

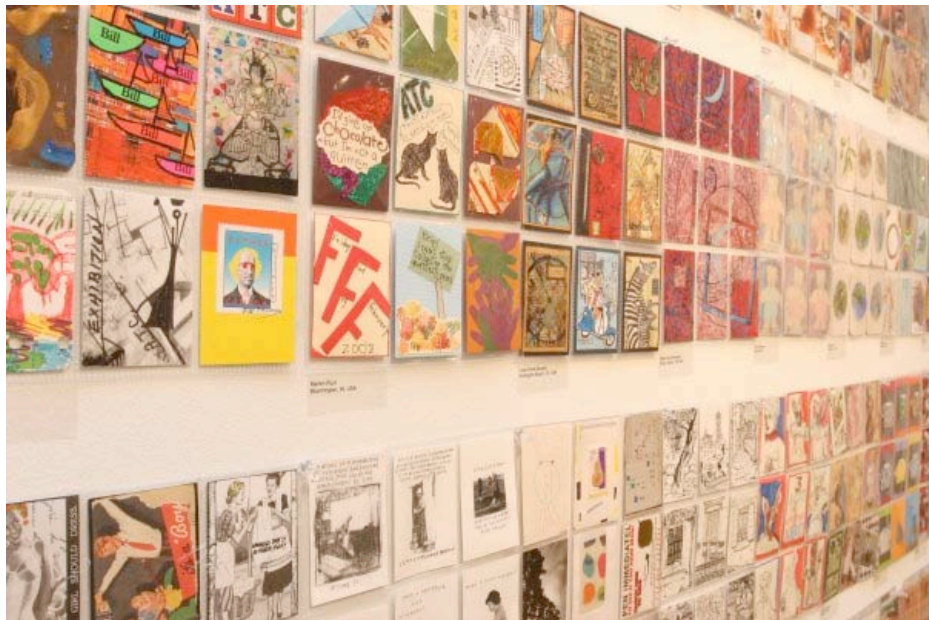
Richmond Art Gallery

SCHOOL ART PROGRAM

TEACHER'S GUIDE

More Often Than Always / Less Often Than Never
– Curated by Noxious Sector

5th Annual Artist Trading Card Exhibition
– Coordinated by Kathy Tycholis



Installation view, 4th Annual Artist Trading Card Exhibition

THE EXHIBITION: BACKGROUND

More Often Than Always / Less Often Than Never is a group exhibition curated by the collaborative team Noxious Sector, consisting of artists/curators Doug Jarvis and Ted Hiebert. This exhibition was conceived as an experimental curatorial initiative that invited artists from around the world to engage with notions of impossibility, uncertainty and the imaginary. Noxious Sector posted an open call to artists to develop artworks in response to 'pataphysics, the science of imaginary solutions attributed to the artist/writer Alfred Jarry.

The curators will return to Jarry himself for assistance with final curatorial selection. This will be achieved by holding a series of séances to consult with Jarry in determining the final selection of exhibiting artists. The séance here becomes a tentative time-machine of sorts, which is a fitting reference to Jarry's speculative essay "How to Construct a Time Machine".

Alfred Jarry (8 September 1873 – 1 November 1907) was a French writer born in Laval, France. He wrote in a variety of styles and genres, including plays, novels, poetry, essays and journalism. His texts are often cited as pioneering absurdist or **surrealist** literature and theatre. Jarry invented 'pataphysics, a pseudophilosophy dedicated to studying what lies beyond metaphysics. Pataphysics is a parody of modern science theories and methods, using nonsensical language and humour to express its meaning.

'Pataphysics has been used as a conceptual principle within various fine art forms, from **Surrealism** to **contemporary conceptual art**. Art within the 'pataphysical tradition focus on the **process of artmaking**, as opposed to the end product, and using **elements of chance** or **arbitrary choices** in this artmaking process.

The artists participating in this exhibition are:

hannah_g – A multi-disciplinary artist and cultural worker based in Winnipeg.

Julie Gendron & Emma Hendrix - A collaborative team of multi-disciplinary artists based in Vancouver, BC.

Tetsushi Higashino – A media artist who lives and works in Tokyo, Japan.

Gordon Lebrecht – Artist and writer who lives and works in Toronto, Ontario.

