

## Ed Varney / INTERVIEW

*The interview recorded here is a compilation of two, really three events. It takes materials from the tapes made at the first interview at Varney's Kerrisdale house-cum-Museo and interpolates them with rephrased questions and new questions and answers that occurred during a second interview held mid-February, 1984. The speakers — Ed Varney and Ann Rosenberg — are identified by initials.*

EV I came here in 1968 from the States and soon after I got here I discovered Intermedia which was . . . an artists' co-op. . . I'd had this idea of something like that before I got here, though I really didn't know what it was, so I was really excited when I discovered Intermedia existed. At a certain point Intermedia decided it needed a press and purchased a complex mimeo machine and that's where I learned the basics about printing.

Intermedia was founded on the premise of an interdisciplinary mix but especially it aimed to create a union between art and technology. There really was collaboration and exchange between people at Intermedia. Almost every artist in town had some relation to it. . . . At a certain point in 1973 when Intermedia was at its apex, . . . when it had an L.I.P. grant that covered twelve salaries is when it started to break up. It's just ridiculous the way these things happen. The very process that got it to that point hastened its demise because people who'd been working there had learned to administer their own trips. So the Western Front broke off and became a separate thing, then Metromedia. Al Razuitis started Visual Alchemy. Granville Grange was a co-operative studio run by Glenn Toppings, Dallas Sellman, D'arcy Henderson. Intermedia Press which had been the publishing arm of Intermedia just kept going partly because I was very committed to Intermedia and didn't want to recognize that it had broken up. It was like a marriage. But I was also doing Correspondence Art in 1973.

AR Yes, and you were also publishing poetry? Being typically self-starting . . .

EV At a certain point in life you realize that you can't just wait around to be discovered, you have to do everything yourself. And in Vancouver, you really have to.

To survive as an artist, you definitely have to be a teacher, a curator or something else. You just can't be one thing, because that doesn't work. So in terms of poetry, . . . I realized that I had to do it myself. I had to edit and publish my own magazines. I had to start my own publishing company and learn the printing trade. Soon I got together with Henry Rappaport, John MacDonald and Brad Wendkos to do a quick-printed magazine called *The Poem Company*. It was on an 8½ x 11 inch sheet of paper which could be folded and cut into an eight page magazine. We printed five hundred copies and mailed them out. In those days postage was three or four cents, ridiculously cheap. We decided not to seek subscribers, but to mail it out to the people we wanted to communicate with.

Before the magazine started, I'd done a similar project called *Junk Mail* where I also communicated directly with the people I'd chosen. So when we started *The Poem Company* which cost us six bucks to produce, we brought it home, stapled it, mailed it out and we got into the rhythm of doing this almost once a week, which is really fast for a poetry magazine. If someone sent us a poem, it might be published next week.

The response was fantastic. Whenever we met someone we took their address, but in a sense we were distributing junk mail to whoever we wished. And at a certain point we were saying, let's send stuff to William Stafford, to Alan Ginsberg; let's communicate with William Burroughs. So we really picked the audience. And in a year we came a long way. The first issue was done at the quick printer, but by the end of the year we had a printing press in the basement and our methods had become very sophisticated and we were publishing almost every conceivable kind of concrete poetry.

AR And you were publishing other people's books and poems?

EV Yes, I guess we were by the end of that first year. . . .

A poet  
 A tongue that mocks the wind  
 A comrade of things  
 An ear that hears what never happens  
 An eye  
 A barbarous heart  
 Death's last ditch



**po'ém**, n. A metrical composition esp. of elevated tone (*prose p.*, description &c. resembling *p.* in tone). **po'etry** n., pp. or the art of making them. **po'et** n., maker of pp., writer of (esp. elevated or imaginative) verse, (*Poet's* corner, part of Westminster Abbey with monuments of poets, part of newspaper assigned to verse); person of imaginative temperament. **po'etaster** n., inferior verse-writer. **po'etess** n., **po'et'ic(al)** aa. (*locally*), of poets or poetry; (usu. -to) having the good qualities of poetry; (usu. *ical*) written in verse; *poetical justice*, ideal equity in fate of the good & bad; *poetic licence*, **poét'ics** n. pl., the science of or a treatise on poetry; highfown talk or principles. **po'etry** n., the poet's art or work, elevated expression of elevated thought or feeling esp. in metrical form; poems; poetical feeling, quality in things that evokes it. [*Grk poieo make*]



1. Who ripped off the enthusiasm?
2. Where are the farming instructions?
3. What times was the moon?
4. Blinded, did the pilots just drift, laughing?
5. Were there blood sounds?
6. Why the clouds of fish bones, surprised in the fields?
7. Did the tourists survive?





AR And that's how Intermedia Press grew? The press you still run with Henry Rappaport?

EV Yes.

AR Were there ever any other partners?

EV One: John MacDonald who worked on *The Poem Company*, but he couldn't take the poverty. He bought a new Volkswagen, then he had to get a full-time job to pay for it. John was still with us when we got a thousand dollar grant from the Canada Council to cover postage for *The Poem Company*. . . . We were really excited about this money and decided to document the process of us putting the money in our account, and so on. Almost as soon as the next day, the R.C.M.P. showed up, because they thought we'd been casing the bank. It was quite hilarious, really.

