

Rare Nest Gallery in Chicago Presents Cache of H C Westermann Illustrated Letters 1957-1969

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CHICAGO, IL, USA, June 16, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Rare Nest Gallery](#) in Chicago Presents a Cache of H C Westermann Illustrated Letters 1957 - 1969

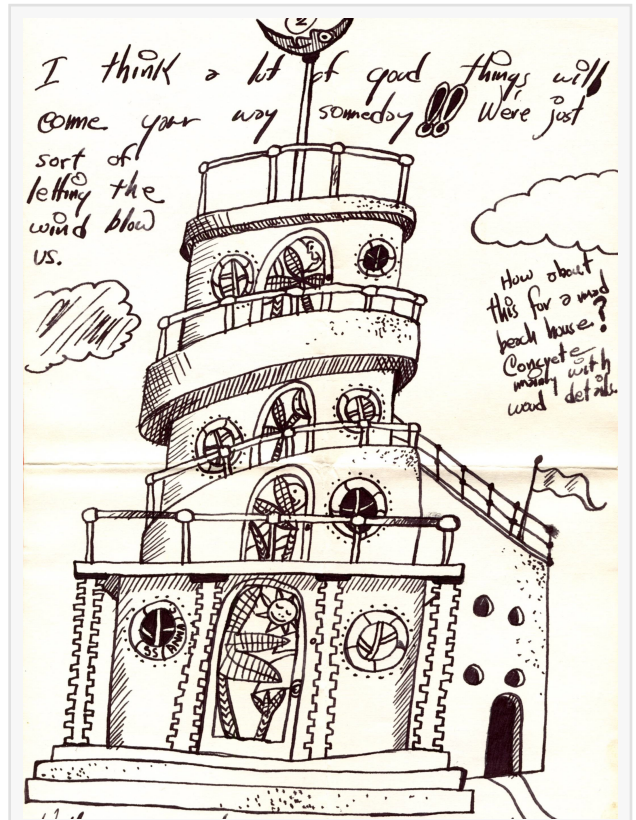
H.C. Westermann (1922 - 1981) is known for his folkloric sculptures and works on paper that pair strong moral commentary with playfulness and humor, particularly in his recurring image of the Death Ship. Influenced by his combat experience in World War II and Korea, he frequently depicted scenes of ships burning or sinking among doomed human figures in rat-infested ports. His carved wood sculptures, mixed-media assemblages, and lithographs, woodcuts, and linoleum prints.

Several tangible archives illuminate the long friendship between H. C. Westermann and Chicago modern artist [John F. Miller \(1972-2021\)](#). This cache of letters postmarked from 1957 to 1969

demonstrates a close and supportive relationship. An additional archive discovered in Miller's studio comprises a photographic survey of 26 slides taken by Miller at Westermann's home and studio in 1978.

This cache includes letter, postcards and illustrated envelopes.

Born 5 years apart - Westermann in 1922, Los Angeles, and Miller in 1927 in rural Princeton, IL - both artists came from middle class families. Both served in the military - Westermann in the South Pacific in World War II and Miller in Korea. Miller served mostly as a sign painter and graphic artist and Westermann as a machine-gunner in active duty.



H C Westermann Letter to John F Miller
1958 Rare Nest Gallery Chicago

They landed together as G.I. Bill students at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1947 for a few years. Both participated to varying degrees in artistic communities, groups and branded style groups. Miller's sons have reflected that John was "not a hustler" as regards his own work but recent archival material contradicts this idea as regards his active development of a community for contemporary artists and a Museum for Contemporary Art in Chicago.

According to Barbara Haskell's 1978 essay for Westermann's breakthrough exhibition at the Whitney Museum, H. C.'s first major presentation of sculpture occurred in 1952 at the 414 Gallery – which was founded and managed by Miller. A poster designed and printed for a joint show of Westermann and Thomas Kapsalis in 1957 illustrates Miller's ability to interpret Westermann's sculptures into graphic art.

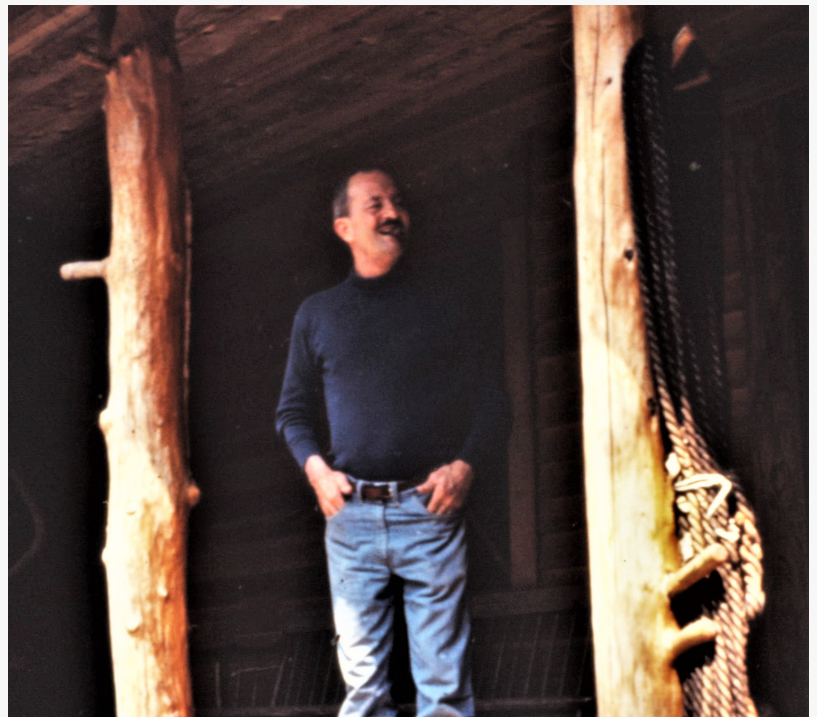
In 1968 Miller produced one sculptural work that echoes some of Westermann's material and formal concerns - a bare plywood and leather rope stylized "Beard" with handlebar mustache surmounting a box form.

Within the group of correspondence presented here, the most striking drawing by Westermann was produced on the beach near the village of Progreso, Mexico in 1958. Perhaps, following Westermann's enthusiastic recommendation, Miller went on to live in Mexico from 1970 – 1971.

In 1995, in an act of extraordinary generosity, Miller donated an important early sculpture by Westermann to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. "Death Ship", 1957 is a seminal work, donated in friendship and now available for the public to enjoy.



H C Westermann to John F Miller 1958 C Rare Nest Gallery



H C Westermann at Home 1978 Photo John F Miller Rare Nest Gallery

Rare Nest Gallery is honored to bring this important archive to market.

Keith Bringe

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