Chikako Maria Mori & Boris Nieslony – Mori is an installation artist based in Japan, and Nieslony is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Germany.

François Mathieu – A multi-disciplinary artist who lives and works in Saint-Sylvestre, Quebec.

Arjuna Neuman – A writer and artist currently finishing his MFA at the California Institute of the Arts.

Anne-Marie Proulx – A multi-disciplinary artist based in Montreal.

Noxious Sector is the artist team of Doug Jarvis and Ted Hiebert. Noxious Sector projects take the form of performances, curatorial initiatives and artistic collaborations.

Doug Jarvis is a Canadian visual artist and curator living in Victoria, BC. He is currently pursuing an MFA at the University of Guelph, Ontario.

Ted Hiebert is a Canadian visual artist and theorist. He is an Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Arts at the University of Washington Bothell.

THE EXHIBITION: BACKGROUND

The Art History of Artist Trading Cards:

Artist Trading Cards are an offshoot from the **Mail Art** (aka Postal Art) movement that became popular in the 1970s, an art form where artists exchange artworks and ephemera through the mail. The historical roots of the Mail Art movement can be traced to the Fluxus art movement of the 1960s.

Fluxus was an international network of artists, composers, and designers noted for artistic experimentation combined with social and political activism. Fluxus was heavily influenced by the **Dada** movement of the early 20th century, which was an art movement that occurred predominantly in Europe during World War I.

Dada artworks were nonsensical, random, chaotic, experimental, and often used humour or social commentary to poke fun of the contemporary culture. Dada influenced many art movements such as **Surrealism, Pop Art, and Fluxus**, which all took on notions of humour, experimentation and the combination of art disciplines.

Fluxus (1970s – today) as an international art movement included a strong current of **anti-commercialism** in favour of a do-it-yourself aesthetic and **artist-centered creative practice**. A common theme was the delight in **spontaneity and humour**, and the value in **simplicity** over complexity. Their events or performances promoted positive **social and community connections** through **collaboration or interaction**. Similar to Dada, the idea of focusing on **art as a process** rather than an object for sale was of prime importance to this art movement.

Several artists associated with the Fluxus movement of the 1960s began to work with Mail Art as the **non-commercial exchange** of creative ideas, correspondence and images in mailable formats. Fluxus encouraged the sharing of art outside the existing gallery system, and Mail Art was a very effective and simple means of realizing this goal. In the 1970s Mail Art grew as an international art movement, and continues on nowadays with the help of the internet and email.

Artist Trading Cards follow many of the constructs of Fluxus and are often considered a sub-genre of Mail Art, especially as many artists mail their ATCs to one another. The first Artist Trading Cards are attributed to Swiss artist M. Vanci Stirnemann who exhibited 1200 hand-made cards in Zurich in 1997, and he invited anyone who wanted one of his cards to create their own to trade during the closing reception of his exhibition. Many artists in attendance at this event were inspired to start ATC Trading Sessions in their own communities. Since then, interest in ATCs has spread to most cities around the world.

The Richmond Art Gallery's 5th Annual Artist Trading Card Exhibition is a display of Artist Trading Cards from local, national, and international participants. Following the tradition of ATC Exhibitions world-wide, there is no jurying as all submissions are accepted. All artistic mediums are welcome, and participants of any age and/or artistic abilities are welcome to participate. Each year, our exhibition grows larger as more and more people participate in this large community event.

WHAT ARE ARTIST TRADING CARDS?

Artist Trading Cards, or ATCs, are miniature works of original art that are the size of a baseball or hockey card, measuring 2 ½" x 3 ½". While anything goes in terms of theme or materials used to create them, ATCs always follow these rules:

- They must measure 2 ½" x 3 ½"
- The artist name or signature is on the back, along with any additional information such as date, medium, edition #, or email contact
- They are meant to be freely given away or traded, NEVER sold
- Trading is ideally done in person, but can also be done through the mail

Artist Trading Cards Guidelines

ATCs inherited many of the principles of Mail Art, including:

- **simplicity** of artwork, due in part to its small size
- trading maintains the **anti-commercialism** sensibility
- trading sessions and exhibitions involve **interactive exchange** and a social dimension
- production of ATCs are an **artist-centered creative practice**, where the process of making and exchanging artworks is just as important as the final product
- exhibitions and trading sessions are **inclusive** rather than exclusive, as anyone can participate regardless of age and artistic abilities
- ATCs are generally **original** artworks, but some people trade digital prints. Prints and digital works are acceptable as long as they are a small edition.