Anyway, out of *The Poem Company* project grew a network of correspondents. *The Poem Company* became a medium of exchange. If someone sent us something, we'd send back a magazine. As it happened while we were following our impulses, in other places people were doing similar things, but not the same things. For example, a guy called Dana Atchley in Victoria was working on *The Space Atlas*. What he did was to ask people for a hundred prints and he would collate the materials collected into books. Then each participant would get a book with his and other works in it. And what happened was, there was soon this network that sprang up of people working in a contributory mode. Art sent through the mail and various projects became Mail Art. So between 1970 and 1972, little by little, we'd gathered together the addresses of people who would exchange things through the mail.

AR Here you have this beautiful book of Xeroxed snaps of Broadway intersections. Will you send something back?

EV Yes . . . One of the principles of Mail Art is the premise of trade, not purchase. So when I get a book like that, I trade the sender something I think of equal value. When I think about it, what I've had for years is an audience of four or five hundred people for my work. It's an audience unlike a gallery audience, because you know that in sending something through the mail, it's going to get there; it's going to be seen by someone. Secondly, you're able to judge the quality of the response to what you've sent by the quality of what is sent back. So if you get a bunch of junk, you realize that somehow the thing you sent didn't work. But the main thing is, you do get back something in trade almost every time.

Out of the context of sending things back and forth — sometimes you send an original drawing, sometimes a print — I got the idea of doing an exchange which would involve me sending a piece of paper on which I'd want the correspondent to do an artwork that would be sent back to me. . . .

AR That idea figures in the recent *Global Postale* and *Heaven and Hell* projects, but hadn't yet been worked out by the time of your first major stamp project. . . .

EV No. The material for that one came because in my correspondence I'd mentioned I was making stamps and so some people sent me things that looked like stamps, that could be stamps or just imagery, like this concrete poem. Then I made stamps out of the ones I thought would make the most interesting stamps.

For the *Global Postale* project, I decided to send people a piece of paper on which they could make a stamp-like image, so I wouldn't have to go through the contortions I did when I made that first collection. So I sent the form to about two hundred and fifty people who I thought would send something back. The format was exactly three times as large as the finished stamp and had *Global Postale 1984* set under it in . . .

AR . . . your Esperanto.



EV Yes, and with an invitation in the pigeon language I've developed. And they could do anything they wanted in the format. It turned out that one hundred and twenty-six people sent something back and I had room for one hundred and twenty-five. I edited one out, because I found it tasteless; but I didn't edit the project. That's another thing about Mail Art; it's always been very open. I thought I'd get enough for one sheet of stamps and it turned out to be five — essentially a little magazine of tiny images.

... When I got them back, I was thinking about them as stamps, I wasn't too concerned with them as originals. I realized later that I'd received some fantastic images; a show, in fact. So I've matted them and preserved them in plastic folders. I've even shown them at a little gallery called the Six in One, but I'd like to have a more comprehensive exhibition combining those with the *Heaven and Hell* projects, and some related things that are really fascinating. . . .

AR Did you collect *Global Postale* last year?

EV No. I actually did it in 1981, but used 1984 because there's been an undercurrent about that year for years, and now I'm beginning to see why. . . . Anyway, you can see how *Global Postale 1984* was the genesis for the *Heaven and Hell* project.

AR In this current one you gave everyone a format and a concept, but some people took liberties with it. . . .

EV They sure did. . . .

AR I just cracked up when I saw them in that little room at the October Show. . . .<sup>1</sup>





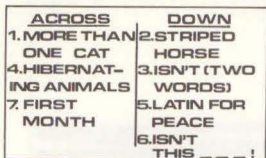
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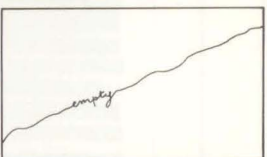
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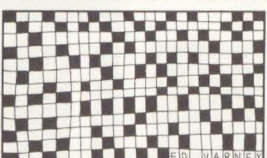
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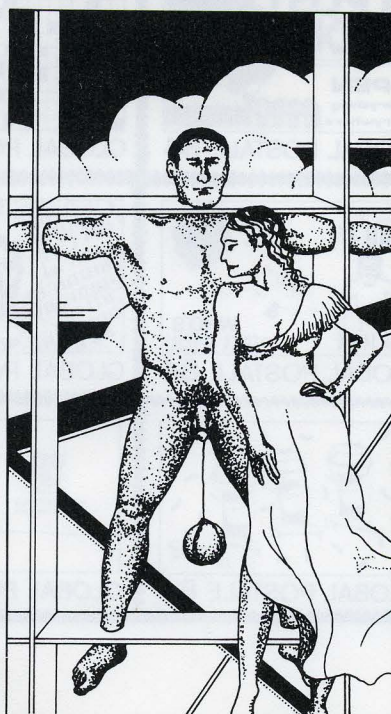


HELL

NO

HEA VEN

YES



*EV* In this one, all they got was a box to put something in and on the back of the paper a space for their names and addresses. Some used the box horizontally; others, vertically. With this project, too, I sent out about three hundred and fifty and got back about one hundred and twenty-five, but not from the same people who contributed to *Global Postale*. . . . The interpretation of the theme was very liberal; a lot of the images have sexual overtones. It's amazing. That didn't occur to me. I probably won't edit this project much either.

