Granary Books, Inc. 168 Mercer Street, Ste 2 TELEPHONE: 212.337.9979 FACSIMILE: 212.337.9774 New York, NY 10012

sclay@granarybooks.com wwww.granarybooks.com

A John Furnival Archive Featuring: Concrete Poetry and Mail Art

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"Furnival Gardens given the chance!" May 29, 1999.

To celebrate the anniversary of his retirement from public life, John Furnival is throwing open his house and garden to the general public. You are invited to the Private Viewing of this heap of old tin cans, yogurt containers etc. on May 29th 1999 from 7.30pm onwards.

John Furnival (1933-)

John Furnival studied at the Royal College of Art from 1957–60. In the 60s and 70s he taught at Gloucestershire College of Art and at the Bath Academy of Art, Corsham. In 1964, he and Dom Sylvester Houédard began the seminal concrete poetry press, Openings, which published Augusto de Campos, Richard Kostelanetz, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Tom Phillips, Edwin Morgan, Houédard, Furnival and others. In 1965 he was included in the "First International Exhibition of Experimental Poetry" as well as the "Between Poetry and Painting" exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (London), curated by Jasia Reichardt.

John Furnival's essential role and his many contributions to the international concrete poetry movement is reflected by his inclusion in nearly all survey exhibitions and reference works on the genre.

Furnival has also been an active participant in the international mail art movement since the 60s as well as a frequent collaborator with his many artist and writer friends including Ian Hamilton Finlay and Henri Chopin. Perhaps his best-known collaboration was with his dear friend Jonathan Williams,



which resulted in, among other projects, "Letters to the Great Dead," an expansive text/image series of prints begun in the early 1980s and completed only after Williams's death in 2008.

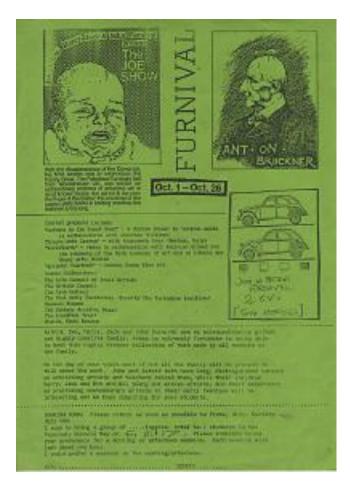
England & Company, writing about "Somewhere Between Poetry and Painting," a survey exhibition of Furnival's work at their gallery in 2010:

John Furnival's prints and drawings connect his antecedents in the Dada and Surrealist movements to his affinities and associations in the early 1960s with the innovators of Concrete poetry, the Beat poets, and the Fluxus and Mail Art movements.

Furnival somehow has avoided falling into any one of these specific categories, styles or movements. Furnival's distinctive métier is 'primarily one of ironic precision and evocation': 'iconic exactness is combined with a spirit of semantic complexity and irony', somewhat different from the pared down, minimalist poetics of Concrete poetry. Furnival's method is a kind of verbal/visual accumulation that takes the reductive qualities of Concrete poetry and subjects it to the accumulative poetics and cut-up collage techniques used by Surrealist and Dada artists in the 1920s and '30s, and by the generation of Beat poets and writers exemplified by Brion Gysin and William Burroughs. Furnival creates his own idiosyncratic system, saying that 'my whole work has been involved with the making of a moiré pattern of meaning, the laying of one message over another, unrelated one, to produce a third, unrelated to either.'

Selected Highlights from the Collection

The archive, apropos John Furnival, was sent by mail to Granary Books in dozens of small and large parcels from his homes in England and France over a two-year period. The mailings were accompanied by more than 50 handwritten cards and letters to Steve Clay that are filled with descriptions, anecdotes, and elaborations regarding the items sent. The descriptions form an integral part of the collection and provide a first person guided tour of the archive.



Flyer for the "Furnival Family Show," Prema Arts Centre, Gloucestershire, Oct. 1–26, ca. 1970s.

In personal correspondence to Steve Clay, contained in the archive, John Furnival writes: "A very embarrassing flyer for a family exhibition we held in a little arts centre in Gloucestershire back in the 70's — this flyer is <u>not</u> our responsibility!"



8 rue du grand primeré 75011 Paris 18 March 07

Dear John & Astrid,

Thanks for the pin-up, thought of you yesterday when sow all the kilts in Pans [before the match]. Bravo Frace.

I am away now until 2 otpil 85 then have a visiten 16-23 April. Have got a new Irish neighbour, bad news for noise as he is a party animal/Bring ear plugs. Love Kx

A. Bort Market Market

Kay Cresswell Roberts, ALS to Astrid and John Furnival, March 18, 2007.

