

PANMAG 53

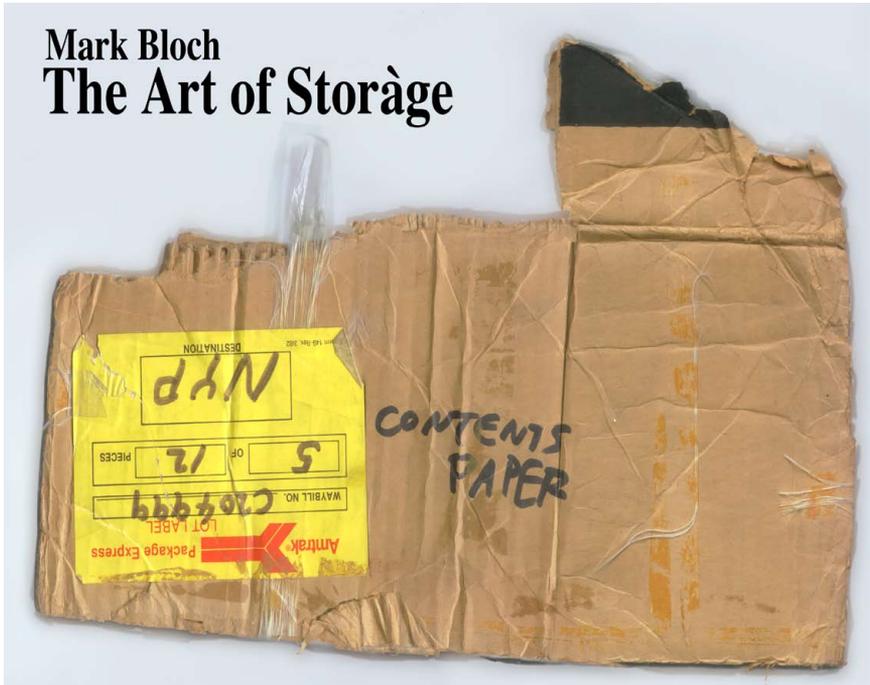
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PO BOX 1500 NYC 10009 USA

PANMAN@PANMODERN.COM

Mark Bloch The Art of Storàge



The packaging from one of twelve boxes that contained various types of art that were shipped via Amtrak from California to New York City in 1982. Some of the boxes still have not been opened. (Photo by Mark Bloch)

July 12, 2006

Some thoughts on the Art of Storàge

Storage is a new art form for our times in which artists will prevent at all costs, their work from seeing the light of day. Artists must conceal what they do, make sure no one finds out that they are brilliant. If an artist must show someone something they have created, they should show another artist so as not to upset the art markets. Other artists do not really count as human beings so there really is no harm in telling them. That is why mail art continues to thrive. Mail artists are sequestered from the rest of humanity. But one should

proceed with caution because occasionally artists know actual people and the news of what kind of work the artists are producing must not spread to civilians.

Storage is an art form like many others: collage, assemblage, frottage. The accent is on the second syllable. The emphasis is on the storing of important information and objects--preferably one of a kind objects, although the storing of multiples is also encouraged--until a great deal of time has passed and the ideas and images contained therein, hidden from public view, have been discovered and explored by other, less talented individuals. This is

THE NEW YORK TIMES **METRO** THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 19



Workers in Vienna with boxes containing paintings by Schiele returned from a Manhattan show. Two works in the collection were not returned.

Agence France-Presse

bound to happen while the work is rotting under lock and key, no matter how advanced the work. Even the most vanguard artist will be unable to stave off the advancing future which will soon provide the unique conditions necessary for the artist's work to be removed from Storage without consequence.

Once a work of art has been rendered culturally feckless, Storage is no longer necessary. The work can now be trotted out into the marketplace where it will no doubt have to endure other types of packaging, wrapping and covering which are part of the Storage process

when enacted by a Storàgìst but in these new contexts the accent in Storàge is removed and it becomes simply storage in which excessive packaging and hygienic germ free protection is always considered good for business. Of course any work of art or other consumer item, no matter how processed and “valuable,” always remains in danger of being placed on dusty shelves in the forgotten back rooms of galleries or museums by art professionals. This is where the nuances of Storàge and storage are revealed--for it is these very art professionals who are uniquely qualified to determine whether or not an artist’s work is any good. During the interim period when the artists are left trying to make this crucial decision for themselves, their work must be safely hidden from view while these art professionals are courted at the artist’s expense without causing too much of a fuss, for it is the artist’s passion that must also remain in the limbo of Storàge, not just their output.

