 3-D. They may be original, a series, an edition, or a multiple. ATCs may be paintings, drawings, collages, photographs, rubber stamp works, mixed-media, found images, assemblages, etcetera. The only stipulation is that they are of the given size.

The first time I had the idea of producing my own trading cards was during my first visit to Calgary, when I was part of a performance art group that did several performances at the Olympic Arts Festival in 1988. Since in Switzerland the collectors of soccer cards are mostly kids and the trading usually takes place in schoolyards, I was rather surprised to see how many adults were collecting hockey cards and hockey sticky back albums in Canada. The trading and business was comparable to what I knew about stamp collectors in Switzerland. As a hockey fan I had a lot of fun sitting around a table with some fellow artists and talk about art, life, and hockey while sticking the pictures in the hockey album. The social aspect of this situation was very clear.

The second time I was in Canada was only two years later when I was invited by The New Gallery to show my performances as their Foreign Artist in Residence. I was (and still am) interested in all forms of collaboration, so I invited a number of local artists to work for two weeks on a collaborative performance art event. After the event I thought about a catalogue/documentation, and the idea of trading cards popped up again. I asked several printers in Switzerland about the costs for a fat set of trading cards. To my not very big surprise, they asked for a fortune. Due to the high costs, I had to renounce the idea, and then produced a normal catalogue.

In the following years I suffered through many variations on the theme and nothing was accomplished. In 1996 I finally had enough of the restrictive printing costs and started to produce my cards myself. Today I wonder why it took me so long to get away from the printed version and to go back to what everybody can do: produce their own trading card. It was probably too obvious. In April 1997, I showed my first 1200 cards, which I called Artist Trading Cards, at INK.art&text in Zurich. During the show I encouraged the visitors to produce their own cards to trade them with me and others at the closing of the show. People were really pleased by the idea that they didn't need an artist's education and didn't have to be rich to be part of this art project.

On the last Saturday of May 1997 the first Trading Day took place at INK.art&text. People came to trade their own cards. Some others just came to watch what was happening and were so fascinated that they asked when the next Trading Day would be. I didn't really plan to have Trading Days on a regular basis at first, but when I saw the enthusiasm of the audience, I decided to hold a Trading Day every last Saturday of the month. With the help of artist Cat Schick I managed to do so, and it goes on ever since. On May 27 we will celebrate the third anniversary of Trading Days in Zurich.

Calgary artist Don Mabie, a.k.a. Chuck Stake, was artist in residence at INK.art&text in May 1997. He was, in spite of his rather skeptical attitude when I talked to him earlier that year about the project, very impressed and convinced by what he experienced. You have to be there to know how much fun it is, he said afterwards, and decided to start Trading Days in Calgary too. He organized the first Trading day outside Europe in Calgary on the last Saturday of September 1997. Because of the large international interest in ATCs, Don Mabie is organizing the first Biennial of ATC in Calgary in September 2000, right in time to celebrate the third anniversary of Trading Days in Calgary. Since 1997, Trading days were held in the Netherlands, England, Germany, Australia, and some other places we just heard rumours about, and hopefully there will be more people trading their cards all over the world.

The most important aspect of the project is the trade from person to person, the personal meetings that happen on Trading Days, and the social situation which is created in open space. But the ATC project wouldn't be complete without the packaged sets of ATCs, the cards that come as a surprise. copy-left editions, specializing in small artist books and assembled editions, which I have run since 1984, seemed to be the perfect way to organize a small edition ATC project which would allow people from all over the world to participate. In November 1997, I sent out a call to the artists I knew and asked them to send a small edition of ATCs to me. In return they would get a set of 15 ATCs back, including an address list of all artists who contributed to the set. That allows people to trade single cards by mail as well. In December I edited and sent out #1 of copy-left ATC editions. The idea was to produce about one edition per month, always including cards from 15 artists. But in January 1998 I edited two sets, in February four, and in February 2000 I published #124, which makes it about one edition per week. So far about 300 artists from 30 countries participated in the copy-left ATC editions, and it sure is an ongoing project.

I invite you to the Artist Trading Card project. Send an edition of 20 cards to copy-left, c/o M. vanci Stirnemann, Dufourstrasse 132, CH - 8008 Zurich, Switzerland. Size is 64 x 89 millimetres (trading card standard size). Sign, date, and number the card on

the back. There is no theme and there is no deadline. Each participant will get a set of 15 artist trading cards from different artists. You can participate more than one time; it is an ongoing project. Please copy this invitation and send it to your friends.