Trading Sessions

The whole premise behind ATCs is the trading, making them more than just an art object but an event where you **share your art and ideas with others**. The intent is to make art inclusive and interactive. At the end of the Richmond Art Gallery ATC Exhibition, the Gallery hosts a *Closing Party Trading Session*, where all the cards on display are for trade. Trading sessions follow basic guidelines to encourage participation and socializing, which are followed at most trading sessions you attend in any city or country :

- Never trade cards that are not yours, you only trade your own creations.
- It is bad etiquette to refuse a trade with someone because you do not like their cards.
- It is ok to say you will only trade original works for original works, and refuse to trade with someone who makes editions of digital prints. However, make this clear from the start so that people do not think you are refusing a trade for aesthetic reasons.
- ATCs are not for sale, but barter can sometimes be made (i.e. 2 cards for 1, especially if trading an original for a digital prints)

GLOSSARY

Collaboration - Two or more artists working together to produce artworks. Also known as an art collective.

Collage - A picture or design created by gluing or adhering flat elements such as papers, magazine images, photographs, cloth, etc., to a flat surface. Derived from the French word "coller", to paste.

Conceptual Art – Art that is intended to convey an idea or concept. This art differs from traditional artworks by rejecting the creation or appreciation of an art object as a commodity, focusing on the ideas behind the artwork instead. Conceptual Art as an art movement emerged in the 1960s, and is seen in much contemporary art today.

Commodity - Something which can be bought and sold. Artwork seen only as a commodity (i.e. monetary value) minimizes its significance in other ways, such as an expression of artist's feelings or ideas.

Curator - A person who coordinates an art exhibition. Curators select the artists they want to exhibit, but are also responsible for taking care of the artwork, selecting which artworks will be in the exhibition, deciding where the artworks will be placed in the Gallery, and researching and writing about exhibitions.

Dada - An early twentieth century art movement that emerged after World War 1, which ridiculed contemporary culture and traditional art forms. Dada artists produced artworks which were cynical toward social values, yet were also irrational, absurd and playful. Many of the Dada artworks are intuitive and irrational, with the artist often relying on chance or 'accidents' to produce the artworks.

Pop Art - An art movement and style that originated in England in the 1950s and in the United States during the 1960s. Pop artists focus on familiar images from popular culture such as commercials, comic strips, and supermarket products, and use them in their artworks in some way.

Process Art - An art movement and creative sentiment where the end product of art (the art object) is not the principal focus. The process refers to the gathering, sorting, collating, associating, observing, researching, experimenting, and patterning which are involved in developing an art piece. Process art is concerned with the actual doing, treating art as a performance or creative journey.

Surrealism or Surrealist Art - A twentieth century art movement that originated from the ideas of the Dada art movement. Influenced by psychoanalysis and Freud, images in surrealist works are similar to dreams in that they can be confusing and startling. Surrealist works are often realistic in appearance, but portray fantasy or irrational scenes. Surrealists often use "free association" to express the unconscious mind and eliminate conscious control.

IN THE GALLERY: WHAT YOU WILL DO

TOUR:

As students are led through both exhibitions, we will discuss some of the artists and the themes/ideas behind their works. We will look at how humour, imagination, and chance can be used in the art-making process.

The tour will focus on exploring and describing images, responding to artworks, and interpreting responses to artworks by:

- Introducing students to the materials and techniques used by some of the artists
- Encouraging students to think about themes and inspiration for creating their own art
- Introducing the basics of visual literacy (shape, line, colour, etc.)
- Discussing and observing how artists work and use their observations of the world around them in the development of artworks
- Discussing the function of art, as a commodity for sale or a process

EXHIBITION BASED WORKSHOPS:

All Grade Levels – Artist Trading Cards

Projects will be adapted to each grade level. It is recommended that the teacher suggest a theme to the Gallery Instructor before arriving, so that students may work with a theme relevant to the classroom.

If teachers do not suggest a theme, students will work with the theme of “imaginary machines” or “solutions to imaginary problems”.

