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ORANGES & SARDINES



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oil on canvas
24" x 20"



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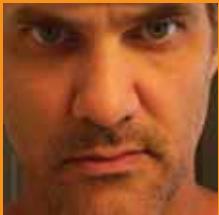
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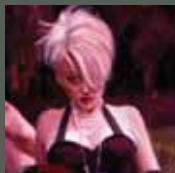
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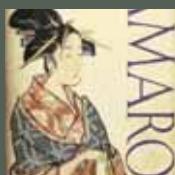
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Natalia Fabia was born in Burbank, California. She is of Polish decent, even though her name is Italian. She attended Pasadena's Art Center College of Design. Natalia loves to paint people and is influenced by colors, punk rock music, hot chicks and anything that sparkles. Her fascination with hookers is what fuels the many paintings she does of sultry women in surroundings and alone.

Natalia is currently represented by Corey Helford Gallery in Culver City and will be having a solo show there in February 2009.

There is also a video/interview on youtube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tbb2Z apbjA

SOLO SHOWS:

**Thinkspace Gallery
"Hook Manor" 2006**

**Corey Helford Gallery
"Hooker Safari" 2007**



Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

Well, my all time favorite artist is Toulouse Lautrec (I even named my kitty cat after him) I love his technique, subject matter, composition and color choices. He was an immensely skilled scholarly painter. He painted real life and from his own life experiences. I strongly believe artists, oil painters in particular, should all first be formally trained before having an active artistic career.

How do you choose your subject matter?

Well, I like to paint my girlfriends or people I meet that look interesting. I am fascinated with skin, eye balls.. interesting situations light, colors, environments... Visually pleasing and sleazy subjects, interiors and decoration. I like to paint pretty things... what I consider beautiful, like chandeliers, animals, shiny things, vodka bottles, and I especially think woman are beautiful and enchanting so that is definitely the encompassing theme of whatever series or painting I am painting.

What was the first piece of art you were paid for?

That was a portrait I did of one of my girlfriends. She is standing in her bedroom lighting up a cigarette and has hello kitty and cross bone tattoos on her collar bone and a back piece that was reflected in a mirror. It is still one of my favorite paintings. I showed it to a regular customer I would wait on at Mel's Drive In, when I worked there as a waitress from the age of 16 to 21, the customer loved it and bought it right away.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

I first have the initial idea for the painting. I plan a photo shoot, get the models, location, props etc. Then I look through the photos, pick one or some and sometimes even compose the photos and mix them with other images on the computer. The way I actually start the painting varies. I sometimes collage things on the panel and paint over it. Sometimes planning what I want to show from the collage, and at times I will just paint and not know what I will cover up and what will show through. If I do not collage in the beginning I just give the panel a wash and start painting right away. In some of my paintings the technique and exact finish is planned and in some I know they will evolve over time on their own, during the painting process.

What is your secret weapon?

Glitter! Just kidding, there is no secret weapon, just to hard work. Constantly painting to finish paintings and to get better, and sometimes things unexpectedly come together and it is wonderful.



Prey oil on panel (with some glitter) 24" x 18"





Leopard Sky oil on panel (with some glitter) 24" x 20"



Natalia Fabia



Wonderful Wild Beast oil, collage and glitter on canvas 72" x 72"



Natalia Fabia



Safari Girl Pile oil on panel 40" x 30"





Bob Hicok

Bob Hicok is a Guggenheim Fellow this year. His most recent collection, "This Clumsy Living," won the 2008 Bobbitt Prize from the Library of Congress. He has poems due out in Best American Poetry 2008 and Pushcart XXXIII.



The healing properties of a public education

God he beat her awful. The beatings were actually very good, improvisational even, he used whatever belt or coffee cup was at hand. She wore

this one bruise everyone tried to copy in art class, it was not black or blue or green but all of them, not shaped like a leaf or African tribal mask but not not shaped like a leaf or African tribal mask. It was beautiful in a way

our attempts to give it a life outside of its life were not, though I feel, looking back, as all of this is a looking back, as memory occupies the center of any view, that she loved us for these attempts, briefly, sitting on the tiny chair in the middle of our tiny circle, everything about the third grade was small except knowing

we couldn't hold her in the circle
of our crayons forever. That was big,
as was the dog that chased me home,
though when shown a picture
of that dog not long ago, I see
I was wrong, it wasn't big
but gargantuan, it was all mouth
and could have swallowed me
in one bite, and when she didn't
come back to school, I drew something else:
the sun, trees that resembled people
with extra arms, people
who resembled coat racks, clouds
that were a churning of my hand
above the empty houses.



