

One Wall, One Work: Eleanor Antin

May 30 – July 17, 2026

"Somehow it came to me in a dream. There! Black boots! Big black boots. I got them at the Army-Navy Surplus then I printed them up on postcards. Over the course of it—finally two and a half years—fifty-one cards were mailed out to about a thousand people around the world. Now it is a piece that I see as a kind of pictorial novel that was sent through the mail, came unannounced, unasked for. It came in the middle of people's lives."

– Eleanor Antin

Eleanor Antin (b. 1935, New York) conceived of the work "100 Boots" and executed it between 1971 and 1973, staging and photographing the imaginary travels of 50 pairs of military surplus boots, then printing postcards titling each episode and mailing them across the country and around the world at irregular intervals. The presentation of "100 Boots" on view at Krakow Witkin Gallery is notable for being a complete set of all 51 postcards, mailed to the same individual.

The absurdity and humor of the project was Antin's sly response to the realities of Vietnam War-era America, within and outside artistic circles. The ranks of empty boots were an unmistakable reminder of the mass conscription of young men, but their meandering adventures also poked fun at the formal posture of conceptual art. The work is a document of performance outside of the studio setting, and its final form as a mailing engaged recipients beyond the boundaries traditionally associated with viewing art.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, announced in its press release for MoMA's 1973 exhibition of "100 Boots":

The artist originally thought of "100 Boots" as a picaresque novel in the manner of Huckleberry Finn or Kerouac's On the Road. However, she quickly saw its potential as a film 'so I sold myself the movie rights.' As more cards were produced she began to see them as highlighted frames from a lengthy movie serial such as The Perils of Pauline.

The boots started in the establishment culture ("At the Bank," "In the Market"), then committed their first crime ("100 Boots Trespass"), after which they embarked on a series of adventures at deserted ranches, on river boats, in and out of odd jobs, and even had a love affair with a sad ending.

While most of the episodes took place in Antin's home state of California, the last six cards document the boots traveling to New York City and entering the Museum of Modern Art (where the 50 cards were shown for the first time in 1973). The final card shows the boots after the exhibition, "on vacation."

Eleanor Antin works in drawing, film, installation, performance, photography, video, and writing. Her practices blur fiction and history, often with humorous wit, theatrical sensibility, and allegorical impulse. One-woman exhibitions include the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum and a major retrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which traveled to St. Louis and toured the United Kingdom. She has been in major group exhibitions at the Hirshhorn Museum, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, the Kunsthalle Wien, the Sydney Biennale, the Centre Pompidou Paris, and Documenta 12, among others. She is represented in major collections including the Art

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Institute of Chicago, Whitney Museum, Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Centre Pompidou Paris, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Jewish Museum, New York, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among many others. As a performance artist, she has appeared in venues around the world including the Venice Biennale and the Sydney Opera House. She received a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006 from the Women's Caucus of the College Art Association; in 2002, the Best Show Award from the AICA (International Association of Art Critics), and earlier in 1999, a Guggenheim Fellowship and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture Media Achievement Award.

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