Students will experiment with various art materials to emphasize the process of art-making, rather than a finished product. Techniques may include drawing, printmaking, painting, colouring, and collaging, depending on the grade level of your students. Finished cards will need to contain a minimum of 3 elements, such as background, focal point, and details.



Some ideas for themes in the Classroom (post-visit):

- still life observations in drawing or painting
- making patterns
- colour schemes (i.e. only cool colours, or warm colours)
- using shapes – collage pre-cut geometric shapes to make images
- a series of images to tell a story
- a series of portraits, each one slightly different in style or of a different person
- animals – draw, collage or paint a series of animals in their habitat
- ‘inspired’ ATCs – using the style of your favourite artist

POST-VISIT ACTIVITY

ATCs in the Classroom – Basic Outline

Artist Trading Cards can be done in almost any media you have on hand. You can try painting, drawing, collage, clay, weavings, small books or pop-ups, prints, stamps, etc. The ATC project can be focused on a particular theme, or can connect to another school classroom you exchange art with. Due to the small size, ATCs as an art project can continue all year long to be done in between large projects, or when students have spare time in class. The possibilities are endless!

Basic Materials:

- Paper or other surface cut to size (2 ½" x 3 ½" for ATCs)
- Pencils and erasers
- Scissors
- Envelopes or plastic sheets to store completed ATCs

Preparations:

- Themes for ATCs can coincide with other class projects, focus on specific colours/shapes, or vary throughout the year with deadlines for specific themes posted throughout the year.
- Ensure students know the guidelines of Artist Trading Cards. (*see previous pages*)
- If storing the cards in the plastic protector sheets, it is advisable that the cards are not too thick with 3-D items. (*Plastic sheets are available at most toy or stationary stores.*)
- Many students are hesitant to part with their ATCs the first time. Keep this in mind, to gently ease them into it. Often you can 'save' a few that are not for trade, so that students can keep a few of their favourites. Or you can have students create sets of 4 ATCs, where they will keep one and then trade the rest.

Procedure:

After going through the ATC Guidelines, select a theme or material to begin ATCs. Students work on one or a series of cards.

Remember that a large part of Fluxus, the original art movement that ATCs grew out of, involved the idea of **experimentation, fun, and not taking yourself too seriously**. The small format allows for trying out new things, taking risks, and working quickly. However, to ensure students put some effort into each ATC, suggest they use at least 3 elements or techniques on each card. For example: background, mid-ground, foreground; texture, line, shape; or line drawing, colouring, and collage.

Plan a trading session either within class, or through the mail (see Resources page for online lists). If organizing an in-class trade, ensure each student has made enough cards to trade one with each person in class (i.e. a class of 30 means each student must make 30 cards).

FACILITATING TRADING SESSIONS



Trading is essential to Artist Trading Cards. Face-to-face trading is a great experience, as they are generally informal gatherings open to anyone. For students, they provide a new element to the idea of art-making where they must interact socially with others to negotiate trades and to talk to new people.

A trading session often begins when a group meets with their ATCs already made and simply asking the person next to you

“Do you have cards to trade?” Storing ATCs in plastic sheets in binders is one of the easiest ways to look through ATC collections, however, you can use envelopes, boxes, or bags to store ATCs and pass around for others to view.

Teachers may want to structure trading sessions to begin with, to ensure that all the students participate. One way to do this is to place one card by each student for trade in a bowl and then students can pick out cards randomly. Or you can separate students into groups of 4-5, where these groups trade with each other only. Or the teacher can be the host of a trade, and once all the ATCs have been handed in, you redistribute the cards to their new owners.

Trading sessions are supposed to be a way for artists (and non-artists) to encourage and support one another, to share their ideas/techniques, and to start a collection of ATCs. Always remember proper ATC Trading Etiquette by not refusing a trade if someone asks. Before taking a card, make sure the person knows that you are taking one, so that they will know to take one of your cards too (especially if in a group setting). Make sure the ATCs you have traded are kept separate from the ATCs you have made, so that people know which cards are available to trade.

Trading With Other Classes/Schools

Trading with other classes or schools is a great way to motivate students to make and trade ATCs, often creating new friendships or correspondence. You can facilitate a trade within your class to begin with as outlined above, then start to branch out to other classes and schools. Having a theme for the swap is a great way to get started. Keep note of how many students will participate, and when the deadline for trading is so that you can send all the ATCs out in one package.