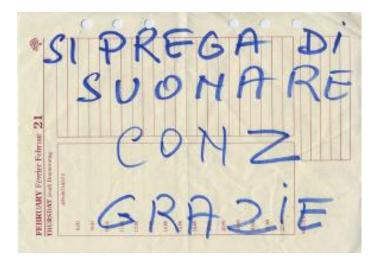
Kay Roberts and John and Astrid Furnival are longtime friends. In this 2007 letter she writes to Astrid and John: "Have got a new Irish neighbor, bad news for noise as he is a party animal! Bring ear plugs."

In 1975 Roberts and Simon Cutts founded Coracle Press and gallery space. She was active with Tarasque Press prior to the formation of Coracle. She published and exhibited with Coracle in the midseventies before striking out on her own. She continues to be an active artist and curator in England.

The archive contains two folders of correspondence from Roberts.

Henri Chopin, TLS to Astrid and John Furnival, May 30, 2001.

Henri Chopin writing to Astrid and John: "me voice revenue ici, en famille, suite à des difficulties de marcher... Sans doute l'âge..."



Note sent by Francesco Conz to John Furnival.

"Si prega di Conz Grazie."



GARNIER L. NOVAK I SPAGAGNA TH WORKSHOP WITH NUGNBURG MAI 23 Hd, 1989 John Furnival Rooks moore House Wood chater glos Inghilterrg

Front and back of postcard announcing the Fourth Workshop of Francesco Conz's "La Livre: An Homage to Ezra Pound" project held at the Brunnenburg Castle, May 23, 1989. Signed by all of the participants: Pierre Garnier, Ladislav Novak, Jacques Spacagna, and Francesco Conz.

Francesco Conz's "La Livre: An Homage to Ezra Pound" project was begun in 1987 and was uncompleted at the time of his death. Over the years he held a series of seven workshops with writers and artist at the Brunnenburg Castle, where Ezra Pound spent much of his later years and is now the home of Pound's daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz.

In personal correspondence to Steve Clay (included in the archive), Furnival writes: "I don't know how much you know about Francesco Conz, but I can fill you in quite a bit, as I, perforce, knew him very well! No. 1 — He had a supersize ego, which was matched only by his arch-rival, Sarenco, and Verona was their battlefield ... No. 2 — Francesco was extremely rude and impatient, a terrible, and dangerous driver (he almost killed us once!) ... I could go on, but won't — funnily enough, everybody misses him!"



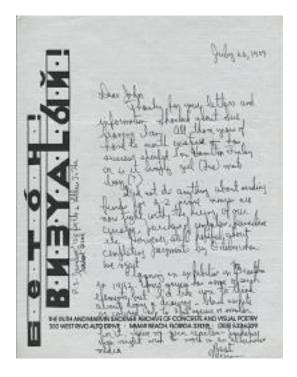
Franceso Conz, TLS to John Furnival, February 14, 2007.

Franceso Conz writing to John Furnival: "The 3rd Station has arrived and will be put together with the other two and, finally, they will be together and will represent the history of a certain Monsieur named Jesus Christ. Hermann Nitsch used to say that the Passion was the greatest event in the history of Happenings."

Verena, 18-1-08 ved your card U iomu 10 2)

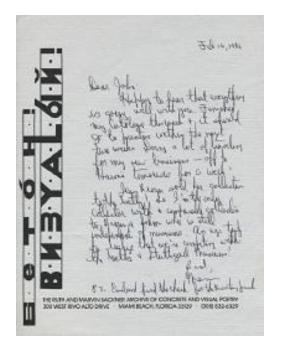
Card sent to Astrid and John Furnival by Francesco Conz, January 18, 2008.

Francesco Conz was a great supporter of both John Furnival and Henri Chopin. Both, along with Dick Higgins and Jean Dupuy were participants in the fourth of the "La Livre" workshops. Conz, writes only two weeks after Chopin's death: "... H. Chopin is peace fully dead at home..."



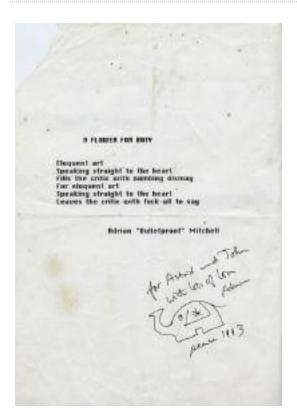
Marvin Sackner, ALS to John Furnival, July 26, 1989.

Ruth and Marvin Sackner are longtime supporters and friends of John and Astrid Furnival. Writing to John, Marvin exclaims: "Shocked about Sue leaving Ian. All those years of hand to mouth existence & has success spoiled Ian Hamilton Finlay or is it simply girl (Sue) meets boy (?)."



Marvin Sackner, ALS to John Furnival, February 16, 1989.

