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THE STARN TWINS



PLEASE ADD TO AND
RETURN TO RAY JOHNSON

c/o PERFORMA
100 W 23RD STREET, FL 5
NEW YORK, NY 10011

#PleaseAddTo

(New York, NY) Performa, in collaboration with The Ray Johnson Estate is pleased to present: “Please Add To and Return To” a mail art activation celebrating the life and work of artist Ray Johnson (1927-1995). Johnson’s body of work spans many media, and he is well known for his intricate and complex collages. His mail art project, The New York Correspondance [*sic*] School, utilized the postal system as a means of dissemination, circumventing the commercial art world and inviting others to collaborate. This egalitarian system of art creation and distribution, incorporating social interaction, inspired a vast international network of artistic exchange and collaboration that exists to this day.

One component of Johnson’s mail art practice was his distribution of “templates” with the instructions “Please Add To.” The artist would send these photocopies of his original drawings en masse via USPS, instructing recipients to “Return To Ray Johnson” or forward to someone else entirely. Upon return of work, Johnson would typically photocopy and recirculate the altered versions or add them to his archive.

As a special homage to Johnson in the year of the 20th anniversary of his passing, several of the artist’s mail art “templates” will be placed back into circulation. This will serve as a call to action for the next generation of Johnson enthusiasts and a point of entry for the rest of the public. Performa asks all participants to simply “Please Add To and Return To” (via USPS or through social media, using the hashtag #PleaseAddTo) – in celebration of the life of the man that *The New York Times* described as “one of the most revered underground artists of the last half of the 20th century.”

Templates will be placed as ads in monthly art publications, college newspapers and distributed digitally as PDFs. Altered templates will be accepted on a rolling basis by Performa, and ultimately posted to a page on The Ray Johnson Estate’s website. The first template circulated will be Johnson’s *The Starn Twins*, upon which recipients are invited to complete a fractured pair of the artist’s signature “bunny” drawings. This will appear in the April 2015 issue of *Art in America*. This project follows on the heels of Mark Guiducci’s ‘Add To and Return To’ project on *Vogue.com*, for which artists including Ed Ruscha, John Baldessari, Mark Gonzalez, and Israel Lund altered Ray Johnson mailings. These responses can be viewed online at <http://www.vogue.com/946784/ray-johnson-homage-ed-ruscha/>.

Ray Johnson was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1927. After attending Black Mountain College, Johnson moved to New York City in 1949 with fellow classmates Richard Lippold and John Cage. An influence on and friend of key art figures including Andy Warhol, Chuck Close, Jim Rosenquist and Jasper Johns, Johnson is associated with several art movements and groups, such as Pop Art, Conceptual Art, and Fluxus. Johnson continued to produce work until his suicide in 1995, an act that many consider to be his final performance. The artist is the subject of cult classic film *How to Draw a Bunny* and his work has been the subject of exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Kunstverein Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Oslo; among others, and is included in renowned private and public collections. The Ray Johnson Estate is represented exclusively by Richard L. Feigen & Co.

Performa is a multidisciplinary non-profit arts organization, founded by art historian RoseLee Goldberg in 2004, dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of 20th-century art and to encouraging new directions in performance for the 21st century, engaging artists and audiences through experimentation, innovation, and collaboration. Part of Performa’s mission is to present a biennial of visual art performance in New York City that illuminates the critical role of performance in the history of art as well as its enormous significance in the international world of contemporary art. The Performa 15 biennial dates are: Nov 1-22, 2015.