*AR* As correspondence and mail artist, one of your specialties is stamps. As you write in a preface to your stamp which was included in a lovely compilation of stamps from twenty-five countries in Milwaukee by Patrick Bellman in 1983:

I got interested in stamps as an art medium because

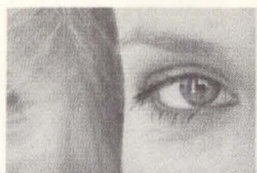
1. They are an intrinsic part of Mail Art.
2. They are efficient, lots of images on one sheet.
3. They require excellent reproduction and
4. Someone gave me an old perforator. I made my first stamps in 1976 and never looked back. My ambition is to design stamps for Canada Post. Stamps are only one part of my endeavours. With the price of postage these days, it will soon be worthwhile to get into counterfeiting.

I like stamps and I have an excellent collection of artists' stamps. I like playing with media that are not generally felt to be art media. The first art stamps I ever saw were William Farley's "X cents" with the reverse of his head. Jim Felter at Simon Fraser University has curated and travelled an excellent show of Artists' Stamps. I could be tempted by \$ to produce a sheet for someone.

Now in this book was included one stamp from a sheet you produced at U.B.C. with a class run by Michael deCourcy. . . .

*EV* Yes. That stamp project was done as a group project on a very primitive printing press and everyone was blown away with the detail that was possible. I was impressed too. It's almost cosmic that each stamp represents a square mile. I like the ones that are the most abstract; some others are almost interchangeable. The Prospect Point one is really great. I've known deCourcy since Intermedia days and we're still excellent friends. . . .





HOMO EKTA CHROMO



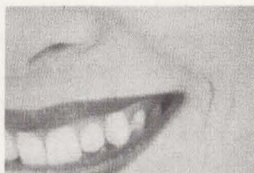
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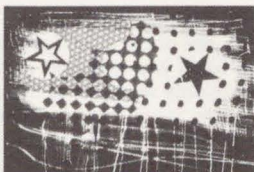
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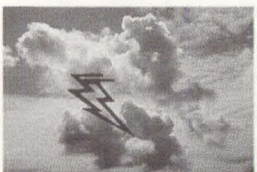
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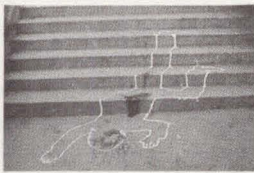
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AR What is the first stamp you made?

EV The first stamp project I was involved with was called the *1st Intermedia Stamp Edition*. I made it at Intermedia and I got little images from the people right there. It had twenty stamps on the first sheet and I did thirteen of them myself because it was just a little experiment.

AR So that came before the others. . . .

EV Yes, that was in 1976. Then I didn't do anything until 1978 when I did the *2nd International Artists' Stamp Edition*, because by then I'd got material from other places. . . . I took the material which was in all different forms — some big, some small, some postcards, but all were graphic — and reduced the ones I thought would look best and printed them in black, red and white. Then I thought I'd like to do some coloured stamps and soon I was working not on one sheet but on four, concurrently. These were the *Homo Ekta-Chromo*, the *International Post*, the *3rd International Artists' Stamp Edition* and the *1984 Commemorative Edition*. I was working on all four at the same time, because the project got a little out of hand . . .

AR . . . as some of your projects seem to do. . . .

EV Yes, that's right. . . .

AR And so the black and red stamps came before these. . . .

EV Yes, they were the *2nd International Artists' Stamp Edition* and they came before *Global Postale* and the colour stamps.

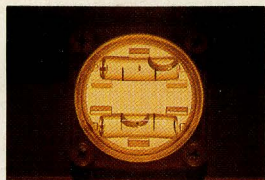
AR In *Homo Ekta-Chromo* and in the *1984 Commemorative Stamps* there's movement on the sheet. Is that something new?

EV No. I see them as a whole sheet, more so than as contributions by individual artists, because I'm always working with them as a block. But in the *1984 Commemorative Stamps*, I worked with people to produce blocks of four stamps, because in philately a block of *four* is an important part of a philatelist's trip. And especially the corner right-hand lowest block. So when I was designing the Commemorative stamp sheet, I asked



Anna Banana to do that corner. People like Anna would come to the press on a Tuesday evening and work on these. Maybe it would take four evenings of discussion and work to come up with the images. It was nice. There were these local people coming in who had an interest in stamps — Ladislav Guderna, Jim Felter, . . . Michael deCourcy, . . . Rick Hambleton, Dave Roberts. . . . In this series some look more like stamps than others. Jim Felter's almost look official; Dave Roberts' are just lovely images, like stickers more than stamps. Each artist played with a stamp-like format in his own way. But in the other series — the *International Post* — I gave them the format and I made it look like a pseudo-stamp, not counterfeit but playing the stamp game. . . . And what interested me a lot in this series was the many visions people had of what a slide could be, for all these stamps were generated from slides. One was a negative; one was made with ink and Letraset right on a piece of acetate; there was one colour-Xeroxed onto a piece of acetate; there was a painted slide, etc. . . .

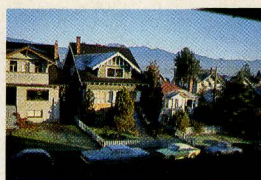
So I started these colour stamps in 1980, but they didn't get printed until 1983.



33<sup>INTL</sup> International Post



33<sup>INTL</sup> International Post



33<sup>INTL</sup> International Post

*AR* But the *Homo Ekta-Chromo* sheet originated from a slide show. . . .