A half hour that is a day that is a life

In a park the size of a large living room
off York, a man dervishes
through his thoughts while the East River
spins out its cowlicks. One side
of his head is shaved, a plastic bag
blooms from his open zipper
like a black peony, and even he asks
of the cops who shot a man
fifty one times and were found innocent
this morning of everything, including
bad judgement, why one of them
reloaded. When I speak to him, he waves a hand
in surrender and leaves, muttering
like a lit fuse, I have the park
to myself, tulips and the dopplering of tires
across the Queensboro, people
headed home. The man
never shot back, didn't have a gun, red buds
are in bloom. I see someone's
attached solar panels
to one of Roosevelt Island's
abandoned buildings, as if our emptiness



is powered by the sun. Our emptiness
is self-powering. In the Guggenheim
this afternoon, I looked at paintings
done with gunpowder spread on canvas
and lit, it burns
shadow-images, in one case
of mushroom clouds, rows of them, each small
as a fist, wraithlike, delicate enough
I wanted to protect them
from the wind of people walking by. I feel why
we pray, I have no idea why
we pray, I leave the park
to itself, walk north, past another park
where three basketball games are going on,
men weaving, shouting, a loom
of aspiration, one guy
working it toward the hoop,
bashing at the man who would tell him
no, you can't have what you want,
when a third man swings around,
strips him of the ball, and arcs
the most beautiful miss, a shot
so perfectly bad it's from
another universe, I feel why we pray, I just
can't.



Critique with possible fracture

When I fell naked across the floor joists
I hurt my wrist. Having planned
to suddenly become a famous pianist,

I wrapped it in a scarf my mother wore
in 1967 as she sprinkled water
from a Pepsi bottle with a nozzle in it

over pants she ironed for my father
nearly every day. Women then
went around in flowered scarves, peonies

or tulips. When they gathered, it was as if
small gardens had missed each other,
small gardens with access

to wood-paneled station wagons.
Achilles would have admired
these pretty shields were he a touch

fay, how they protected
the Rube Goldberg machines of their hair
while washing windows or putting the crease



of meaning business into pants.
Why was I naked? I don't recall.
I'd never play Carnegie Hall, that much

was clear, but the Iditarod
was still on the list. I just needed
someone to convince me the dogs

liked pulling a sled, and only the dogs
could convince me of this, as I would only
believe a tree about how the axe feels,

no matter how loudly you yell timber.
The station wagons are harder to understand.
Why make a car look like a den, why

make a den no bear would enjoy, why the suburbs
at all when cities were available, you know,
to be lived in?



Between rapture and repair

The feeling everything is different
for the peony this time around. The hell
with ants. It's not even true they open
the blooms, small mandibles. The feeling

corners are tired of waiting
for what comes around them. This row
of clapping people walks
toward its opposite, while on the left
of the first row, another row
of clapping people walks
toward its opposite, and this box
of clapping people will not have a lid.
This is what the corner hopes will happen

when it takes a more active role in society.
The feeling reincarnation alone
makes sense, that I have all these jobs
to learn to do, broken shale
and leaf shard. I will come back as gravity

so I can pull Tocqueville apart in the library
of unreading, and make you fall, and hold you
when you fall. Suddenly



I am not so tired. The feeling
mountains are a wave of starlight
moving through, growing trees and grass
and me for a slow while. Who said

rodeo? bareback? Who said
you have to eat your supper
before you can go out to play? The feeling

that was a conspiracy, that we could have played
well into the night
without our carrots and especially
our green beans, nothing personal, green beans.
But it's all personal. The feeling

my cursive is a hairdo beyond restraint.
That I am buttercup beyond restraint.
That the coming rain
is a reassurance beyond restraint.
That it will make my roof feel useful. The one
that leaked. That doesn't leak now.
That will leak again.



Arriving light in their fury to eat

It is not an indigo bunting but beautiful
still, a blue I can think of nothing like
at the feeder beside the cardinal
except the blue in "Champs de Mars," blue
of Chagall's Paris with a red sun
or moon, I can't tell, behind the Eiffel Tower
on a postcard I'll send to a woman
I have decided needs a purple bird
to arrive in the corner under roses.
Last night she said that her sadness,
the ongoing one, the one that never actually
leaves, that hides as a child at tag
or recedes as the tide, was there, with us,
among the cedars. I will send her
Monday this purple bird in the corner
of a postcard under roses, and the message,
I was with you in the cedars
as I am with you in the house.
She will find me, wherever I am
in the house, we will go to the window,
look at birds emptying the plastic tubes
with vigor, a churning of crow and chickadee,
eastern oriole, her sadness there,
with us, as mine, always, feels like this:



I've asked my mother a question, she has turned
and said, I tried in the womb not to give you
a mouth, she was a fine mother, feels like
an unhung door, I want to be free
of the figurative, to return to the future:

her sadness there, with us, as mine, always,
but not named or fed, I hope
by then hummingbirds, ruby throated,
off to the side, probing the Rose of Sharon
that opened yesterday, the fluted blooms,
here is gentleness, over and over,
practicing enticement, being — there is
no other word for it — licked, there is
another word for it, kissed.





Zhaoming Wu

www.zhaomingwu.com

Zhaoming Wu was born in Guangzhou, China. He received his BFA from the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art, China and his MFA from the Academy of Art University, San Francisco.

