

Networking Artists & Poets:
Assemblings from the
Ruth & Marvin Sackner Archive
of Concrete & Visual Poetry

Curated by Craig Saper



An Exhibition at the
University of Pennsylvania
Rosenwald Gallery
Van Pelt-Dietrich Library
17 April – 27 June 1997



Preface

by Michael Ryan,
Director of Special Collections
University of Pennsylvania Library



Networking Artists & Poets represents the second time the Penn Library has had an opportunity to exhibit a selection of materials from the Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry in Miami Beach. There is nothing comparable to the Sackner Archive in public or private hands today; it is quite simply the collection of record for contemporary artists' books. To be able to draw on it for a substantial group of artifacts is both a rare privilege and an occasion of genuine discovery. What Professor Craig Saper of the Penn English Department has done is to introduce us to a little-known but important movement within the post-War art world that deliberately circumvented established networks of information and distribution and invented its own modus operandi. Eclectic, iconoclastic, didactic, and humorous at the same time, this movement sought new audiences and new venues for its new art. *Networking* displays some of the results of this bold experiment.

Exhibits that draw on the Sackner Archive are almost always collaborative efforts, and the present show is no exception. The idea and energy for the exhibit were Professor Saper's entirely. Somehow, between publishing commitments, teaching responsibilities, and a new family, he found time to select and write this impressive show. However, he also had enthusiastic collaborators in Ruth and Marvin Sackner. They not only opened their collection and their home to him, they worked with him on crafting and shaping the exhibit. Marvin Sackner's singular knowledge of the field and his infectious enthusiasm for the project were key to moving it along, sometimes in new and unexpected ways. The hospitality and generosity of the Sackners is

TOP LEFT

Front and back cover of *Aspen*,
designed by Marshall McLuhan.

(42)*

BOTTOM LEFT

Inside cover of *Aspen*, also designed
by Marshall McLuhan. (42)

* Italicized numbers in parentheses
refer to item numbers in the
Exhibition Checklist.

legendary. There are few collectors as liberal and as welcoming as they; it is always a pleasure to be able to work with them.

The Library is deeply grateful to Professor Saper and to the Sackners for sharing with us a new view of the contemporary art scene and for allowing us to see for ourselves the richly textured worlds of *Networking*. It is also good to acknowledge the fine and talented work of Greg Bear, the Library's Exhibit and Design Specialist, who "assembled" the exhibit and the catalogue with style and sensitivity.

Michael Ryan
Director of Special Collections