*EV* Yes. . . . It arose from a group of students in Michael de Courcy's class who started up an organization called T.B.A.T.V. They had a weekly show on cablevision. . . . I know Michael, as I mentioned earlier, and I'd visited his class, gotten to know these people, and so one of the projects T.B.A. undertook as a whole that was beyond school and beyond the Fine Arts Department at U.B.C. was to collect a 20th Century media compilation in the form of slides for the Museum of Anthropology: 20th Century Anthropology. So they collected literally thousands and thousands of slides. . . .<sup>2</sup>

*AR* From people that they knew?

*EV* No, the group took them. There were about ten people who made thousands of slides. In the end there was a six-screen computer-driven slide show for the Anthropology Museum, . . . and, in the end, we went through the slides and picked out ones to make stamps of which represented to some extent the concerns of the slide project. So in the stamp sheet there are images drawn from media, from reality, banal images, abstract images like snow on T.V., T.V. images. The stamps came after the show. The museum was pleased with the show itself and I believe it still retains the materials, because the museum essentially commissioned the slide project. . . .

*AR* But the stamp sheet allows it to survive in another form.

*EV* Yes, this just condenses it. And a lot of people who were involved in this group are still really active. . . .

*AR* Yes, I recognize their names . . .



*EV* . . . some were Michael's students then. I think he really did a great job out there at U.B.C. I felt sorry when they changed policy, let go the photography area. . . . While this T.B.A. project was going on, I'd make myself available one night a week at the press and the stamp project was the basic continuity that went through that period of availability. On a given night Rick Hambleton would be there working on some P.M.T.s and I'd be there talking with Ladislav or Michael about stamps. Meanwhile someone else would be using one of the light tables to do something else. It wasn't really a seminar, but I was opening up the facilities of Intermedia Press, that resource. I was making myself available in that context and I really enjoyed it. It went on for almost three years like that, but then over the last year or so, I haven't been doing that as regularly. Then, at a certain point, I'd finished the stamps . . . and the reason evaporated to a certain extent.

*AR* Have you done other stamp projects, sheets for artists?

*EV* Well, come to think of it, I have made sheets for Michael McCall, Andrej Somov as well as for Ladislav and Martin Guderna. But they were simpler than these colour stamps are.

*AR* You have been collecting things by mail for a long time. Is there any pattern to the correspondence you receive?

*EV* Some of the people have been in the network for a long time; there are people I know well. I've got lots of pen pals. I've corresponded with Uncle Don Milliken really extensively, maybe as much as once a month for three or four years. But lately I've been sending him things and he doesn't respond, so that's tapered off. . . . There's this lady, Angelika Schmidt from Germany, who's always sending fantastic things. Tom Ockerse responds with really nice things, but not often. Actually, I have about one hundred consistent, longterm Mail Art correspondents and another two hundred casual.



# ENEMY

—LINCOLN CLARKES—



*AR* Over the years, have any of the Mail Artists established their personalities?

*EV* There's this guy called Richard C. — never knew his last name — who's sent me about fifty postcards. His forté is the pun. He'll send a postcard and on one side it will say, "left," and on the other, "right." They're always simple little tricks. Richard's medium is the strange little postcard. There's another fellow who sends quick-printed collages that are always 8½ by 11 inches and really complex; always built up from ads and stuff. . . . Together they give a picture of our culture, and I've got a folder full of them; about one hundred and thirty, so far. These collages are his medium. Some people always send drawings; some people send something different every time. There's no standard really. What's sent is as varied as the people.

And Mail Art is close to play. It's fun. Many of the artists who participate work in other media — some are writers; some are graphic artists. And over the years I've watched some of these artists mature. Some of them have positions like curator at various museums; others — especially the Europeans — I've no idea what they do. But at a certain point, I began to realize that this wasn't just a random activity I was involved with, it was something else. So I came up with the idea of calling it a museum or a museo, because, once again, in my Dadaist pose I like to have fun with, play with all these ideas.

I invented this museum, but I haven't really promoted it. I just use it as a plaything, a front, the Museo Naçional de Neu Art in my own esperanto that combines Italian, German, Spanish, French and English. When I write letters, I try to write this kind of language. I don't know German; I don't know Spanish; I'm not spectacular in French. I try to write in this English-based stuff with a "mit" and a "der" whenever I can throw them in. . . .

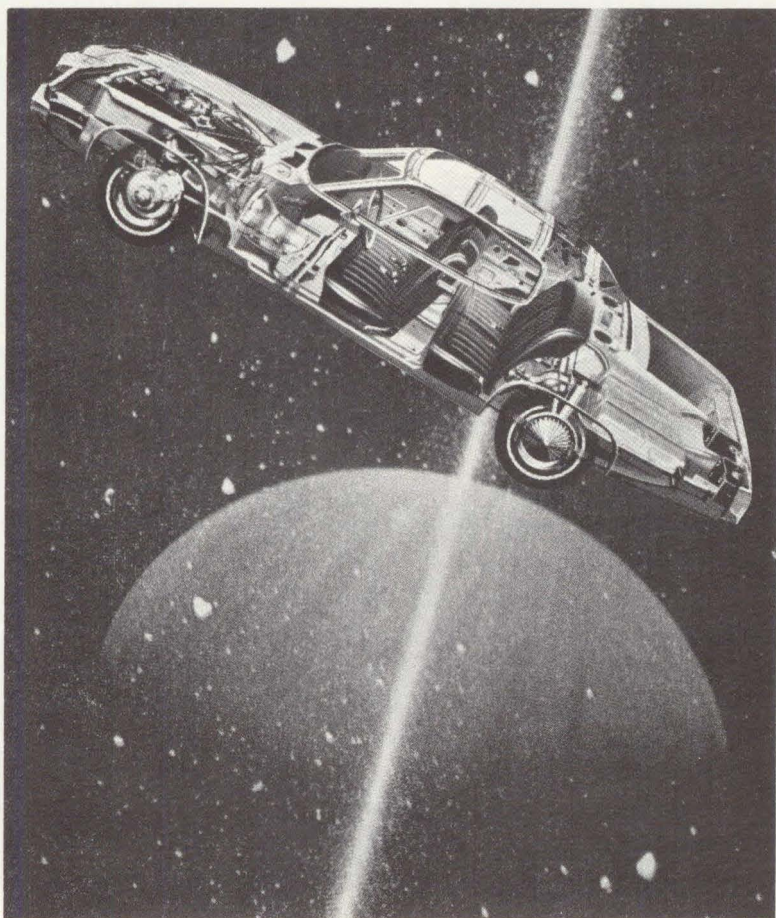
*AR* And do people respond in kind?

