

# Helene Fischman & Nathaniel Frederick

## Photographs & Hand-Written Stories

Helene Fischman, in Alameda, California, and Nathaniel Frederick, in Fertile, Iowa, functioned as both photographer and writer in this two story series. During the month of July 2014, they sent nine photographs to each other through the mail. Upon receiving the photographs, the collaborators rendered each other's images into unique hand-written stories in nine chapters.

Images are understood differently by each set of eyes laid upon them. Helene & Nathaniel used the slow transference of postal system to act as the petri dish to germinate a change in image-meaning as the pictures traveled the miles between them. Each photograph began as material evidence of the reality seen by the one who clicked the camera's shutter. The recipient of the image saw it with new eyes, and the act of writing brought a new, present life to the former testimony and intent of the photographer. The process of waiting for each new photograph to arrive spawned a latency period for thoughtful creative interpretation.

As separate individuals with different stories to tell, this collaborative project brings to light the power of image-making and writing as an exceptional combinatory recipe – the difference in writing styles was one of the delightful surprises in this open-ended, extemporaneous process.

# Cybele Gerachis

## Sewn Collage & Assemblage

All the mixed media pieces were inspired by a trip I recently took back home to Washington D.C., to be present for my father's back surgery. During my time at home, I began preparing my father's house for his eventual return and recovery. This, in part, meant organizing and getting rid of a lot of junk, including the books from my high school English classes – the kind that have your name written all over the sides with hundreds of notes in the margins. As I leafed through them, I stumbled upon old photos, notes to friends, and an unused pack of rolling papers. At this point I was still considering how I was going to interpret the semiotics of snail mail and the United States Postal System.

My approach began to evolve as a type of intrapersonal communication using the postal system as a conduit for journaling, note taking and general processing of thoughts. I sent by mail many of my old book pages and their jackets back to myself, another self, the person I would be when this whole situation was over. At first, this was more of a journaling exercise, but it evolved into collage portraits stitched together over the course of several weeks: First in my head, and then with the physical materials.

My father needed to be in the hospital longer than expected, as the surgery revealed a more complex and potentially critical cardiac situation. I used that time to record on the pages from my old books everything I had learned from my father, from architectural appreciation to unconditional love, and, of course, to my sense of direction. What originally was intended to be an observation of how the postal system functions as a vestige of epistolary communication in its potentially most romantic and historical sense, instead transformed into a deeply personal response to a challenging time where there were limited outlets. Oddly, I relied on this project and its introspective possibilities to help me process a week and a half of trips to Walter Reed Navy Medical and the Veteran's Administration Hospital.

# Christopher Allen

## Collage, Painting & Repurposed Objects

Christopher Allen, while living in an industrial building in West Oakland, was horrified at the amount of junk-mail he received... an insidious collection that accumulated on a daily basis. Flyers, pre-approvals and glossy brochures piled up like a load of garbage. (The average American gets 41 pounds of junk mail every single year.)

Using collage, Chris repurposed this otherwise useless debris. Pulling out the pattern of parallel lines from barcodes, he created an ironical reference to the animal kingdom. In an overt statement about the highjacking of the postal system by this capitalist swill, he covered mailboxes and buckets with remnants of mailed advertisements and credit-card offers.

Among other creative action against junk-mail, Chris gathered a pile of credit-card offers and mailed them back in one of the pre-paid postage envelopes.