

Making POSTCARDS 2006

Often I have a coffee* in the morning while reading the newspaper and I find words and images that attract me and I clip them. The words and images remind me of someone or something in my life. Or they relate to something I am thinking about. Sometimes it is just some random subject that I decided I would clip when I see it. Some of my earliest memories of clipping: Clipping the word FAILURE during the 2004 Blackout for my friend Fabio who runs The Ministry of Failure, clipping the word "OHIO" and photographs about OHIO for my friend Uschi who publishes a magazine in Germany called OHIO, clipping the letters "A", "M" and "K" for my friend AMK, anything to do with "7" and owls for Lary Seven, And the earliest is seeing a very rough hand-torn clipping of mine printed in the catalog for a show at MAK in Austria by the great Laura Kikauka. But it was a visit to Presidential Hopeful Dan Andreano whose thrift store book from the 1800's inspired me to make my We Clip stamp.

Instant Art™.

I clip words and images, usually out of The New York Times and glue them to a pieces of card board, recycled generic postcards, food packaging or whatever cardboard-like packaging I find in the trash that day. I file my favorite clippings by categories and put whole articles and specific clippings into envelopes so I can access them later or mail them directly to friends I am thinking about. Sometimes I bring blank postcards, a glue stick and a bag of clippings with me wherever I'm going that day. For me it's like carrying around a pencil and paper. At anytime and anywhere when I have a moment to myself I can make a postcard. Sometimes I have an idea and sometimes I have no idea at all, I just pull out my materials and start playing around with them. I juxtapose one image or word against the next. I try not to think too much about it and I often succeed. I have to say mostly I really don't think at all and I wait until later to even look and see what I've done. Often I address them and put them directly into those blue metal postboxes so I am not tempted to edit them or think about them too much. Because my decisions about what to include come so fast and without too much thinking it becomes fascinating for me to discover them later. I am often surprised! (This reminds me of when I first started laminating. Similarly I made fast spontaneous laminations of disparate elements and then put them in my bag to be looked at and re-discovered them at a later time.) I feel free and alive while playing with these images and words. When I'm alone I laugh out loud when one of the combinations of images and words are really funny to me. I get excited when elements work really well together and sometimes I don't even know how they work together. I enjoy the spontaneity and haphazardness of the process - reminds me of playing with building blocks as a child. I would begin with a base of one block and start stacking them up not knowing what the final shape would be. Each additional block informs the next. Same with the postcards. One word or images suggest what the next should be. Plus I like the sound of scissors on paper!. Sometimes I drop them in the nearest post box immediately. Sometimes I carry them around for days, occasionally looking at them and making additions to them before dropping them into the post box. Many times I start to place them in the postbox but at the last moment I stop and put them back in my bag because I thought of one more things I'd like to say on them. Sometimes I just want to look at them a little longer so I will carry them a bit further before I drop them into the box. Many times walking towards the box looking at a card I see connections between words and images that are obvious yet I was unaware of them while making the card.

Once I finally drop them into the postbox I feel a sense of release. Of letting go. I delight in knowing that my cards will travel by boat, plane or truck to a distance country in another hemisphere

through borders and government employees or even just down the street to a neighbor. I know they are special yet are sorted next to the most mundane mail, advertisements and bills. Eventually they will arrive in the houses and hands of people I love. By that time they are only a vague memory to me. I have since gone to thinking about other cards, words and images. I feel good knowing they are in transit or knowing they have arrived and also knowing that I don't have to take care of them anymore. Knowing that my friends appreciate receiving them fuels my desire to continue and make more. And continue I do. I have no problem making more. I often think about photographing them before I send them and sometimes I do. But there are more where these come from so I don't bother most of the time. I work on many different themes for many different people everyday. I will devote a special amount of time and thought to a particular person or theme for a certain length of time and then suddenly I will let that theme rest for while. I do eventually drop certain postcard campaigns. Other linger on indefinitely. Some campaigns become dormant then re-emerge unexpectedly.

This is a process that goes on in my life on a daily basis and is a great source of inspiration and fun. I feel good making and sending postcards and the process gives me a sense of satisfaction and connection to people. It comes natural. I look forward to making them. Sometimes I feel anxious when I can't find the time to work on making them. Sometimes give myself deadlines for making or sending a card. I fail I don't stress about it too much. (They're just postcards after all!) I use Holidays, even ones I don't care about as excuses for making cards. I often make too many cards and have to steer them into a holding pattern like the rows of jets at the airport waiting for take-off. I have a box full of nearly finished postcards. I try to avoid sending 2 postcards to the same place, and to same person on the same day but it does happen, sometimes intentionally. Last year I sent 50 postcards each with the theme "Fifty" to Lary Seven and James Crotty on their respective birthdays.

Postcard Pathology?

It occurred to me while in a flurry of postcard producing that behavior might be considered obsessive by some psychologists. I feared this need to make postcards is a symptom of a mental illness. Perhaps it's a problem?. This thought swept over me while I was going about my daily routine of creating postcards and it suddenly worried me a bit though not enough to put a dent in my postcard production.

*I stopped drinking coffee in 2010 but I still make as many postcards.