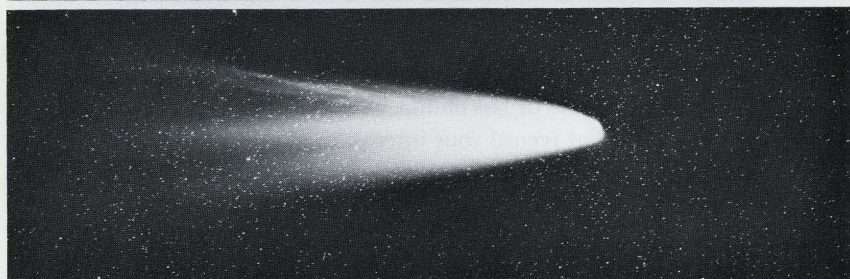
*EV* Yes, they really like that. I always try to make it game-like in some way and people are really responsive. People call it Esperanto, but it really isn't. I was very interested in Esperanto at one time and I discovered that it was a very Baltic, very Slavic-based language. There were few English words and I



found that surprising. The further you got away from Central Europe, the less useful it became. Now I think we're in a period of history where English is clearly the major language so a real Esperanto, I think, should be based on English. I think that, living in Canada, we should be using French in our everyday language, but that's a sub-issue. But I really have fun with my pigeon Esperanto.

*AR* In the office of your museo, you keep different categories of your interests more or less on file. You have drawers to contain photographs that record your interest in Pyramids, Galactic research. You have files for exceptional envelopes . . .