His work have featured in:
International Artist
Art Talk
America Art Collector
Art of West

He is represented by several galleries:

Addison Gallery,
Boca Raton, FL
Abend Gallery,
Denver, CO

Astoria Fine Art,
Jackson, WY
Bryant Galleries,
New Orleans, LA
Sanders Galleries,
Tucson, AZ
Howard/mandville
Gallery, Kirkland, WA
Morris & Whiteside
Galleries, Hilton Head
Island, SC
Gasov & Gurule
International Fine Art,
Scottsdale, AZ
Mclarry Fine Art,
Santa Fe, NM

Q&A

Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

European Artists in 18 & 19 century, such as Auguste Rodin, Rembrandt.

How do you choose your subject matter?

I get ideas for my paintings in one of two ways. Sometimes I get an idea, so I will tell the model roughly what it is and let her interpret it. Other times, I will ask the model to just start moving around. When I see something I really like, I'll ask her to stop and hold the pose. Either way, I know I'm found a subject when all of variables combine to elicit an emotional response in me.

What is your opinion of digital art v. traditional art?

Traditional art is foundation to the digital art, and the digital art is the new energy to the traditional art.

What was the first piece of art you were paid for?

I have sold my first piece art with \$100.00 in 1981.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

Before I start a new painting, I take a few minutes to look at the model or photograph and study the subject. As if I were meditating, I am thinking, trying to fully connect or re-connect with the inspiration behind the painting so that I am not just painting objects.

What is your secret weapon?

Very solid painting skill & unique perspective to the subject.





Zhaoming Wu

6, Dusk In Solo oil on canvas 20" x 16"



Zhaoming Wu

News oil on canvas 20" x 16"



Dynamic Movement oil on canvas 24" x 30"



Zhaoming Wu



William Stobb

William Stobb is the author of *Nervous Systems* (Penguin 2007) and *For Better Night Vision* (Black Rock Press 2000). His new poems are from a manuscript in progress entitled "Flood Light." Some of these poems are forthcoming in *American Poetry Review*, *Conduit*, and *Colorado Review*. Others have appeared in recent issues of *MiPOesias*, *nthposition*, *Jacket*, and *Pistola*. For miPOradio, Stobb hosts the "Hard to Say" podcast on poetry and poetics. He lives in La Crosse, Wisconsin, where he works as Associate Professor of English at Viterbo University. His Viterbo homepage is easily searchable and includes links to recent works and .mp3 recordings of poems.



The Light Year

After many deaths, a late fall,
an ice storm and a long dreaming.
I saw my friend in new time
Already dead yet still sick and distressed
he grimaced in company
I must've known
others there but it didn't register.
Recklessly positive I said it's good
to see you and try not to worry
meaning I continue to love you,
you already died,
and you're the kind of person
who deserves transcendent happiness so
please I'm trying to believe.

I shouldn't think ironically this layer of ice seems moralistic

The girl wasn't expecting to feel
perfectly fit to the boy or to think
during that surprisingly literal
connection about different things like
red paintings in the employee
break room at the restaurant
where she worked empty
at that hour but one light left on.
It was fine. Safe. Love, she thought.
She just wasn't expecting
in an afterwards flush that he would open
the window "I'm naked you know"
"Feel good?" "Yeah but come back I'm cold"
"You should see the world froze"

seeking purpose—found maybe
lacking but half willing



Morning at the end of one long winter
walking sidewalks in the dynamic of
thaw freeze thaw freeze Have to be
careful in thinking of my dead friend
noticing on such a day vole tracks ending
at the surface brush of owl wings
Careful not to be reckless with this
grieving like ice once begun
consumes the season So he would notice
now in the past tense He noticed
moments as if a shimmer rode what I found
significant more for its ending / beginning
Thinking arriving to mind a girl elapsing
to the window in ice light reflecting

in the dynamic of being still
after having been still having to



Blue in Nature (with Some Overflow)

A year later I ride through the marsh.
A goose hisses at me.
A heron flees the racket my bike trailer makes.

I hadn't even thought of you yet.
I had to run juice boxes over
to my daughter's school

and grocery shop for Anna's graduation.
I had to try once or twice
to stay positive. When Claire called to tell me

we forgot the luau I didn't get angry.
Maybe one second.
A dog came bounding

over hillocks of marsh grass growing
around rootballs and trunks decomposing.
It wasn't scary. It looked like

some kind of hound
probably practicing birding only these birds
weren't shot. I thought of you

only after the trail submerged—luckily
my trailer has good clearance
but my shoes got soaked.

(I should've taken my shoes off
and put them in the trailer!)
After that bracing adventure



I crossed the bridge, looked down
at the overflown oxbow and remembered you
securing your canoe

to get up on a gnarly deadfall and help
Andy and I clear a narrow gap that wasn't
nearly as tricky as we were making it.

