

Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes
Ed: Richard Kostelanetz
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ROSENTHAL, Barbara (17 August 1948), is a polyartist. She has produced photographs, videos, super/8 films, objects, games, stories, novels, performances, book-art, and "novelties." Among the last are *Button Pins* (1995-ongoing); *You and I* (1986), a card game where, she says, "two players continue to organize and trade word-cards, slowly revealing attitudes toward self and other"; and *One 4-Word Book/4 One-Word Books* (1995), which is bound shut on both sides, requiring two cuts to reveal contents. Another book, *Soul & Psyche* (1999), interrupts passages from six years of her journal with pages of photographs, the former written in an orthographic shorthand intended, as she says, to "eliminate every letter in a word unnecessary for its comprehension":

Apr 10, 1990. Invitd to ope in newly renovat MoMA. Pitful art decorat hulking ovsiz spce, tru squand rm; storys o vaultng emptnss whr mny xamps fr collec ought b dsplay on flrs walls. Arrog wastf archit, profligte, vain, ego-swllng, slf-glorfyng.

Disaffecting at first perhaps, Rosenthal's prose becomes more familiar and acceptable.

Rosenthal's work tends to be personal, if not autobiographical, each product reflecting her mentality at the time it was made. She writes that art comes from the "artist's psyche, intellect, and personality. It results in deep feelings of universal connection in viewers who pay full attention."

Rosenthal's photographs usually portray constrained individuals, aberrant trees, tiny houses, strange neighborhoods, and weird patterns of nature, sometimes accompanied by written comments. Rosenthal has noted that her videos are "rarely screened by many alternative spaces in the U.S. because, as letters regretfully state, "They don't fit into any category, and aren't like any other artist enough to program with them." To a truly original artist, few rejection letters are so implicitly flattering.

Books: *Clues to Myself*, Rochester, New York, Visual Studies Workshop, 1981; *Sensations*. Rochester, New York, Visual Studies Workshop, 1984; *Homo Futurus*, Rochester, New York: Visual Studies Workshop, 1996; *Soul & Psyche*, Rochester, New York, Visual Studies Workshop, 1999. Interactive Novelties: Numerous objects. New York: Barbara Rosenthal (463 West St., A-628, 10014-2035), 1986-95. Videotapes: *Reality Check*, et al. New York: Barbara Rosenthal, 1976--. "Deluxe Objects": *Pocketful of Poesy*, et al. New York, Barbara Rosenthal, 1997--. Films: *Pregnancy Dreams*, New York: Barbara Rosenthal 1979-94, et al. Multipaneled Conceptual Photographic Wall Works: *Photoblock*, 1987; *Shoes Doubleprint*, 1989; *Starfish/Fossil/Twins*, 1994; *Five Houses on the Horizon*, 1998; *Satchadananda/Fonteyn*, 1999, et al.