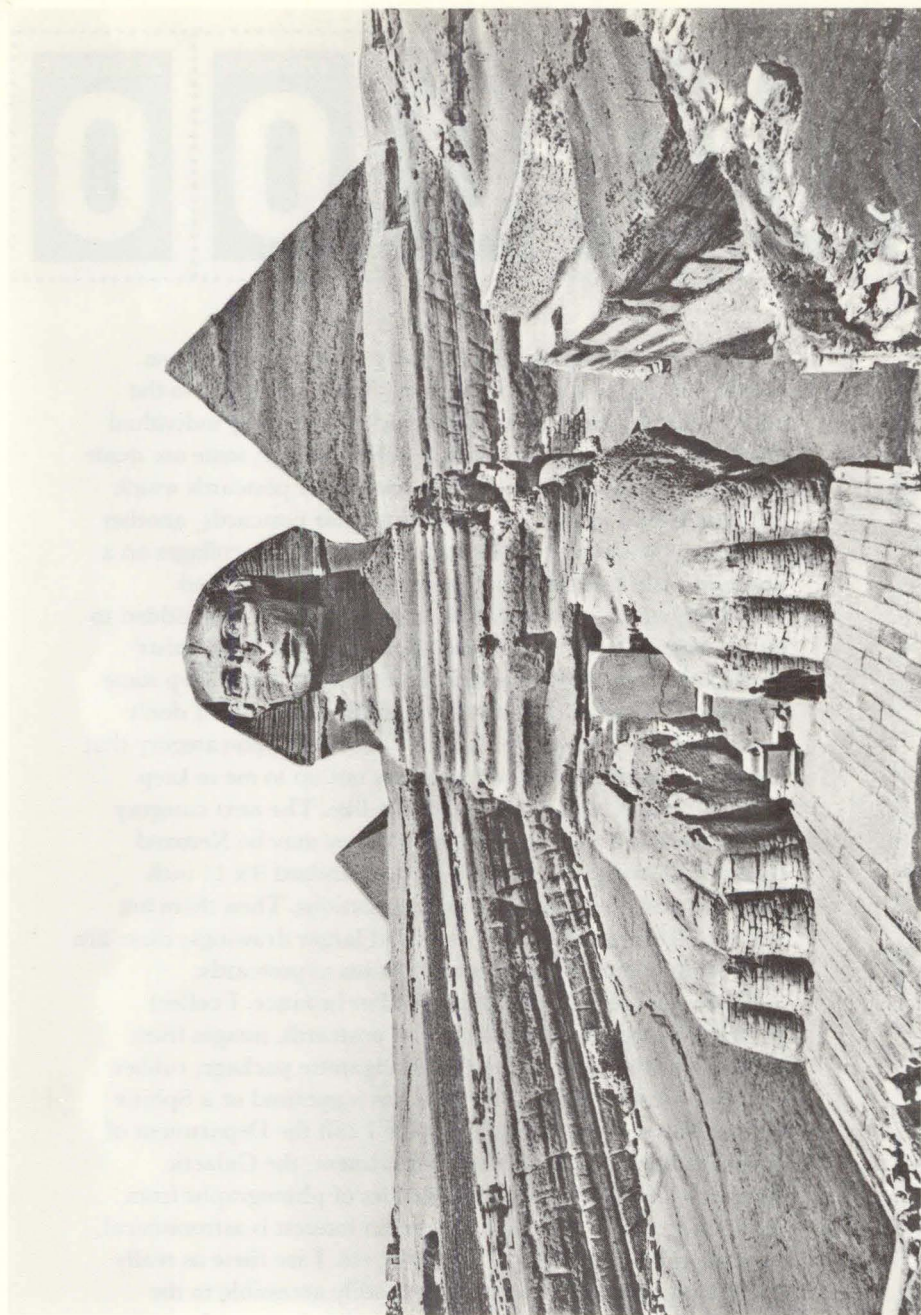




*EV* . . . Yes. I have a big file on stamps by artists, probably one hundred sheets of stamps by artists. These are similar to the ones I've done, but they are mostly whole sheets by individual artists. Some of these are made in colour Xerox; some are made by rubber stamps. I have two drawers full of postcards which fall into several categories — one is regular postcards; another is unique postcards by artists such as drawings or collages on a postcard scale sent through the mail; another is altered postcards, which are regular postcards that have been added to or subtracted from. Then there are also postcards of artists' works and some of these are really interesting art. I keep some invitations to shows that are of postcard format, but I don't keep them all. . . . I figure that invitations is a sub-category that someone else may be collecting, so it's not up to me to keep them all. I only keep the ones I really like. The next category I keep are 8½ by 11 inch sheets. . . . They may be Xeroxed sheets or drawings, but they fit into a standard 9 x 11 inch envelope and are letter-size communications. Then there are posters, etchings, silkscreen prints and larger drawings; there are a lot of photographic images and photos as postcards.

There are specialized collections. For instance, I collect pyramid images that I really like — postcards, images from magazines, the camel of the Camel cigarette package, rubber stamps — just anything I see that has a pyramid or a Sphinx on it. I put all these things into a file I call the Department of Pyramidology. I have another Department, the Galactic Research Council, which contains files of photographs from N.A.S.A. on various planets. My main interest is astronomical, in other galaxies, comets, solar flares, etc. I see these as really interesting images. They are most readily accessible to the specialist, so I thought my job as an artist was to make some of that imagery more available.





I have a huge collection of slides, slides of my own and slides other people have sent me, artists' books and poetry books. I've always collected poetry books.

Again the Museo contains collections of things that no one else could collect, because they're unique. Books, for example, are collected by others. I'm always amazed, for example, at how comprehensive is U.B.C.'s Special Collections. But then books are usually published in several hundred copies, and they really do get around. . . .

In Europe, especially, there's a tradition of people having their own museums. There's one fellow in Belgium who has something called the Art Recycling Terminal (A.R.T.). There's another guy who has a Museum of Museums. In Hungary, . . . there's Art Pool. There are a number of people who have pseudo-institutions; for example, there's one in Ontario called The People's Republic of Poetry; there's one in Poland called Bureau de la Poésie. But to have one's own museum isn't that common in North America where we tend to take our museums very seriously. Here they're seen as public, not private endeavours. There, there are lots of little places, like Albrecht-Dürer-lived-here. . . .

Finally, I've got a large archive of poems. All the things I was sent for *The Poem Company*, I keep in one place.

AR This Museo-cum-archive, like the Correspondence Art, is an on-going activity. You're hoping soon to publish *Heaven and Hell*. What other immediate plans do you have?

EV I had this realization a while ago. I started thinking, "I've done the stamps, I'm doing *Heaven and Hell* — what am I going to do next?"

I realized that I'd be foolish to give up stamps, because I've obviously figured out how to do them . . . so I'm going to work on another couple of stamp sheets. But really what I want to do is to break out of this miniature format, to expand, to make some prints. I have a series of paintings in mind. So I'm . . . moving out of correspondence and the network thing to do my own art.



*AR* The last work of yours I remember seeing, I'm ashamed to say, was in the Westcoast Hermetics Show (1973) at U.B.C.'s Fine Arts Gallery. You're still doing art, still exhibiting?

*EV* Yes. I've always been doing art, but lately I've been doing more. I had something in the October Show. I've had things in two shows at the Unit Pitt recently and was in two shows at the gallery near it called the Modele-Kite. . . . So lately I've felt as if I were allied, once again, with the younger artists.

For years, however, my main definition of myself was as a poet. . . . Sometime during my freshman year at college, I decided to become a poet and lately I've realized why. Of all the things I did, I had the least talent for expressing my emotions in words and poetry seemed like the most difficult thing I could possibly attempt, so I really studied hard. I got an M.A. in English with the aim of learning everything I could about poetry. I edited poetry magazines. I learned how to make books, how to be a publisher. I did readings. The printing business I'm in now is a spin-off from those activities. I worked very hard at being a poet and in 1975, I think it was, I gave myself a Ph.D. in Poetry from the University of Vancouver because I thought I'd earned a doctorate in the subject. But in the last year or so, I've changed my direction.

I'd always had a talent for art. In graphic art I could unite the two interests often; for example, I did a lot of concrete poetry. A year or two ago, I began to assess myself as a poet and I decided for various reasons that things had changed for me, that I wasn't as interested in poetry anymore. I'd become



the best poet I could, . . . but the response to my work had been limited and I felt maybe I'd been barking up the wrong tree, maybe I'd taken on a thing that I wasn't really gifted at, that I'd worked very hard at so that I was successful in it on my own terms, but lacked the essential gift for. . . .