You came back to me clearly—
you were feeling really good you said
meds were remarkably effective—

when one of those little birds you see
a million of but also only individual ones rarely—
glimpses of bird world much more

than hi how do you do singular bird
now we're fine acquaintances
friends for life—jigged away from whatever it was

snacking right off the pavement—
I was riding easy no rush and it jigged
up and away from my approach—

then in a pretty tight moment
snapped back to take one more bite I guess
it was really good and it recognized me

as friendly I was happy to see as I remembered
you the bird posed for the briefest interlude
vividly blue.



Some Overflow

This thinking overflows the poem. About how musical it was—the zig-zag the bird made in its deft fly-away-and-then-back and its clear, momentary pose all made me think of how like instruments we are played by perception and consciousness. I turned the bike and trailer around, rode back and found the bird again. It had an ample source of food in seeds fallen on the trail—we're right in the middle of a late spring bloom—so I was sure I'd find it again and I did. And when I managed to get close enough to see it clearly a second time, I thought and felt that the bird was only itself now. In that first moment when its performance blew through me it had been more. Not, "it had signified more," though I know it's absurd to argue that I didn't interpret it. It was more than itself. It was bright arpeggios separated by an eighth note rest. It was you, Earl. But in the second instance, it was itself only. "Of course it has its own life," I thought. These thoughts about *how* the dead are with us—the mechanism of it, in a way, though that sounds awful. Maybe the instrumentation of it—the ways we're blown through the larger harmonic. Maybe the dead play the symphony of the living, though after I wrote "At the Afterlife Hotel" I started really hating metaphors about what the dead are doing. I wanted to think of the dead very physically. And then blue appears in nature. Physical blue. Even a blue flower but in this case better, an animate creature, softly textured and coming still as if to present itself as blue, seems so precious as to have been dropped from some richer sphere. This thinking overflows as maybe living overflows.





William Stobb

Island Time - Block Island Poems by Natalie Lobe

REVIEW BY CHERYL TOWNSEND

ISLAND TIME - Block Island Poems by Natalie Lobe
with photography by Nathan Bickell - Black Island
Press, 3413 Wilshire, Greensboro, NC / 21pps

"Think of your poem as a beacon." is the first line of the first poem in this second collection of poetry by Natalie. A beacon . . . showing us in, guiding the way. Enter into vacation time and revel in its virtues.

Gentle poems of essence, of place, of visual relaxation - ebb and flow and stable. Smell the roses. Listen to the breeze. "Shine one word at a time."

Yet they also speak of appreciation, conservation, and a duty to preserve. She asks that we "Make your every image live/for coming generations" and herein she is. Natalie has struck me as an acute observer, a studier and a recorder. Her verbal photography puts you there with her, toes in the sand and sharing.

From "Black Rock"

Marsh grass, scrub pine, my hair,
even the rocks lean towards Algarve
where Portuguese women,
their red and green scarves blowing

against the wind, walk on the beach,
bend to pick up mollusks, then chasten
children dodging waves, sandpiper style.

I wish the photographs were in color . . . to match the vividness of the poetry, but even in their B&W exhibition, they extoll the succulent landscape, the happy faces, the scenic escapades.

Further poems of clam digging, wind surfing, licorice dolphins, ferry rides, stargazing, the inevitable footprints in the sand and "BLACKBERRY PICKING" where she muses "I could have stayed on the porch, with a love poem/or a daydream."

But mostly I took in her enjoyment of the elements. Her soaking in the sun, giving in to the wind, allowing the massaging of the water and listening to the rain. "A late August shower taps/paradiddle on he porch roof" .. Paradiddle, indeed.

I do need to mention that the aforementioned photographs were taken by her grandson, who obviously enjoys nature as well.



Robert C. Jackson is a contemporary realist still life artist. Since 1997 he has been working full time at his painting craft.

Robert's work is in private, corporate, and museum collections and shows in various galleries from coast to coast.

His work can be seen at:
Arden Gallery, Boston MA
Gallery 1261, Denver CO

Leslie Levy Gallery,
Scottsdale AZ

Zenith Gallery,
Washington DC



Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

Historically, Rembrandt. But in all honesty, I'm affected most by the people I know. That would include a boatload of peers but at the top of my list would be painter Scott Fraser. He has been invaluable in the exchange of ideas, discussion of painting, and someone to simply challenge me to go farther.

How do you choose your subject matter?

A hoppy ale or imperial stout and a little time. I'll take a break from my painting occasionally to sit in a local hangout for an hour and just brainstorm. In those times I just write ideas as my work is driven by the narrative. Not that I always have a long story to go specifically with a piece, but I certainly give the viewer a jumping off point. I have a few sketch books that during those hours I intently write down as many ideas as possible.

What was the first piece of art you were paid for?

I've never liked selling my work personally so I am thrilled to work with galleries. Thus my first sold piece was a simple still life painting that sold through my first gallery.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

I work. I'm a pretty disciplined person so I go to work and paint. I've had some folks ask if an artist should wait until they are "inspired." I wake up very seldom feeling "inspired" and if I waited for it to come, it would never show up. But, If I start painting, before long, I am lost and captivated by what I am doing.

