

TIBOR DE NAGY GALLERY

ESTABLISHED 1950

artnet*

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Donald Evans

FASCINATING PHILATELY

by Alexandra Anderson-Spivy

In 1977 at only 31 years of age, the artist Donald Evans burned to death in a house where he was living in Amsterdam. An intensely private man, the New Jersey-born artist had obsessively created exquisitely drawn and colored stamps for a virtual universe of countries he invented. Now on view at Tibor de Nagy Gallery, his work is magical, poetic and unique.

Evans was always a kind of a cult figure. In a few short years while he was in his 20s he created around 4,000 stamps for 42 different imaginary countries, cleverly incorporating his fascination with travel, tropical islands, varieties of fruit and, peculiarly, the game of dominos, which he often used as borders and as subject for his stamps. He even created a Republic of Domino.

Evans recorded the characteristics and histories of his meticulous and romantic imagined miniature domains in a monumental volume he called his *Catalogue of the World*. And he mounted his stamps correctly in series and incorporated them as components on envelopes and postcards complete with his hand-made cancellation marks. Though his work could be considered an outlier of mail art, in actuality his sensibility was more allied with that of Joseph Cornell than with Ray Johnson.

Evans ardently collected stamps as a child, and as an adult turned philately into art. Trained as an architect, his work as an architectural renderer for Richard Meier early in his 20s honed his precise skills as a draftsman. His obsession with stamps as souvenirs of fictional exotic places is particularly touching now that the post office is staggering toward extinction. His stamps incorporated his fascination with travel and faraway places. I have always been particularly fond of the paradisiacal series, "Isles des amis et amants," which feature tropical coasts and swaying palm trees in silhouette.

Evans' delicate work is tricky to reproduce and often hard to find, so I recommend a trip to the gallery, if at all possible, before the exhibition ends on Oct. 15, 2011.

In the large gallery, painter John Beerman is represented by some skillful, traditionally romantic paintings. These crepuscular and soft-focus scenes, à la a kind of updated Hudson River school, project an aura of hallucinatory, tranquilizing calm. The one I liked the most was *Tanker on the Hudson* (2010), which perfectly captures the mellowness of the great river in autumn.

Donald Evans, "Selected Works," and John Beerman, "Paintings," Sept. 8-Oct. 15, 2011, at Tibor de Nagy Gallery, 724 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y.

ALEXANDRA ANDERSON-SPIVEY is an art critic and art historian who lives and works in New York City.

724 Fifth Avenue New York NY 10019

212 262 5050 212 262 1841 fax info@tibordenagy.com tibordenagy.com