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Can we know  
our past lives?

**The Myth of the Twilight Years**



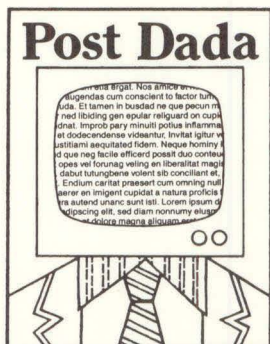
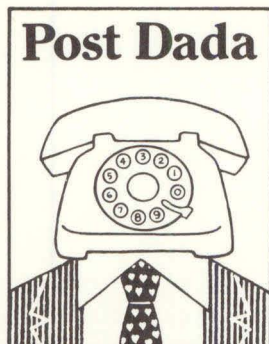
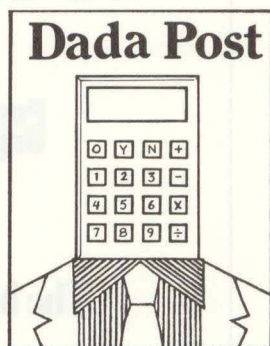
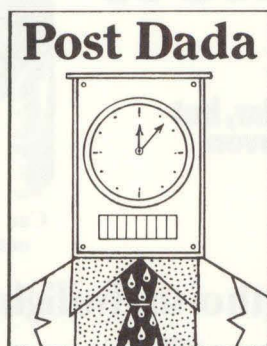
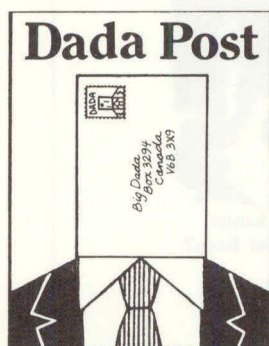
*The Unpublished  
Facts of Life*

**Natural Wonder**

When I was younger, a teen-ager, my mother used to say, "You should be an artist." But the visual arts came easy to me as did printing, so I thought it would have been too facile, too easy to be an artist. I was always very interested in the philosophical end of poetry, . . . and it was difficult to make philosophical art. I think it's hard to convey complex meaning in art, but that may or may not be true.

Anyway, a year or so ago, I dedicated myself to a new direction, to visual art. I'd always maintained an interest; I'd always been a graphic artist, a book designer. But I decided really to get into it and it's been invigorating because it's like being a beginner again. Because I'm a beginner getting serious at it, I'm lumped in with the younger artists, though I think I'm seen as a middle-aged poet.

For the last six or seven years in philosophical terms, I've developed an interest in Dada which grew out of my earlier interest in Existentialism. As I evolved as a poet, I got lighter and lighter, in a way. I developed a persona for myself as Professor Poem. Having given myself a Ph.D., I gave myself a professorship. . . .



**PROFESSOR POEM**  
Poem's The Name And Poetry's The Game



**Box 3294  
Vancouver, B.C.  
Canada V6B 3X9**



*AR* That makes sense. . . .

*EV* So, anyway, I had this poet persona and I was developing some art personas too, the most recent one being Walt Dizzy. . . . But the truth is that there's an attitude that's Dadaist, that recognizes that all this activity is absurd; though meaningful in some ways, it's a game. This attitude seems to work better in the visual arts than in poetry which is usually thought of as a serious business.

At a certain point, I'd become less able to open myself up to experimentation in poetry. It seemed to me that I could lose something everytime I published and opened myself to criticism; whereas now, as a visual artist, I've very little to lose. In fact, I'm moulding my thing on losing it, on giving it away, on not being afraid to make mistakes, on being willing to experiment. And that's really exciting, really fun.

*AR* Do you like the Dadaist idea that everything we do is art?

*EV* Yes and no. In general, I feel that art is really a specific activity. And I'm forced to do things that are definitely not art. My life isn't all that together that I can maintain a high attitude all the time. . . . Recently I've been realizing that my experience in the printing trade has been very handy because I think art is about communication, and through printing I've learned about communicating with large numbers of people. . . . And in my most recent prints, I use techniques that come from the stamps. Those prints derive from collages that I made slides of, then colour separations of the slides. Then I blew up the images so that the dots of colour became very large. The results, I thought, were very interesting, and I'd like to pursue these experiments further.



# TIME

*AR* A thumbnail sketch of your progress as an artist?

*EV* When I was young and first involved in art, I was interested in representational painting and artists like Andy Wyeth. . . . Little by little with that kind of outlook I became involved in photography, took lots of slides. Then because reality itself wasn't interesting enough, I began to make surrealist collages — some of which are published in *The Poem Company* — and concrete poems where sometimes I overlaid a word on slide images. These slides with words I used to project in a random order.

Soon I was collaging things into images of real landscapes which I saw as a way of intruding an image from another reality into an actual landscape, but at a certain point I had images in mind for which I couldn't find collage materials, so this has led me to contemplate moving into the area of surrealist painting. My lifestyle, at the moment, doesn't allow much time for painting, though I'm trying to free up some time.

