

## PROFILE: c.d.o., parma

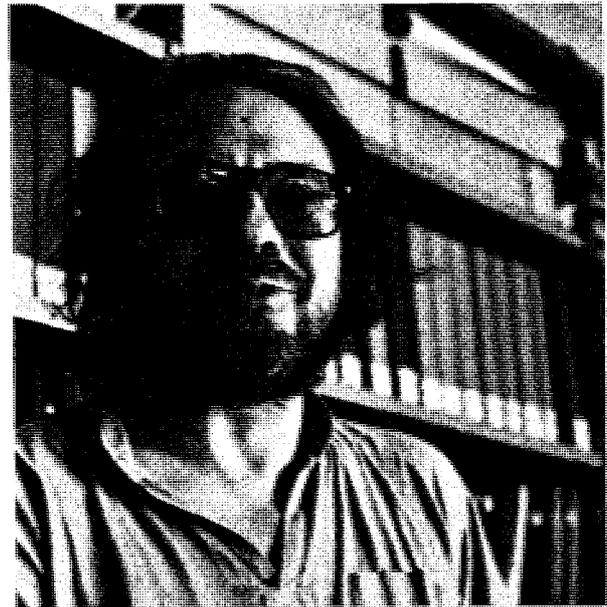
When Romano Peli met Michaela Versari in July, 1972, c.d.o. was born. Peli came from the visual arts, and Versari from theater and philosophy. Together they wanted to do research, document and distribute the results of their research into art in Italy. c.d.o., or Centro Documentazione Organizzazione, was founded in Trento in December 1972. Among the first contributors were works by Antonio Paradiso, Clau Claudio Costa, and then Luca Patella followed.

At the outset, they issued a journal called *Il Coprannature* in 250 copies (1974). In that year they moved to Parma, and in the move they changed their focus from national to international interests. In 1975 they had their first direct mail contact with correspondence artists such as Vigo and Zabala. They also received an invitation to participate in the *Last Explosion of Art for Correspondence '75* at the Galleria Arte Nuevo in Buenos Aires, sending 200 works from the post office in Parma, but they disappeared without ever being delivered. The "Art-Test" was a series of erotic questions on art to which one answered with a "yes" or "no" and then sent anonymously to c.d.o. They continued to send art and enlarge their contacts and communication in subsequent months, while participating in many exhibitions in 1976.

The following year they began the *First International Postal Encounter Art Works of the Visual Communications*. So much came in to change their social and artistic vision that c.d.o. learned a great deal more about the work, history, hopes and fears of all the artists throughout the world.

Mail Art Space was thus born in 1977, a space to be available to artists, friends and the national press while the mail art arrived everyday at c.d.o. The archive began, and initiatives for exhibitions were born such as *c.d.o.-Parma/Mail Art*, which took place at the Governor's Palace in Parma. In order to exhibit the vast network that c.d.o. had uncovered, they launched *Manuta Mail '78* and *13 International Communications* in the town of Mantova in seven large rooms of the Casa del Mantegna (House of the artist, Mantegna). More than 4,000 works by 154 mail artists from 28 countries participated.

That year they also had guests Anna Banana and Bill Gaglione (Dadaland) perform Futurist Sound, and inspired perhaps by the energy of Banana and Dadaland, they began cataloging all the works in the Archive (in English). This is all done in a large room in their apartment, which has become c.d.o. That is all it is, but it is everything—archive, workroom, exhibition space. The works are archivally boxed, the work tables are full of mail that has recently arrived.



In an interview with Peli, he stated that many artists want to see the results of their work in exhibits right away, instead of just having the satisfaction of having the work included in archives. They want to be appreciated by a new audience. What c.d.o. has done is communicate the importance of mail art to city fathers, commissioners of fine art, so that the visual communication generates more creativity. In still another way, Peli affirmed, mail art bridges language barriers and speaks in universal visual language.

On the other hand, Italian mail artists use the network to insert political statements, seeking critical competition and stressing the anarchical value of the mail artist in Italy. Thus, in some countries such as in Latin America and in Italy, mail art has been politicized. There is also another problem in many other countries, where galleries keep the materials, issue no catalog, and then nothing is heard from them again.

Their energy is boundless, even though they hold down jobs, raise a family, and try to see friends occasionally. They have sponsored exhibitions in Australia for Italian mail artists and others; they have formed a TelephoneArt Bridge among 12 artists using the telephone, or last spring they invited more than 300 artists to send an unpublished Mail Art book for an important exhibition *100 Artists-100 Books (Mail Art Books)*, and they issue periodically a new list of all the artists included in their archives, and even the journals they receive. They have worked through the Italian Consulate and sponsored an Italian Spring Festival Mail Art Show in South Perth, Australia, held in October 1980 and in February of this year they invited Italian mail artists to participate in a mail art exhibition in Stockholm, sponsored by the Italian Institute of Culture.

Both Versari and Peli are devoted to the documentation of their mail art collection, cataloging with painstaking care in English all the material that has come in. They have received a great deal of press in all the major newspapers of Italy as well as most of the important journals. As Romano Peli says, "I cannot change the world so I try to create a new world with the work of others." Visit and write c.d.o., Via dei Farnese 9, Parma, Italy. You will be very delighted!



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