



OVERVIEW

GRADE 2 ARTIST: BARBARA SELVIDGE

ENVELOPE BOOKS: Sending Mail Art

Mail Art is a form of collage art that is created by sending an object or envelope to someone or some place via the postal services. In this lesson each student will create an envelope book that can be decorated and “sent” to other students in the class or students in another collaborating classroom. This lesson can be utilized in other contexts, as an introduction to simple bookmaking and as an incentive to letter writing as outlined in the California State Standards in Language Arts. Through this lesson, students begin to learn some of the basics in simple book making: alignment, cutting, and pasting.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will develop folding, cutting, and gluing skills while make a book.
- Students will learn about the Mail Art movement.
- Students will learn about writing and mailing friendly letters.

LESSON BACKGROUND

“Mail Art” was an art movement in the United States and Internationally, focusing upon envelopes, stamps, postcards, trading cards, home-made magazines or “zines” and illustrated letters and collages. Correspondence Art Movement of New York City was the name of the group that participated in this type of art; the group was inspired by the work of Ray Johnson in the nineteen forties.

MATERIALS

Sample books made by teacher.

Construction paper (Tru-Ray if possible) cut to 18" x 6" for book covers

Paper (colored or white) cut to 5 1/2" x 8" inches for book pages

Scissors

Adhesive (glue or glue stick)

Pens, pencils, colored pencils

Collage materials: cloth, tissue paper, string, rope, student made stickers, medals, magazine and newspaper images, etc.

RESOURCES

Boyle, Mick. "Mail Art Postcard Exhibition." [Online] Available. <http://digitalmailart.blogspot.com/October, 2006>.

Jacobs, Michael and Judy. *Creative Correspondence*. Cincinnati: North Light Books, 2003.

Spurgin, Kristina. "Mail Art: A Pathfinder." [Online] Available. <http://www.infomuse.net/kristina/courses/605pathfinder/index.shtml> October, 2006.

Wikipedia. "Mail Art." [Online] Available. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mail_art October, 2006.

VOCABULARY

Mail art: Mail art is art which uses the postal system as a medium. The term "mail art" can refer to an individual message, the medium through which it is sent, and an art movement.

Adhesive: a substance used to stick things together.

Alignment: the arrangement of something in a straight line or in an orderly position relative to something else.

Estimation: a judgment or opinion about something not based on tested fact.

Envelope: a flat pocket of paper with a sealable flap for holding letters.

Letter: a piece of handwritten, typed or printed text addressed to a particular person or organization and typically sent by mail.

Postage stamp: an illustrated paper stamp affixed to mail to show payment of postage. A printed mark or impression on an envelope indicating that the postage charge has been paid.

INTRODUCTION

Begin by asking students: "Can mail be art? Briefly tell about the New York School of Mail Art, when artists sent mail to each other and to friends, sometimes asking them to "add to [the letter or envelope] and send back." There was no gallery, and the art had no price. It was giveaway art and it changed every time it was sent through the mail. The postmaster would stamp it and/or the person who received it in the mail would add a picture or cut out paper to it. Every piece of mail art was constantly changing.

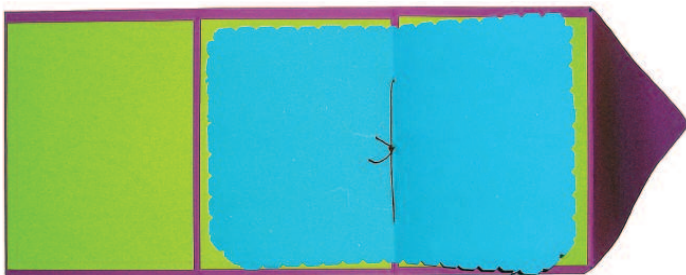
Often the mail art was a collage, and used the postal service as an important element. For example every time the piece of mail art was sent through the postal service, the post man stamped it or put a new stamp onto the envelope.

Today's lesson uses the envelope to start our own mail art.

Explain that each student will make an "envelope book" that they will write in and decorate. The envelope books will then be "sent" to another student in the class who can add to the artwork on the book. (The books could also be addressed and mailed home to a family member if stamps are provided.)

Emphasize carefully folding and cutting and explain that when mess-ups happen, there are almost always solutions. It is okay to make mistakes, and even professionals make them. Often the mistake gives you an idea that is creative and inventive.

When moving to the decorating portion of the lesson, demonstrate the format for writing a friendly letter and show students the proper way to address and stamp a letter to be put in the mail. You can explain the meaning of the different parts of the address and how they help the post office know where the mail should be delivered.