What is your secret weapon?

Humor. The soul needs both humor and drama. Somehow in the arts, drama is what is taken seriously. But don't forget, you can be seriously funny!



Robert C. Jackson

Ballooning oil on linen 40" x 30"



Object Project Food Fight oil on linen 48" x 48"



Robert C. Jackson



Waiting For A Fanfare oil on linen 40" x 30"



Robert C. Jackson

Grace Notes:

GRACE CAVALIERI INTERVIEWS RON SILLIMAN

Ron Silliman is one of America's most exciting / intelligent poet/critics. He has written and edited 31 books to date. For 25 years Silliman wrote a single poem, entitled *The Alphabet*. (1979-2004.) His present poem is entitled *Universe*. Silliman sees his poetry as being part of a lifework, which he calls *Ketjak*. Ron Silliman's blog is a culturally significant English-language blog of contemporary poetry and poetics. By 2008, the site had logged 1,500,000 visitors. Silliman was born in Pasco WA, and attended San Francisco State University and the University of California, Berkeley. He has taught at San Francisco State University, the University of California at San Diego, New College of California, Naropa University and Brown University. Silliman is a literary activist who has also been a political organizer, lobbyist, ethnographer and newspaper editor. Ron has received several honors including fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Pennsylvania Arts Council and the the Pew Charitable Trusts. He is a market analyst in the computer industry. After living for 40 years in the Bay area, he now lives in Pennsylvania with his wife and children.

GC: What is the urgency of poetry in your own life?

RS: When I was younger, say the age of ten, I knew that I wanted an art of language, but I didn't really have an idea what that might mean, what possibilities

might exist. Growing up in a home that held only Readers Digest condensed novels was not conducive to finding out. Fortunately, the suburb I grew up in was on the edge of Berkeley, so that what I couldn't find at home I could come across in the world.

When, at the age of 16, the same age my boys are today, I happened across William Carlos Williams' *The Desert Music* in the local library, I knew I had found what I'd been looking for.

GC: What was the most



Ron Silliman

Photo © Star Black 2008

critical crossroad in your professional life?

RS: There are so many different ways to answer that. When I left UC Berkeley during my senior year to perform my “military obligation” as a conscientious objector with a prison movement group, the Committee for Prisoner Humanity & Justice, I discovered that nonprofit groups needed writers, even if they didn’t know it themselves. Before I left that job – I stayed five years – I and a half-dozen other people had crafted a rewrite of California’s state penal code, setting terms for over 3,000 different felonies. Perhaps the most critical crossroad on that job occurred my very second day there. The two women who ran the organization had given me the keys to the door and instructions on

how to sort the mail and told me to open up the next day so that they could come in around ten, but when I arrived I discovered an “escaped” convict from San Quentin literally hiding in the shadows. He’d been part of a work-release program but had failed to return

crime, tho he was removed from the work-release program. It gave my new employer a sense that I could think and act in an emergency, and I was given much more responsibility right away than otherwise might have been the case.

GC: How do poems without narrative and story create experience?

RS: The same way experience does. Narrative, in a strict sense, is nothing other than the unfolding of

meaning in time, and my work is deeply narrative. But it doesn’t confuse narrative with plot, which is something altogether different. I have a hard time imagining what my work must look like to somebody not familiar with it, if only because I’ve been on the inside now for decades,

“Narrative, in a strict sense, is nothing other than the unfolding of meaning in time . . . ”

to the joint the night before because a female co-worker, not knowing he was a San Quentin inmate, offered him dinner and some post-dinner companionship. I had to negotiate his surrender and managed to do so in a way that he was not charged with any new

but I think if you don't worry about your preconceptions of what a work "should be," you will discover that my writing is always rich with meaning, but that its focus moves, sometimes sentence by sentence, at times word by word. Usually I try to set up rhythms in the write to guide the experience, and my principle interest in the Fibonacci series (which I used in writing *Tjanting* and several sections of *Lit* within *The Alphabet*) is first of all musical. It always amazes me that people who have no difficulty going to a show by Robert Rauschenberg, David Salle or Jess or any other artist whose canvases pile multiple layers of imagery one on top of the other would then have any difficulty with a text that did the same. I've given readings to audiences that were mostly Deadheads (there to hear my co-reader Robert Hunter, the lyricist for the Grateful Dead) and even in prisons and had great responses. The

only place my work appears to be difficult at all is within certain second-tier creative writing programs.

GC: How can dismantling the line make a greater entirety?

RS: I'm not quite sure what you mean by this question, so I'm going to presume that you're alluding to a work like 2197, which is part of *The Age of Huts* cycle. That work, which consists of 2,197 sentences over 13 poems (some in prose), each with 13 paragraphs or stanzas (and each with 13 sentences) combines the basic grammatical structure of some sentences with the vocabulary of others, so that you can get sentences in which certain terms recur. Let's just look at one word, *fishing*. It appears in the following forms there:

We arrived at the small fishing sensitivity just as the language worked its way over

the information.