Artist Trading Card Information.

by Don Mabie a.k.a. Chuck Stake

There are no rules regarding ATCs but the general guidelines are:

- 1) Produce your own cards.
- 2) Size 64 x 89 mm
- 3) Signature, date, edition number (if necessary), on the back of the card.
- 4) Trade. Cards are most often traded in person, but they can and are traded by mail. ATCs are primarily created for trading and free exchange, but they can be sold and have/are sold from time to time.

Chuck Stake Enterpizes (CSE), a.k.a. Don Mabie, has been involved in correspondence/mail art since 1972. During that time, CSE has organized and presented more than 25 exhibitions across Canada, the USA, Europe, and Japan. Correspondence/mail art has been practiced for more than three decades. It began to mushroom and form a strong international network in the early 1970s. This international exchange has involved thousands of

artists; estimates range as high as 20,000. At any point in time, as many as 700 artists from some 35 countries may be involved in the network. Correspondence/mail art is primarily exchanged on a one-to-one basis, but from its beginnings there have always been public manifestations via exhibitions. One of the earliest exhibitions was held at the Whitney Museum, New York City, in 1970. There have been hundreds of exhibitions throughout the USA, South America, Europe, and the Far East. The roots and attitude of correspondence/mail art are found in the Dada movement of the early part of the 1900s, and more recently in the Fluxus movement in Europe, North America, and Japan of the late 1950s and 1960s.

Personally I see a very close philosophical relationship between ATCs and correspondence/mail art. They both emphasize certain principles such as: a democratic exchange and interaction with others (be they artists or non-artists); open-ended creativity; a non-hierarchical mass-appeal activity that can exist within, but more importantly outside of, the existing high-art world. In a sense, it is in opposition to the high-art world; ATCs are a true vernacular art form. The potential for ATCs is unlimited. I have not been as excited or invigorated by an art form or movement since my discovery of correspondence/mail art in 1972. The potential for ATCs is much greater because it is so much more immediate, as it does not rely on the mail for interaction but rather

relies primarily on direct interaction while the trading takes place. The response to ATCs is much more instantaneous relative to correspondence/mail art, from artists, art students, children, and the general public. I think there is a great deal of potential for ATC workshops for all of these groups, but in particular for children.

“The mail art phenomenon isn’t a new fad or a fashion of the art market. Mail art represents a thirty year old utopian tradition of exchange which has included such internationally renowned artists as Yoko Ono, Carl Andre, Christo, Wolf Vostell, Nam June Paik, and Dick Higgins, among others. Why has mail art remained an enigma to the American [Canadian] art establishment? As important critics such as Lucy Lippard and Suzi Gablik call for a socially engaged international art paradigm, mail art is ignored.” [From: ETERNAL NETWORK; A MAIL ART ANTHOLOGY, by Chuck Welch.]

To quote Nancy Tousley, from her review of the correspondence/mail art entitled “1984 is coming ... SOON!” (CALGARY HERALD, January 3, 1980): *“Mail art, an underground activity thousands of artists take part in on an international scale, is concerned less with preserving things for the future than it is with circulating information, generating ideas, and making people think. International systems are its vehicle. Its content is as free wheeling as it is diverse.”*

The same can be said of Artist Trading Cards as can the following: *“In an era when people feel more isolated, estranged, powerless, uninvolved, and depersonalized than ever before, mail art has offered many the opportunity to be involved in communicating in a very personal and connecting way, in a way that reinforces the notion that there exists a community of like-minded people, regardless of national boundaries, who share certain values that are not lauded by the mass media or the art establishment. The primary one, as I see it, is a belief in the importance of one’s own creativity, and that we don’t need the sanction of the media, galleries, or other institutions or authorities to validate our activity. We have glimpsed the importance of believing in our creative activity, and we applaud each other’s output for the same reason, that it comes from the self, and is concerned not so much with marketability, or the production of high quality objet d’art, as it is with self-expression, playfulness, inventiveness, and communication, person to person. Because the object isn’t the objective of the activity, there is a freedom and vitality in the work that I feel is missing in the more conventional forms.”* [From: VILE (December 1979 issue), by Anna Banana.]

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