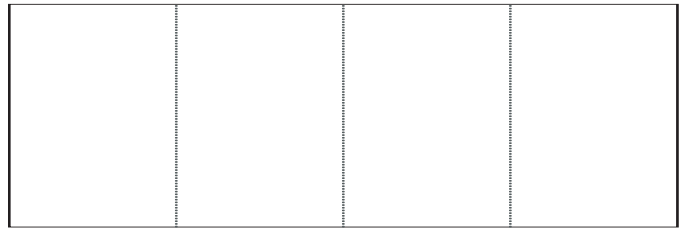
Unfolded envelope book

STEP BY STEP

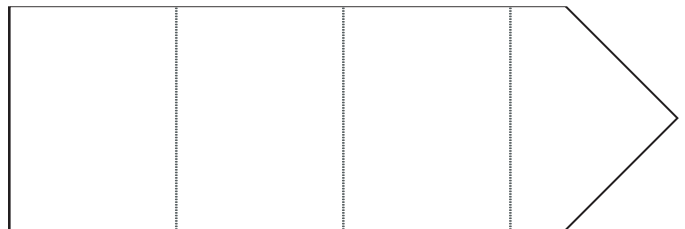
Preparation

Making the book

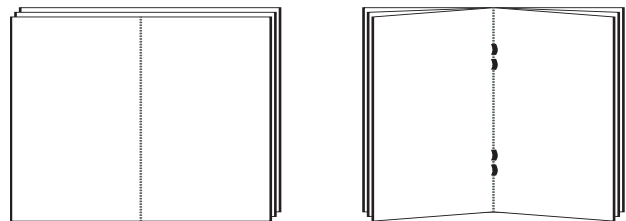
1. Allow each student to choose a 6" x 18" cover sheet.
2. Fold the cover lengthwise into quarters.



3. Cut one end into a point.

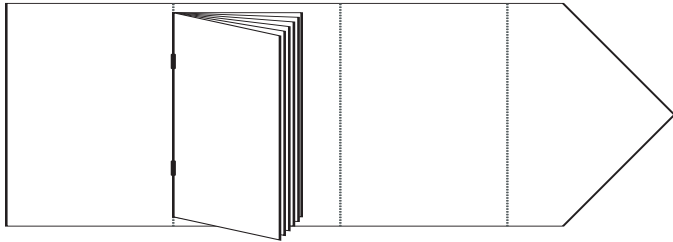


4. Supply each student three sheets of paper pre-cut to 5.5" x 8" for the book pages.
5. Place the rectangular pages in a pile, align and folded in half so that they form pages of 5.5" x 4"



6. Place two staples along the fold of the pages to hold them together. (This requires a full size stapler so students may need to share the stapler or it can be done by the teacher.)

7. Center and glue back page of folio to one panel in cover, aligning the fold of the pages with the crease. Once dried and secure, the pages are ready for text.



Decorating the Books

1. Once the books have dried letters can be written in the pages and they can be decorated. You can find examples of mail art on the websites listed in the Resources section of this lesson which can be printed and shown to students.

2. In the pages of the book, have students write a letter about what they have learned during the lesson and the subject of their artwork, or write and illustrate a story or poem

3. Students can draw and collage on the outside cover as well as the pages of the book. Remind students to leave space on the back of the envelope cover to address the mail art.

4. Students should address the envelopes and can design and add their own postage stamps or, if actually mailing the envelopes, provide students with real stamps. Ask students how they intend to

make a closure for their envelope. Tape, glue, medallion, etc.

5. If students have personal cubbies they can deliver the finished books to their addressee or, put in the school mailbox if being sent home.

During the lesson

Monitor the folding...

Encourage students to fold slowly, matching corners for alignment

Remind students to look for solutions and to help each other before asking for teacher to help

When using adhesives, show examples of careful glue application

Concluding the Lesson

Cleaning up:

Allow 10 minutes for clean up.

Post-project discussion:

Spread out a large roll of black paper to create an instant mail art gallery. Explain that in mail art everyone's work is exhibited, and often a list is made by the museum (like the Whitney in New York) of each participant. Each artist is given the list. Ask each student to make an artists' inventory for your classroom and mail it to their partner!

Variations:

Books can be used as projects during the holidays which can actually be sent to family members at home as cards.

STANDARDS

2.1 Demonstrate beginning skill in the use of basic tools and art-making processes, such as printing, crayon rubbings, collage, and stencils.

3.1 Explain how artists use their work to share experiences or communicate ideas.

4.1 Compare ideas expressed through their own works of art with ideas expressed in the work of others.

4.2 Compare different responses to the same work of art.

4.3 Use the vocabulary of art to talk about what they wanted to do in their own works of art and how they succeeded.

NOTES