§

Ridge on the small of fishing.

§

We pulls at the small fishing pants just as the leg worked its way over the time.

§

We arrived at the small fishing context just as the term use its way over the miscreants.

§

We arrived at the small fishing swamp just as the sun worked its way over the gas.

§

Which is fishing, which is sun.

§

A small village, fishing, worked for the sun.

§

Fishing on the ridge
of way.

§

Fishing is the small ridge.

§

We arrived at the small
fishing body just as the
temperature worked its
way over the back.

§

The village of small fishing
sun.

§

Fishing off the small.

§

The ridge of my fishing
village.

§

We arrived at the small
fishing attention just as
the case deserves its
way over the past.

§

We arrived at the small
fishing village just as the
sun worked its way over
the ridge.

§

The village arrived with
fishing first.

§

We arrived at the more
fishing village just as the
sun eat its way over the
porridge.

§

Distance arrived
between the small fishing
meaning just as the
verification worked its
way over the this.

§

The small fishing of an
old sun.

§

We form at the small
fishing form, just as
the rain worked its way

over the loss.

§

As small of fishing begins
to arrived, village of sun
begins to worked.

Those are all 21 occurrences of the term *fishing* in the 13 poems of 2197. You will notice that there are two kinds of sentences here, at least with regard to that one word. There are a group that all follow the same syntactic structure into which for all but one some unusual terms have been introduced. Then there is a second group in which the term *fishing* has been introduced into sentences with different structures, and that some other terms that keep appearing with *fishing* may also have been introduced into that sentence. And there is one sentence that is a perfectly ordinary sentence – the 15th in this sequence. At one level the introduced words, whether from the *fishing* Ur-sentence or from

others, invariably twist the language so that is sort of intelligible, but only sort of. The other is that terms begin to take on some traits that typically belong to characters in fiction, they appear in different circumstances and have different fates. Now if you pay heed to the language as you – as you would if you read it aloud – this seems pretty easy to do, even if all the disjointedness is a little unusual or new to you. But if you are used to skimming language and only heeding the larger elements of fiction & exposition, like characters, then you are probably going to think this is all gobbledegook. In some ways, my ideal reader is somebody who starts off doing the latter, which is the sort of lazy, semi-literate reading most of us were trained to do, and realizes in the process that she or he has to do the former. I've had several wonderful

conversations with readers who have had that experience with one or another of my works and, as one of them once told me, it "ruined them" for bad literature from that point forward.

GC: What is there about language that we own and what cannot be owned?

RS: I don't think we own anything, ultimately. If you can't take it to the grave, it's not yours.

GC: Would you approach teaching Milton, Dryden and Donne the same way you'd teach Mullen or Hejinian?

RS: Absolutely. In each case, I'd have people begin to read the works aloud, even when they're by themselves alone. I don't think you can read Milton any other way, frankly.

GC: In your own writing of a single work for 25 years, how do you sustain the flagging spirit to keep going?

RS: Because one of the major issues of my work is to rethink the part:whole relationship in the long poem, I'm working with different forms and approaches from section to section and, in some cases, within sections. So I'm not really doing the same thing for a quarter century. And, as *The Alphabet* built, the variation, the way individual sections "commented upon" one another became a sort of its own fascination for me.

GC: What do you see at this moment as the heart of invention in poetry?

RS: The world is changing constantly, at an even more rapid pace now than ever before. Poetry has to both reflect and refract

those changes in order to speak meaningfully of our lives at this moment. To write of the 21st century in a form that was tired in the 17th century is just pathological. While I have my issues with the term "postmodern," I don't have any problem recognizing that pre-modern or anti-modern approaches to literature are failures both as writing and ultimately as ways to live.

GC: What thematic similarities do you see stated and restated in poetry?

RS: Charles Olson put it best: What does not change / is the will to change.

GC: What of the safety and stability of digitally encoded text, as compared to the permanence of ink in the old fashioned book?

RS: Permanence is a

relative fiction for a species that lives on a planet dependent upon a sun that surely will burn out if we don't annihilate ourselves first. There are pros and cons to both methods, but the pros for electronic media mostly have to do with distribution, more than with retention. As librarians are wont to say, "Hard copy is truth."

GC: Is pattern on the page the way we understand poetry not based in meter?

RS: Meter is just one of many ways of building pattern, structure, form into a text, however you want to think of it, and the least original and interesting one at that. Meter, if it is at all regular, is simply narcoleptic.

GC: What if Icarus had been a pragmatist?

RS: Then we'd tell a

different story, but with the same key variables. We need a tale about overreaching, call him Icarus, call him Faust.

GC: How come people are so mean to Language poets?

RS: What does not change / is the will to change. But people resist change. Language poetry was confrontive and analytical at a moment when many writers were still pretending that they were "above" such cognitive exercise. Even many poets whose work we admired felt that they had chosen sides in the 1950s debate between the raw & the cooked and here we came with a different menu altogether. It was as if we brought chopsticks. Basically, we've been the torso of young Apollo in the room for the past thirty years. You must change your life.