Sometimes fear of the art professionals will cause an insecure artist, one prone to alarmism and in constant dread of being accused of being labeled an exhibitionist, to send works into hiding early, thus risking beginning their career as a Storàge Artist prematurely. But there is nothing to be alarmed about here. Fears about these types of fear are only a waste of time. Any uncertainty at all must always be acted on immediately. To err on the side of invisibility is never a mistake. If an artist has any doubts at all about the worthiness of what has been created, they should simply place the work in a secure area, free from intellectually curious intruders where no one can see it. In fact experience has shown that no work is too ripe to entertain misgivings about its readiness for public consumption. Any suspicions at all should be indulged whole-heartedly and enthusiastically by the Storàge Artist.

Boxes within Boxes

The proper answer to any question about the techniques of Storàge is always containment. Place the object in a container and place that container inside another container whenever possible. Eventually you will want to put the container on a shelf or drawer, which is another container, or into a box that contains other boxes. Those containers could eventually end up in a commercial Storàge unit which is the ultimate in containment. It resembles a prison in its completeness of the containing process. Commercial Storàge also has the additional attraction of costing money which is far superior to a closet, attic, garage or even a friend’s basement; the latter being ideal for creating guilt and confusion, essential tools in the Containment Arts . But of all the Storàge Artist’s allies, none are ever as effective as the outlaying of cold hard cash.

Remember: money is the reason for Storàge in the first place. Without money, there would be no way for the unimaginative civilians of the marketplace to determine whether artwork has value. Luckily we live in a society where the surefire way to determine the effectiveness of any creative act is try and sell it. If it can’t be sold, it is probably time to find some place to store it and simply wait until the coast is clear. When feelings of ambivalence arise, the power of waiting cannot be underestimated. After all, there is always a rainy day just around the corner when all unfinished tasks will magically disappear from one’s To Do list.

The To Do list

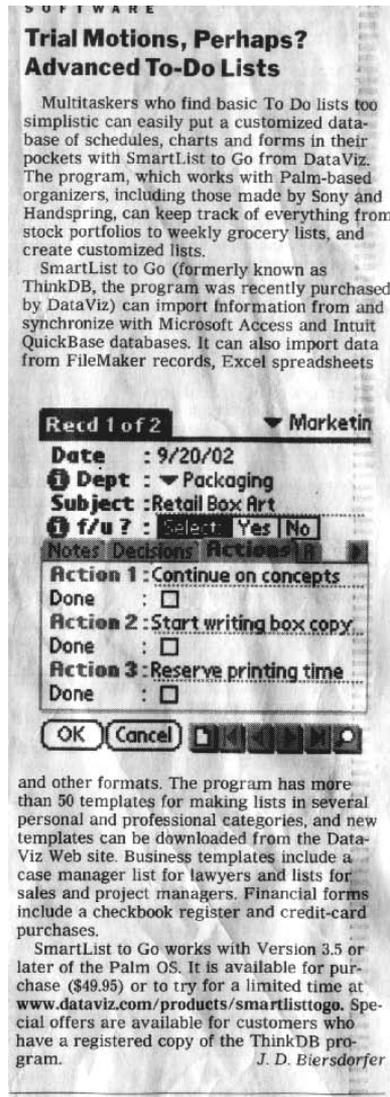
The “to do” list is an easy-to-use device that civilians can utilize to create the anxieties previously reserved for Storage Artists. In fact, the to do list is a perfect substitute for what was previously known as The American Dream. By reducing entire lives to lists of unfinished tasks, process has been elevated to its proper place--superior to finished product. Consumer items can continue to exist in a post-Storage world but only as props to accommodate the endless illusion known as “crossing things off the list.”

Multi-tasking

Multi-tasking is the very important oft-heard battle cry of today’s moms, dads, movers, shakers, poseurs and fakers. It has been elevated to the highest good. Everywhere and anywhere, anxious overachievers can be heard speaking gleefully of the fast pace of contemporary life. In a world without quality, doing as many things as possible, badly, is of the utmost importance. If a person is ever in doubt about whether or not they are operating at maximum capacity, picking up a cell phone and reporting ones exact location to another multi-tasker can be a very effective way to create an additional mutual illusion of accomplishment. The maintenance of such distractions is the key to busyness and busyness is the key to business. Business is the goal of all art. If art is incapable of generating money or putting asses in seats, it should be locked up and hidden away until further notice.

Sortage

Sortage is something one can do when they are at the end of their rope because everything they own is in Storage. One goes to the Storage unit and sorts through the things found there. These notes are an example of Sortage in action.



