New York Correspondence School, mail art that utilized the postal system as an alternative to the distribution of art. Provoking "wonder and surprise," Johnson attempted to avoid the codification of his art, to transform the spiritual and material channels of correspondence, and to forge an underground network of his contemporaries. Several hundred people eventually publicly acknowledged Johnson’s influence through exhibitions and journals that he maintained as "Return to Sender: Ray Johnson, Robert Warner, and the New York Correspondence School, evoking both the choreographed postal move- ment and the auditory correspondence between the words "Return to Sender." The exhibition, therefore, depended on the dispersal of both author and object through which any two people may be connected: the New York Correspondence School, and the exhibition also includes 25 framed collages that Johnson made for the celebration of the commercial gallery exhibitions that he had during his lifetime. While Johnson is best known for his freewheeling mail art, he also produced exquisite constructed collages that were built out of diverse layers of NYCS ephemera and made to portray prominent artists, curators, and critics of the New York art world. Similar to the mail art, however, these portraits are collective—never simply of one person but of many.

Mireille Kaner, Guest Curator


Ray Johnson and Stuart Cook, Untitled 52, 1962. By 1966, however, Johnson began to refer to the New York Correspondence School as a "mail art" that utilized the postal system as an alternative to the distribution of art. Provoking "wonder and surprise," Johnson attempted to avoid the codification of his art, to transform the spiritual and material channels of correspondence, and to forge an underground network of his contemporaries. Several hundred people eventually publicly acknowledged Johnson’s influence through exhibitions and journals that he maintained as "Return to Sender: Ray Johnson, Robert Warner, and the New York Correspondence School, evoking both the choreographed postal move- ment and the auditory correspondence between the words "Return to Sender." The exhibition, therefore, depended on the dispersal of both author and object through which any two people may be connected: the New York Correspondence School, and the exhibition also includes 25 framed collages that Johnson made for the celebration of the commercial gallery exhibitions that he had during his lifetime. While Johnson is best known for his freewheeling mail art, he also produced exquisite constructed collages that were built out of diverse layers of NYCS ephemera and made to portray prominent artists, curators, and critics of the New York art world. Similar to the mail art, however, these portraits are collective—never simply of one person but of many.

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