



Wish You Were Where:

The Postcard Project

First introduced in the late 19th century, postcards provided a cheap and convenient alternative to letters (honey, have you seen my sealing wax?), reaching their peak in 1908 when 677 million were handled by the post office. The Portsmouth Poet Laureate Program thinks their moment has come once again; this time with a bit of a twist. ***Wish You Were Where?: The Postcard Project*** encourages poets of all ages and abilities to send one of their poems (along with a stamp and return address) to an artist of their choice (as many as they'd like as long as each written piece is different) who will respond to the work by providing an illustration as the front of the postcard. And then drop it in a mailbox.

While this unique correspondence lends itself to multiple readings and themes—the ekphrastic poem (where one's task is to tap-into the artist's work), the homage (paying tribute, heartily back-patting), as well as those inherent in the postcard's connection with travel (desire to escape or get outside-one's-self, navigating that space between home and away; disorientation and displacement), as well as tried-and-true adventure--the participating poets are free to approach the project however they'd like.

Yes, there is risk. Your artist might snub or brush-aside your flattery. Or your postcard might be mistreated or even lost. But as collagist Charles Farrell has observed about his own exchanges with poet Sebastian Matthewo [t]he US postal service becomes an unwitting collaborator in the process—thus further extending and reshaping it/them. And, yes, conformity. Being restricted to the space limitations (all postcards must ascribe to a rather standard 4 1/4 x 6 1/2 format). But while a haiku would seem to be one's best option why not a sonnet or heck even a tiny-typed epic? **And the pay-off, reward, could be out-of-this-world—not only a distinctive work-of-art but quite possibly a lifetime acquaintance or (as Robert Dunn was fond of saying) co-“conspirator.”**

Once we have the first installments we'll meet in the spring and share our postcards/ experiences and celebrate. But for now get yourself a blank postcard. And write someone a poem. There's no telling where it will all end (up)!

Best regards,

Mark DeCarteret, Portsmouth Poet Laureate

Please find the Poet and Artist guidelines for participation on the other side of this letter.

After participation, Then What?

- ☒ Postcard Release Party on May 7, 2010 ó others will bring their finished postcards and everyone can see the results of these collaborations & correspondences
- ☒ Exhibitions ó several exhibitions of postcards will take place in and around Portsmouth, some in surprising locations
- ☒ Postcard Sets & Posters ó some postcards will be selected to be reproduced as posters and as usable postcard sets suitable for collecting or mailing
- ☒ Digital Gallery ó finished postcards will be archived on the PPLP Web site so that people anywhere can enjoy them
- ☒ Auction ó still in the “maybe” stage ó the pieces of collaborative postcard art could be auctioned off to help support PPLP and future poet laureate projects

Portsmouth Poet Laureate Program

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