July 13, 2006

Precursors to the Art of Storàge

If you are reading this it may be because I couldn't bear to keep the secrets of Storàge under my hat any longer. So I am letting this information leak out. Leaks are one of the few ways out of the otherwise ironclad security system that is Storàge. The current masters of the leak are the "evil-doers" in the Bush-Cheney Administration. They have constructed elaborate hierarchies to reveal important furtive information as it suits them only to feign outrage when they pretend to discover that leaking occurs. Artists interested in disingenuous career jockeying should take a few hints from their fine example. These bozos are not technically Storàge Artists but rather part of another movement known as "Bullshit Artists." This brings us to the history of Storàge.

There have been many precursors to Storàge but the most notable is Marcel Duchamp who created *With Hidden Noise* in 1916. Like the object inside this work, Duchamp himself used to be a secret. When Walter Hopps gave him his first retrospective in Pasadena in the 1960s, Duchamp was virtually unknown except for a small cadre of LA hipnoscenti. Duchamp famously and accurately predicted that the "artist of the future" would go "underground." As you may have suspected, I was once the artist of the future. Duchamp also provided himself as a self-fulfilling artist of the future when he told the world he had given up art and then privately worked on a highly contained secret project for the next two decades.

Another who did a variation on that working-secretly-only-to-revealed-upon-death theme and also one of Storàge's important forerunners was Ray Johnson who stuffed his art into envelopes and saved the envelopes he received from others in cardboard boxes stacked neatly in his mysterious home. Few were allowed to enter. Johnson also was known to drop off his full cardboard boxes on the front steps of museums and other locales when the timing was right. Johnson has still not completely emerged from hiding and probably never will.

Finally, the most obvious choices as a precursor to Storàge are Christo and his partner Jean Claude. According to *Christo and Jeanne-Claude: Early Works 1958-1969* by David Bourdon (2001, Taschen: Koln, New York, pgs. 8, 40-43) In 1958, Christo "bought used oil barrels..." and "cleaned and wrapped them..." "He stored them in a cellar that been put at his disposal by Jeanne Claude's parents. Over the months the cellar accumulated stacks of... barrels... boxes... bottles... that Christo called Inventory. Later he moved everything to a garage... that he rented for storage and working space. When he was unable to pay rent for the garage, he was forced to

abandon the work that was stored there and much of it was subsequently destroyed.”

And later in that same book, this seems relevant:

“Metal cans were patented in 1810, and folding cartons were invented in 1879. The packaging we take for granted today scarcely existed before 1900. It was not until this century that efficient storing and handling and informative labeling became important attributes of packaging. The three basic services that packaging performs for the consumer—pre-unitizing, protection and communication—have attained such a level of sophistication that the wrapping, as we are so frequently reminded, is what makes us buy the contents.”

February 6, 2002

Ambivalent Secretism

Earlier thoughts on the Art of Storage

The principal of Ambivalent Secretism is a mode of working similar to Dali's Paranoiac-Critical method. It is a one-man, dual-hinged triangulation: First, it is an ambivalent dichotomy between purposeful and accidental secretism. Is my work unknown on purpose so that I could “go underground,” as Marcel Duchamp suggested the “artist of the future” should do, or did I create an air of secrecy around my work due to my own neurotic phobias? Secondly, any neurotic phobia would have to be an ambivalent dichotomy between purposeful secretism due to inside forces reacting to outside ones, that is to say, withholding when faced with victimization (by what?) vs. self-generated victimization (i.e. volunteerism—due to what?). In other words, secretism as withholding without being faced with obstacles. Thirdly, it is an ambivalent dichotomy between a closed system that works and an open system that requires justification (such as this text). The closed system is a self-contained information loop and exists in an eternal, timeless Utopian state until it is “leaked” to the outside world, at which point it enters into the “art coefficient” stage that Duchamp described. At that point there is no determining what will happen to the work. However, due to the limited life span of a human being (Tao Te Ching: Without a body, how could there be misfortune?), this stage is inevitable. The Utopian stage is, thus, always only temporary (and thus not Utopian at all).