"Jean Brown sold her collection to the Getty! So I'm the only collector with a comparable collection to Brown & Sohm who is still independent of museums. An ego trip to realize that we're competing with the Getty & Stuttgart Museums!"



Adrian Mitchell, "A Flower for Boty."

Poem inscribed by English poet, novelist, playwright and activist Adrian Mitchell, 1993. In personal correspondence to Steve Clay (included in the archive), Furnival writes: "...I don't know how much you know about him — he was one of the main 60's protest poets, along with Mike Horovitz, Anselm Hollo et al. — the equivalent to the Beats, I suppose. He was a good friend of ours, although his poetry is definitely not our cup of Lapsong — he was just a very nice person — ditto his wife Celia." Mitchell died in 2008.



Four of many collaged envelopes from Berty Skuber to John and Astrid Furnival.

Italian-born artist Berty Skuber has been exhibiting since the late 60s and her work is in numerous European and American collections. She is married to translator and critic Henry Martin and she is the Venice Gallery Manager for the Emily Harvey Foundation. Her many cards and letters to the Furnivals are often accompanied by colorfully collaged envelopes. The archive contains two folders of correspondence from Skuber and three of her artist's books inscribed to the Furnivals.

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Left: Chain letter on Satie's Faction stationery started June 23, 1982.

Right: "'Palimpsest' chain-envelope project," n.d.

Left: This chain letter was started on June 23, 1982, and was to be returned to John Furnival when finished. There are only three participants on this sheet: The Gerlovins (contributing a pornographic image and string), Jon Hendricks, and Dick Higgins.

Right: The "Palimpsest" chain letter was to be returned to John Furnival for an exhibition at the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol. Participants in the project include: Lucien Suel, John Furnival, Barbara Moore, Jon Hendricks, Jon Gibson, Ypdu Anagrammiste (Jean Dupuy), Olga Adorno, and Gianfranco Mantegna.

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Postcard from artist Rémy Pénard, May 13, 2006.

French mail artist Rémy Pénard is recognized for his use of rubber stamps and stencils, he has participated in over 1200 mail art exhibitions.

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Görgy Galántai, "Other Issue," Artistamp Museum of Artpool, 1995.

György Galántai's "Other Issue," Artistamp Museum of Artpool, 1995 is inscribed to John Furnival. A second set of stamps, not inscribed but with instructions to use the stamps, was also sent. Galántai is the founder of Artpool as well as the conceptual projects of Buda-Ray University and Artpool's Ray Johnson Space.



Flyer for one of György Galántai's conceptual projects and festivals of mail art.



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Flyer for the Festival of Plagiarism.

The Festival of Plagiarism, "a decentralized Londonwide" event in January–February 1988 was coordinated by Stewart Home and Graham Harwood.



Solidarte Informa, no. 1. Aug 1982.

Newsletter of the Arte Correo Mexico de Solidaridad Internacional (Solidarete: Mexico Mail-Art for International Solidarity). On the back is a manifesto in Spanish and English.



Darrel Rees was a student of John Furnival's at the Bath Academy of Art and is now a well-regarded illustrator. In addition to 10 of these collaged envelopes there is a folder of additional correspondence from Rees.







A1 Waste Paper Co., Ltd. U-mak-it (No Talent!).

U-mak-it (No Talent!) by mail artist A1 Waste Paper Co., Ltd. (Michael Leigh) was issued as part of *Photostatic*, no. 28, Jan. 1988.

Rimma Gerlovina and Valeriy Gerlovin, ed. 5 Year *Plan. Collective Farm, no. 5.* [Gerlovins], 1987. This is no. 40 from an edition of 100 copies.

Silk-screened envelopes bound and unopened, each around a specific theme. Artists in this issue include: Robert Atkins, Mike Bidlo, Jean Dupuy, Peter Frank, Ken Friedman, John Furnival, Valeriy Gerlovin, Rimma Gerlovina, Richard Hambleton, Tehching Hsieh, Donald Lipski, Igor Makarevich, Robert C. Morgan, Charlie Morrow, Carolee Schneemann, Fred Truck, and Paul Zelevansky among many others.

Archive Inventory

The archive consists of four boxes of correspondence and two boxes of books plus oversized broadsides and posters.