More and more trades happen through the mail with the popularity of internet trading forums and sites. You can join groups online for monthly swaps or through websites that offer ongoing trades. Most trades are free, except for the cost of postage.

RESOURCES

ARTISTS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION:

Dada Artists: Francis Picabia, Marcel Duchamp, Kurt Schwitters, Man Ray, Max Ernst, George Grosz, Hans/Jean Arp, Sophie Tauber, Hannah Hoch

Fluxus Artists: George Maciunas, Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Al Hansen, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Dick Higgins, George Brecht, Ray Johnson

Mail Artists: Ray Johnson, Anna Banana, Shozo Shimamoto, Mark Bloch, Ed Varney, Ruud Janssen, Ryosuke Cohen, Guglielmo Achille Cavellini, George Maciunas, Robert Watts

Noxious Sector: Noxious Sector website – <http://www.noxioussector.net>
Doug Jarvis – <http://www.dougjarvis.ca>
Ted Hiebert – <http://www.tedhiebert.net>

WEBSITES:

Art in the Mail – A complete unit plan on Mail Art by the National Teacher Training Institute for grades 7-12 by Patricia Kambitsch – <http://www.art.net/~kiyotei/new1/artinthemail.pdf>

Art in Your Pocket – Ideas to get started on ATCs – <http://www.cedarseed.com/air/atc.html>

Art Junction: A Collaborative Art Space for Teachers and Students – great tips for ATCs in the classroom – <http://www.artjunction.org/atcs.php>

Artist Trading Cards – the original ATC site – <http://www.artist-trading-cards.ch/>

Artist Trading Card Ideas on *Squidoo* – <http://www.squidoo.com/artist-trading-card-ideas#module10189455>

ATC Quarterly – Canadian 'zine all about ATCs – <http://www.atcquarterly.com/>

ATCs for All - gallery, forum, and exchange lists (heavy focus on illustrative ATCs) – <http://www.atcsforall.com/>

Go Make Something : An Archive of Projects and Printables – Ideas for ATC projects – <http://gomakesomething.com/category/ht/atcs/>

Mail Art and Artistamps (includes section on ATCs) – <http://www.mailartists.com/index.html>

Nervousness – Group for Mail Art and ATC Exchange – <http://vb.nervousness.org/>

School Arts Magazine (has an annual ATC contest for teachers and students) – <http://www.davisart.com/Portal/SchoolArts/SAdefault.aspx>

ARTIST TRADING CARDS AT THE RICHMOND ART GALLERY

The Richmond Art Gallery offers many opportunities for artists of all ages and abilities to participate in the ATC community. Mainly, our annual open-call exhibition attracts participants from all over the world and have included people of all ages. Through the School Program, we have introduced many teachers to ATCs and help facilitate trades between schools as much as possible.

Contact Kathy Tycholis anytime to ask questions, set up trades, or anything to do with ATCs: ktycholis@richmond.ca.

View our website for updates: <http://www.richmondartgallery.org>

The Richmond Art Gallery also has a Facebook group entitled 'ATCs at the RAG'. This is our main connection with people interested in ATCs and especially for those who have participated in our ATC Exhibitions. Join the group and feel free to post images of your ATCs, ask for other involved teachers to coordinate a trade, or just to see what we are up to.

Richmond Art Gallery ATC Group on Facebook –
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=9104983993&ref=nf>

Upcoming Events:

Panel Discussion with Noxious Sector

Saturday, January 22, 2011

1:00 pm, Free

Join Noxious Sector and some of the artists from the exhibition as they discuss their work.

ATC Closing Party Trading Session

Saturday, January 22, 2011

2:00 – 4:00 pm, Free

The big finale to the Artist Trading Card Exhibition! One of the largest Trading Sessions in BC, this is an afternoon of fun and social trading. All Artist Trading Cards from the Exhibition are up for trading, which means there are thousands of cards to choose from. Even if you did not participate in this year's Exhibit, please bring some of your own ATCs to join in the trading action! All ages are welcome to participate.

Family Sunday

4th Sunday of the Month - November 28, 2010 and January 23, 2011

1:00 – 4:00 pm, Free

It's fun, fabulous and free, thanks to RBC Foundation. Join us in the Gallery for a family art activity that relates to the current exhibition.