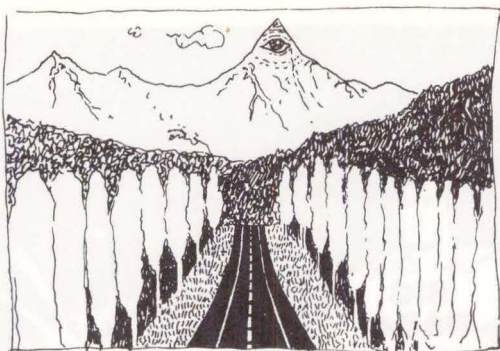
*AR* How does meeting with the Melmoth Vancouver group of surrealist artists and writers assist you?<sup>3</sup>

*EV* What I appreciate in meeting with the surrealist group is that they get together to discuss what they are doing. I liked that at Intermedia, that network of support. I like that about Mail Art.

Art is a process of communication, and I like to talk to artists about what they are doing. I'm interested in their concerns. Even at college though I was an English student, I hung around artists.



×WORLD×ART×POST× 84×



A pamphlet printed at Intermedia Press outlines seventeen projects of Varney's concern, most of which have not been touched on in the interview.

1. To create a series of images of the West End of Vancouver seen from different points of view with three large pyramids superimposed in a realistic enough way to convince someone from another city that these actually exist.
2. To produce a large time capsule to be buried under a pyramid-shaped monument in Stanley Park commemorating the City of Vancouver Centennial in 1986 and to be opened in 2086.
3. To produce a set of limited edition serigraph prints of the Lions called *36 Views of the Lions*.
4. To set up and run a summer school for the visual arts on Lasqueti Island.
5. To produce a large number of miniature paintings in series, each series dealing with a single theme, such as the moon, natural textures, clouds, graffiti, flower close-ups, etc.
6. To carve a monument 450' high, representing the mystic image of the eye and the pyramid on a suitably shaped mountain peak.
7. To produce a large-format coffee table book containing a photographic history of Vancouver.
8. To produce a series of large serigraph prints of already existing collages using newly developed colour process and UV inks.
9. To produce a commando street-art project for the summer of 1983.
10. To produce a sheet or sheets of process colour stamps by artists in a limited edition.
11. To produce an ongoing calendar series based on space photographs.
12. To curate a large-scale and comprehensive Mail Art exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1984.
13. To continue to promote the Museo International de Neu Art.
14. To make a book about the history of the Intermedia Society.
15. To produce a book called *Heaven and Hell* comprised of images and writing gathered from artists round the world.
16. To curate a comprehensive exhibition of the work of Dorothy Manning.
17. To produce a 33 rpm record drawn from the Ed Varney tape archives.





Sketch for monumental sculpture at Rogers Pass B.C. on the Trans Canada Highway. Funding by the Canada Council, the Canadian Heritage Foundation and private donation. Total cost of project \$180,000. To be executed in 1984 under the auspices of Canada Parks and Recreation. General contractor: G. Mason & Sons, Calgary. Artist and project co-ordinator: Edwin Varney.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The *October Show* catalogue (Vancouver, 1983) contains a substantial entry on *Heaven & Hell*. This catalogue may be obtained at the Contemporary Art Gallery, 555 Hamilton Street, Vancouver.
- <sup>2</sup> For more information about this project please contact the Museum of Anthropology or any of the individuals listed under the image entry.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Capilano Review*, Issue #29, "Surrealism? B.C."



## IMAGES

*Canadada* — four self portraits. Ed Varney.

Six pages of *The Poem Company*.

*Global Postale*. Left to right: Lon Spiegelman, Martin Guderna, Professor Plum, Julie Oakes.

*Global Postale*. Top to bottom:

- |   |                      |                      |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Davidet Hompson                          | 1. Dave Emblom       | 1. Herb Gilbert      |
| 2. P. Robertson and J. Wolodarsky . . . . . |                      | 2. Marv Newland      |
| 3. Anthony Gnazzo                           | 3. Michele Perfetti  | 3. E. F. Higgins III |
| 4. Ko De Jonge                              | 4. Ed Varney         | 4. Horst Tress       |
| 5. Paul Hill                                | 5. Henryk Bzdok      | 5. Pat Taverner      |
| 6. Marvin Jones                             | 6. David Greenberger | 6. George Brett      |

*Heaven & Hell*. Top: Gilmar Cardoso and Johan Van Geluve;  
bottom: Buster Cleveland and Larry Sunter.

*Homo Ekta-Chromo* was a multi-screen slide project by Bev Atwell, Arden Williams, Cindy Trotsuk, Barry Gordon, Karen Crosby, Linda Gammon, Leigh Harrington, Ken Oye, Darryl Montgomery, Bill Jeffries, Jan Koot, Bob Sherrin, Michael deCourcy, Ed Varney.

*International Post* (below) was contributed to by: Tony Gnazzo, Keith Rodan, Ely Raman, Emil Daley, Mike Crane, Gerry King, Jerry Dreva, Rick Hambleton, Gerry Gilbert.

*1984 Commemorative Stamps* by Anna Banana.

*Enemy* by Lincoln Clarkes (above) ; stamps by Henryk Bzdok (below).

Photocollage, Ed Varney.

Galactic Research Council Comet (Arend Roland, April 26-May 1).

*Zero Post* stamps by Endre Tót.

Department of Pyramidology image.

Pyramid stamps by Ed Varney.

Concrete Poem by Ed Varney.

*Dada Pose, Dada Stamps* by Ed Varney.

Professor Poem business card.

*Time*, a drawing by Ed Varney.

*World Art Post 84*, Ed Varney.

*Pyramid Project*, Ed Varney.

Collage, Ed Varney.

Poetic License Exam.