The following are represented in the archive with correspondence, ephemera, books or all three:

A.1 Waste Paper Co. Ltd. (Michael Leigh)Ackerman, DianeAdams, CliveAdams, Heather and MichaelAgrafiotis, Démosthène

Kentish, Charlotte — Arcadia Gallery King, Ron and Willow — Circle Press La Fosca, Francesco Larcombe, Sam Leibowitz, Herb Aguiar, Feranado — Associação Poesia Viva Alcock, Kate (ex-student) Allen, Bill The Ampersand Anderson, Don and Sally - Roswell Artistin-Residence Program Andrews, Steve Anleo, Xoan (artist book) Archive of Artistic Works and Projects about the Amazonic World (Ruggero Maggi) Arends, Vickie and Stuart Arnolfini Atkinson, Terry Bailey, Peter Baker, Bob Baroni, Vittore Bawden, Richard Beaudry, George Beam, Jeffrey Bean, Victoria Bellaart, Gerard Bibliothèque Nationale de France Blaine, Julian Breckenridge, Colin Broadhurst, Caroline — Ingleby Gallery Brown, Jean Broxton, Peter Bulatov, Dmitry Bunting, Basil Burge, Josephine Butera, Virginia Fabbri Bulter, Frances - Poltroon Press Carus-Wilson, Anna Causley, Charles Cernotto, Andrea Chopin, Henri Christie, John Claire, Paula Clark, Thomas A. Cohen, Ryosuke Conz, Franceso Coover, Robert Cowcher, Helen Culbert, Pip and Bill Cutts, Simon and Erica Van Horn - Coracle Davies, Hugh Davies, W.H. Dawson, Liz Day, Graham de Charmoy, Cozette della Grazia, Paola Dias-Pino, Wlademir Dupuy, Jean Edeline, Francis England, Jane and Peter (England & Co) Erisson, Leif Essary, Loris Falafrivka, Nick Fedden, Mary Ferro, Luigi

Lumb, Michael Koch, Suzanne Kostelanetz, Richard Lenoir, Pascal Lora-Totina, Arrigo Lowe, Tony Marsh, Wendy and Stanley Martin, Henry — Emily Harvey Foundation Mathieu, Didier - Centre des Livres d'Artistes (CDLA) Meeuwissen, Tony Melchert, James and Mary Ann Menezes, Florivaldo Menezes, Philadelpho Metcalf, Paul Meyer, Thomas Michelon, Olivier Millington, Terence and Pat Mitchell, Adrian Mordvinter, Dmitri and Zoa Morrison, Andrew Mukherjee, Trilokesh Mullery, Kevin Openings O'Shea, Susan and Patrick Oyama, Reiko Packer, Robert Mark O'Shea, Susan and Patrick Oyama, Reiko Packer, Robert Mark Padin, Clemente Papadopoulos, Philipe Partridge, Frankie Pawson, Mark Pénard, Rémy Pennie, Marlene Phillips, Tom Portella, Manuel Power, Kevin Pride, Nick Quartermain, Peter and Meredith ----Slug Press Rabascall, Joan Random, Steve Rees, Darrel Reese, Sandra Liddell and Harry -----**Turkey Press** Reichert, Hans Dieter and Veronika Rheichardt, Jasia and Nick Riches, Eileen Roberts, Kay Cresswell Rogers, Martin Rogers, Maxine Ross-White, Malcolm Russell, George Rypson, Pytor Sackner, Ruth and Marvin San Millan, François Sarenco Scott, Susan

Finlay, Ian Hamilton Fontana, Giovanni Fortune [Burger], John and Emma Frank, Peter Frayling, Christopher Frykman, Gérard and Geniève Seillé Fuller, Mossy and Ron Furnival, Astrid Furnival, Jack, Harry and Eve Furnival, John Galántai, György — Artpool (Hungary) Gerber, Alain (France Musiques) Gerlovin, Rimma and Valery Gore, Mozella — Zella Nine Gallery Gosling, Ray Greene, Jonathan Groh, Klaus Hair, Ross Hall, Lee Halsey, Alan Hapgood, Marilyn and Robert Harker, Jonathan Harwood, Lara Hoss, Theo Hosszü, Michael — International Stamp Art Project Houédard, Dom Sylvester Humphreys, John Jaffe, James S. Jenkins, Jessica Joki (Jo Klaffki) Jones, Hazel Kato, Kowa Kempton, Karl

Seille, Genevieve Sensini, Roland Shiels, Tony "Doc" Shirreff, Jack Shohachiro, Takahasi Skuber, Berty Smith, Derek Smith, Roger Stein, Donna Stewart, Rory (MP) Suel. Lucien Tänzer, Gerhard Thomkins, André Thompson, Sheila Townshend, Piers — Tate Gallery Trinkewitz, Karel Tucker, Paul Tullett, Barrie Verey, Charles Vince, John Volta, Ornella Warner, Marina Weldon, Fay and Ron Whalley, Robin and Karin Williams, Danny Williams, Emmett Williams, Jerry Williams, Jonathan Williams, Steve Wilson, Bill Wise, Gillian Zagajewski, Adam Zelevansky, Paul and Lynn