

ESOPUS SPACE

THE ESOPUS FOUNDATION LTD.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“RAY AND BOB BOX”

June 2 – June 30, 2011

Closing reception: Thursday, June 30th, 6–8 p.m.

New York, NY (May 18, 2011): Esopus Space is pleased to announce **“Ray and Bob Box,”** an exhibition and event series related to a years-long correspondence between the legendary late artist Ray Johnson and Robert Warner, a subject explored in depth in *Esopus 16* (currently on newsstands). There will be a closing reception for the exhibition on Thursday, June 30th, from 6 to 8 p.m.



In 1988, Robert Warner first came across a piece of mail art sent by Ray Johnson to a mutual friend. Intrigued, he contacted Johnson, who called him a few days later. That phone call initiated an intense, fascinating exchange between Johnson and Warner that lasted until Johnson’s death in 1995. Over the course of their relationship Warner received hundreds of pieces of mail art from Johnson, ranging from collages to a piece of driftwood hand-delivered to the eyewear store where Warner, an optician, worked at the time.

Johnson and Warner spoke on the phone nearly every day, but met in person only seven times. One of those meetings is described by Warner in *Esopus 16*: “One time I told him I was going to be at a friend’s garage sale in Great Neck. Ray called and asked me if I was going to have transportation back to the city, and I told him I would. He pulled up in front of the house in his Volkswagen. He was very cordial and shook hands with everyone, and then he said to my friend’s husband, who was driving me back, ‘Can I put these things I brought Bob in your trunk?’ And I said, ‘What things?’ He proceeded to take out of the car 13 cardboard boxes tied with twine, labeled ‘Bob Box 1,’ ‘Bob Box 2,’ ‘Bob Box 3’....”

A fundamental component of “Ray and Bob Box” will be 13 two-hour events at Esopus Space in which Warner will archive the contents of each of these boxes (see schedule [here](#)). The exhibition will also feature a number of never-before-seen works by Johnson from Warner’s collection, a sampling of the two artists’ correspondence, and several objects recovered by Warner from a dumpster near Johnson’s house after his death. A program of videos of Johnson by Nick Maravell will also be screened at Esopus Space on Tuesday, June 28th, from 7 to 9 p.m.

Esopus Space is an exhibition and performance venue operated by the **Esopus Foundation Ltd.**, a nonprofit organization which also publishes *Esopus* magazine. Located in central Greenwich Village at 64 West Third Street, it is open to the public Mondays from 12 to 8 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12 to 6 p.m., and always by appointment. For more information, please visit the Esopus Space website, send inquiries to space@esopusfoundation.org, or call Tod Lippy at 212-473-0919. **DIRECTIONS TO ESOPUS SPACE**

Esopus Space is a nonprofit exhibition and performance venue operated by The Esopus Foundation Ltd., whose supporters include The Andy Warhol Foundation, The Greenwall Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), New York City’s Department of Cultural Affairs, The New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), the Foundation for Contemporary Art, the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, the Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation, The Strypemonde Foundation, The Puffin Foundation, The Fifth Floor Foundation, and a number of other institutional and private donors.

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Deemed “the most famous unknown artist in America” by *The New York Times*, **Ray Johnson** was born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1927. He studied with John Cage and Merce Cunningham at the experimental Black Mountain College from 1946 to 1948 alongside Cy Twombly and Robert Rauschenberg, and in the early '50s moved to New York City, where he quickly established himself as one of the pioneers of Pop Art. Johnson's body of work includes collages, Xerox art, sculptures, and performances that consisted of everything from the artist inserting mustard-covered dimes into pay phones to his emptying a box of wooden spools down a gallery staircase. Johnson is perhaps best known as the seminal force behind the New York Correspondence School, an international network of poets and artists founded in 1968 that popularized the mail-art movement in the ensuing years. Johnson was represented early in his career by Richard Feigen Gallery and also had one-person shows at the Willard Gallery and Betty Parsons Gallery in New York and Galeria Arturo Schwarz in Milan. After being mugged in New York City during the summer of 1968, the artist moved to Long Island, where he became increasingly reclusive, rejecting gallery representation and communicating with friends and colleagues mainly by mail and telephone. On January 13, 1995, Johnson dove off a bridge in Sag Harbor, Long Island, and was last seen backstroking out to sea; his body was recovered the following day. Johnson's work was the subject of a 1999 retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art and has since been featured in exhibitions in Paris, London, Budapest, Oslo, and Barcelona.

Born in Geneva, New York, in 1956, **Robert Warner** is a collage artist, letterpress printer, optician, and eyewear designer who currently resides in New York City's Greenwich Village.



Spread from “Yesterday's Mail,” a piece in *Esopus 16* about the seven-year correspondence between Ray Johnson and Robert Warner. Currently on newsstands, the issue includes 19 removable facsimile reproductions of a selection of items sent by Johnson to Warner.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ESOPUS 16

“RAY AND BOB BOX” EVENT SCHEDULE

Monday, June 6th:

3–5pm: Archiving of Bob Box 1

6–8pm: Archiving of Bob Box 2

Thursday, June 9th:

3–5pm: Archiving of Bob Box 3

Monday, June 13th:

3–5pm: Archiving of Bob Box 4

Thursday, June 16th:

3–5pm: Archiving of Bob Box 5

6–8pm: Archiving of Bob Box 6

Monday, June 20th:

3–5pm: Archiving of Bob Box 7

6–8pm: Archiving of Bob Box 8

Thursday, June 23rd:

3–5pm: Archiving of Bob Box 9

Monday, June 27th:

3–5pm: Archiving of Bob Box 10

6–8pm: Archiving of Bob Box 11

Tuesday, June 28th:

7–9pm: Screening of Nick Maravell's *Ray Johnson Sampler*

Thursday, June 30th:

3–5pm: Archiving of Bob Box 12

6–8pm: CLOSING RECEPTION