A subset of Ambivalent Secretism is the art of storage (as opposed to collage, decollage, frottage, and assemblage). It is the necessary offshoot of Ambivalent Secretism and precedes the entry into the art coefficient phase. Information theory is useful in understanding both the art of storage and ambivalent secretism. Concepts like Dispersal of Innovation (reconceived by me as Panmodernism, the sine wave theory of life, for lack of a better term) and the study of gift economies (my own concept of thax as the name of any activities and their by-products that are not done for money) can be useful in charting the necessary course of events inherent in any flawed, time-based system of Secretism. So can pop-psychological constructs such as the ambivalent dichotomy between victims and volunteers. Furthermore, art historical concepts such as Self-Historification by G.A. Cavellini (1914-2014) come into play as do two important



Photo by Ruth Fremson The New York Times Photographs by Ruth /

volumes that were found in a room, above, awash in pigeon droppings at the Harlem Community Justice Center and so do at the Harlem Community Justice Center on 121st Street, where a long-forgotten attic storage room was discovered after a building renovation three years ago. Inside the room, stacked on wood shelves, are bound volumes containing court records, dating to the early 1900's, from a prison that once operated within the landmark structure.

The discovery at the building, now used as a courthouse, is the kind that archivists dream of, with one exception: for years, a broken window has encouraged birds to nest in the space, and the decades' worth of pigeon droppings that have accumulated there have made the room toxic, putting the retrieval of the records into question.

Katherine Franke, a law professor and legal historian at Columbia University, is one of the people who would like to see the documents rescued. The prison, built in 1893 and the oldest still standing in Manhattan, briefly served as a women's penitentiary, and the court records offer a window into the street life of the era. "Flipping through the minute books, I saw women arrested for the things late 19th-century women would be arrested for — running a 'bawdy house,' vagrancy," Ms. Franke said. "My guess is that ladies on Park Avenue don't appear in those legal books."

A few of the less damaged volumes sit on a table in a small room near the storage area. Though the information listed is basic — name, age, date, crime, fine, address — viewers can almost sense a stark narrative behind them. To

Ms. Franke has contacted a state agency, Michael E... the restoration of old documents, but given the costly and involved procedure in despoiling the records, little progress has been made. Thomas McCarthy, who founded the New York Correction History Society, is another advocate for saving the documents and has posted photos of the attic room at www.correctionhistory.org, the society's Web site.

Many thanks to *The New York Times* which published the pictures in this issue of Panmag except for the photo on Page 1. I have found that an excellent subject for storage is the daily print edition of the *The New York Times*.

and largely unappreciated death works: Duchamp's leaving of *Étant Donnés* as a final checkmate he delivered to the Art World via William Copley and the Cassandra Foundation; and Ray Johnson's suicide performance (named by me a *Rayocide*) that one-upped Duchamp by creating a work that not only fused art and life but also art and life and death. (By creating my own Museums, I commit acts of self-historification. By creating this text, I create a context for my death, which, God-willing, unlike Johnson, will not be at my own hand.) When this text is read, my work moves from one state of Eternity to another. It is the addition of the concept of ambivalence that returns, in my case, the secrecy to its proper state of unflawed perfection and therefore beauty. By identifying but not choosing the causes for the secrecy up to and including the moment of revelation to the world outside the closed system, a Duchampian hinge creates a mythical context in which all my activities retain a sense of mystery that can never be conclusively uncovered. This should be sufficient to earn me a place in Art History and position my work in immortality. If not, the system remains closed and therefore also unflawed and eternal. -Mark Bloch

November 25, 2003

Mark Bloch announces

2004- The Year of Decompression

After decades of hoarding, being too small, too large, too dull and too invisible and after taking the advice of Duchamp and going/being underground, both intentionally and unintentionally, and after boycotting both the World-Wide Decentralized Networker Congress Year 1992 and the Incongruous Meetings Year 1998 because I felt they were redundant, irrelevant, unnecessary and redundant, and most reverently, in honor of the OA04 Year of Obscure Actions, I declare that I, Mark Bloch, also known as Panman, the Post Art Network, Panscan and other mismonikers, will enthusiastically perform one major act of creative decompression during every month of 2004 to repay my gratitude to all the people who have been so kind to me all over the planet. Because surprising and generous acts of kindness have come to me from all over the world, I will attempt to humbly spread it back, reaching out as far as I can, from as deep within my soul as I am able to muster. I will do so abundantly and lovingly, to be of service to anyone and everyone I can, but in particular for those wonderful people, living and dead, real and imagined, who have directly, indirectly and anonymously enriched my life with their own generous, abundant loving acts of kindness. I promise to decompress, to spread, to share, to disperse, to disseminate, to explode at least 12 times throughout the calendar year of 2004, with creative, loving and healing energy.

FOR PIERMARIO CIANI and our other late mail art friends.

DADA: NOT READY FOR MASS APPEAL UNTIL 2006

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