

Destination: Postcards for Democracy, Rauschenberg Gallery, Fort Myers

CAITLIN ALBRITTON | THURSDAY, JUNE 3, 2021



Courtesy of Brian Tietz/Rauschenberg Gallery

The Postcards for Democracy exhibition at Rauschenberg Gallery featuring thousands of artists and celebrities like skateboard legend Tony Hawk will be open now through Aug. 8.



Many people know Mark Mothersbaugh as the lead singer for Devo, but many may not know that he has always been invested in visual arts -- specifically, mail art -- since he was a teenager growing up in rural Ohio. Because it was a cultural wasteland, Mothersbaugh would find addresses of other artists, send a postcard, and sometimes get a response from household names like Jasper Johns or Robert Indiana.

Over the years, he has made postcard art daily, and has filled 573 binders -- each holding 100 postcards -- with over 57,300 of his works for his personal archive (and that's not including the numerous ones he has sent out to friends). Instead of focusing solely on his visual art, Mothersbaugh has collaborated with artist/musician Beatie Wolfe for a collective art campaign for anyone, artists and non-artists alike, to send them postcards in support of the USPS and its important role in America's elections.

“Mark and Beatie started this project a little over a year ago pre-COVID, at the beginning of talks of defunding the USPS and how that would effect voting. That was the jump-off point, and they started receiving tons and tons of mail,” says Jade Dellinger, Director of the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at Florida Southwestern State College in Fort Myers. “So much of our communication is not through the tangible form of sending a letter. This time, artists repurposed the USPS and turned letter handlers into art handlers.”

The huge group exhibition at Rauschenberg Gallery featuring thousands of artists and celebrities like skateboard legend Tony Hawk will be open now through Aug. 8. They even anticipate rotating the works at least two if not more times depending on how many more postcards the duo receives while the show is up.

“What interests Mark and Beatie most is that this has been ongoing project because it’s important that the post office continue to be supported. They’re always excited to see what comes in from all over the country, all over the world. It has become a snapshot of this moment, like a time capsule. These are saying something about the times we’re living in. There are lots of heavily political postcards -- some are BLM, COVID-related, or highly-personal -- but many simply just encourage people to vote by mail,” Dellinger says.

Instead of being a strictly visual show, *Postcards for Democracy* boasts a truly immersive experience, starting with your ears: Mark made a specific 5-CD set with 7 hours of non-repetitive compositions for the gallery called “The Most Powerful Healing Music in the Entire World,” so you’ll never hear the same music twice while visiting. A few video components will be shown, including an interview with Mark and Beatie done by filmmaker Ross Harris that was commissioned by the gallery as well as a slideshow of postcards that Mark and Beatie have sent to each other over the years.

In addition to that, there are interactive components like postal vending machines where visitors can slide quarters in and receive a letter-pressed souvenir art stamp designed by Mark and Beatie. Even their exhibition catalog is USPS-themed, with a uniquely made sheet of arty stamps enclosed in a glassine envelope.

“Many people are gravitating to this type of participatory show. From Mark’s perspective, this exhibition is about recuperating, healing, and concerns the message of a collective whole. It’s about the work of all these people, not just Mark and Beatie, who are addressing issues that are uniquely theirs,” Dellinger says.

To find out more:

- Postcards for Democracy exhibit
- Postcards for Democracy Project
- Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at FSW

To be a part of this postcard art campaign, send your pieces to:

Postcards for Democracy
8760 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90069



Read more articles by Caitlin Albritton.

Caitlin Albritton is a freelance writer based in Tampa with a BFA from Savannah College of Art and Design and a MFA from Maryland Institute College of Art. When she's not looking at art throughout town, she can be found making it. You can keep up with her visual art on Instagram @caitlinalbritton or on her website. Visit her recent line of inlay "wearable paintings."

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