Jane Draycott

<http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/janedraycott/>

Jane Draycott is a UK-based poet with a particular interest in sound art and collaborative and digital work. Nominated three times for the Forward Prize for Poetry, her most recent collections *Prince Rupert's Drop* and *The Night Tree* (Carcanet/Oxford) are both Poetry Society Recommendations. Previous collections include, from Two Rivers Press, *Christina the Astonishing* (with Peter Hay and Lesley Saunders) and *Tideway*, a long sequence of poems about London's working river.

Winner of the Keats Shelley Poetry Prize in 2002 and nominated as one of the Poetry Book Society's 'Next Generation' poets in 2004, she teaches on postgraduate writing programmes at Oxford University and the University of Lancaster.

'Concourse' and 'We would like you to listen' are part of an audio-text collaboration with Elizabeth James based on Andrea Alciato's 1531 *Emblematum liber*.



Concourse

Selective walking in a field or maze.
 Closed circuitry. Wave after wave
 of closeness. Running together.
 A deployment of human figures.
 Seed bed. Our bed. We float,
 are carried, you against me.
Now what? Get in close
 with personal data. Me against you.
What are you going to do about it?
 Get in close. You made this world.

We would like you to listen

We would like you to listen
with your whole body
that dog Jimmy circling
surprised by the moon the mirror

To do so we would ask you to reflect
that dog is just calling dog

We want to ask what we can
seeing himself as others see him
another dog we can ultimately listen to

Jimmy the point of living is just to call
is to merge with the Beloved
to call another dog

Longing or love the moon's
just rocks another sea
circling there surprised



Turquoise

Because it is so necessary.
In the shop they are looking
for bits of sky. It is in his eyes.
She is in his eyes, sacred object,
talisman against some kind
of falling. Her eyes are turquoise,
tending towards fire. Like heaven.
Inlaid like heaven on earth.

And here it is, at least
a little bit of it. Blue fire.

~

At sea they watch the sky free falling,
a line of fire tending towards green,
toward the underwater mines of green.

And now they swim. Cold, deep, downward.
Because it is impossible. Now she is scared.





Jane Draycott

Resurrection of the Dust by John McKernan

REVIEW BY **JIM KNOWLES**

John McKernan, "Resurrection of the Dust",
The Backwaters Press. 225 pages, 6x9

Despite the rather large (these days) size, this collection is dense with excellent and varied work, an unusual intensity, and many surprises. The image, language, and sound are usually very sharp and well-worked, and there is an attitude that wavers from playful to a bit sinister. You really need check out some samples:

Page 18:

*...I want to stay here to see
who owns this car. Almost a blue-quiet in red
neon. But the wind polishes its ice pick
to push be to the far edge of my daily
walk past the crack motel and morphine Bright
Aid Drug Store...*

There is almost an addled talking through teeth to the sound, and the objects are all sharp and dangerous, and the sprinkling of the mundane among the pretty and lethal.

Page 27:

*...To get a green passport Be &
Be a soul Stand back please Give
The alphabet time to breathe the dirt
Beneath the deaf squirrel who jumped
& flew 100 yards when the oak
Fell Be soul & tell us why you
Hate God A sentence squirting ...*

A chanting soul motif, stream of consciousness, surrealism, surprise soundings,

alternate phrase plays, a disquiet....wow. This is the sort of thing that stops me in my tracks at the book store, all the deciphering to do, all that play, hints at things beyond the poem.

There are many macabre moments, some personal, but with the poetic edge undulled:

Page 41:

*He tried to leave
Through hidden wisdom teeth
Then through two front teeth
With their pain-filled silver helmets*

*At the end He kept trying
To float up the IV drip Past
The iced needles of insulin Into
The calm syllables of coma
Whispering his name in a new language*

Wow again. Eerie beyond gothic, he is entangled with a consciousness so closely by observation. Riveting. At each step, not what you expect. I actually remembered a friend who was semi-conscious for a week describe his trip through the IV tubes . . . this is mythology of the real, the now. Very difficult to read quickly, so much to feel. The way a gasp or cry moves the thoughts past the teeth. So sharp. This is painting scenes with a razor. Hard to forget.

All along, there are little patterns, about ten pages of recollections, tributes to other poets, more witty or macabre observation, some youth scenes. Through it all, there is a strange precision yet a paired detachment from reality that makes this always surprising, and sharp. I will be revisiting this, for sure. It's a pretty amazing body of work.



Victoria McKenzie

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Victoria McKenzie is a graduate of Brown University. She moved to NYC in the late 1980s; attended Parsons School of Design and studied privately with artist Beverly Brodsky for several years. She is married and the mother of two daughters. She can be found online at www.vhmckenzie.com, which has links to her full archive of work and also her daily art blog, The Night Shift.



Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

Egon Schiele, Pierre Bonnard, Romare Bearden, Joan Mitchell, Alice Neal

How do you choose your subject matter?

I'm drawn to melancholy faces or scenes – capturing an expression that says much more than that which is instantly obvious. Depth of soul.

What is your opinion of digital art v. traditional art?

As someone who pays the bills through the practice of digital technology and design, I can find myself straddling both sides of this issue. Putting a computer into the hands of someone who knows which buttons to push doesn't mean they will create a work of art. I'd put it this way, someone with the knowledge and experience of working with traditional materials can create amazing things on a computer, once they learn the software but I think the reverse journey is MUCH more difficult. Similarly, working with traditional materials, without the benefit of hitting "undo," forces you to really master your skills and ultimately gives you much more confidence.

What was the first piece of art you were paid for?

I think it was a small watercolor of some colorful sarongs blowing in the breeze, strung on a line between two palm trees. Sweet and simple.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

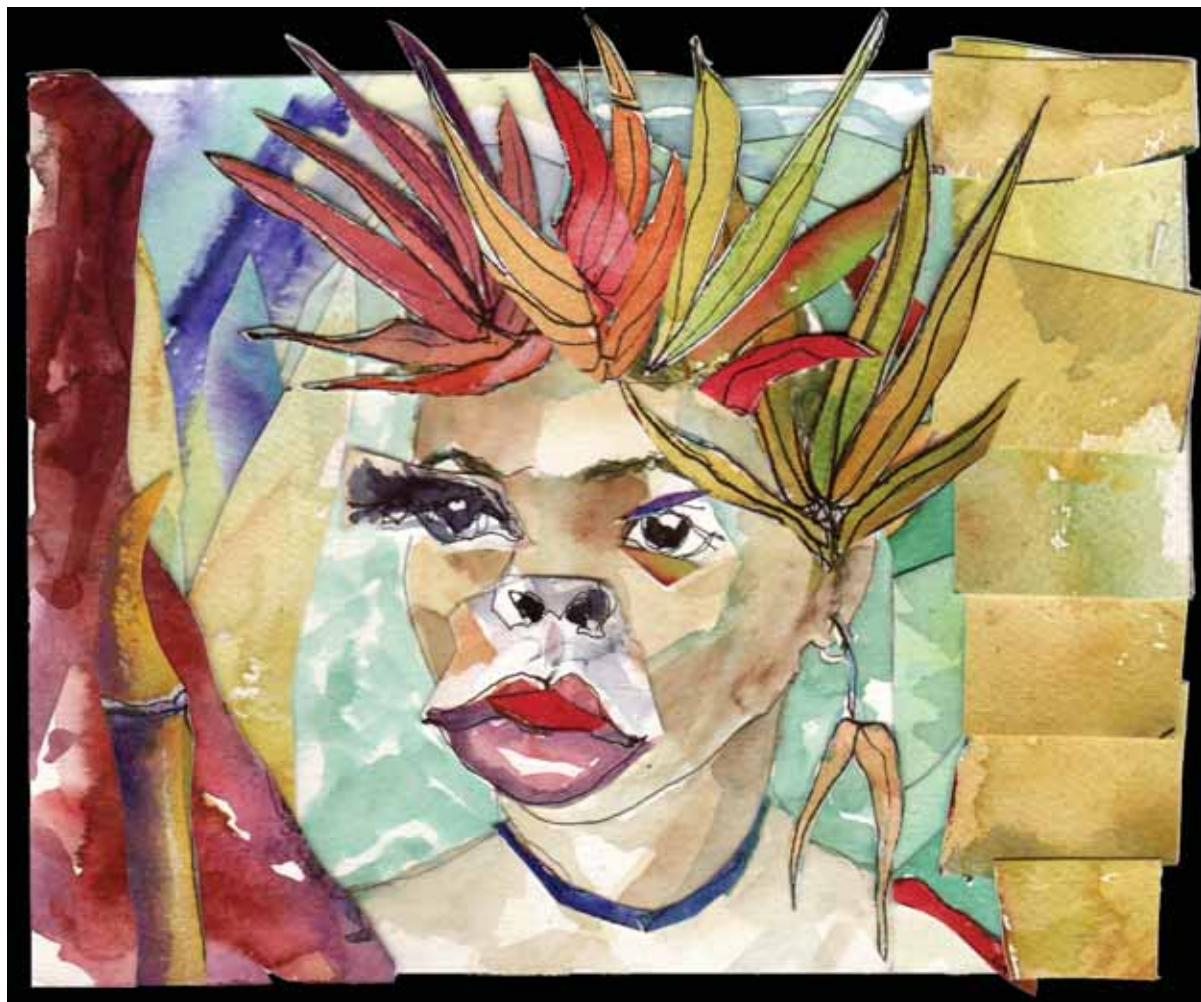
I think my most re-curring ritual is that of procrastination, typically through cleaning and tidying up. Once I get on a roll with something, the chaos just expands exponentially and it doesn't bother me one bit. But to start something new, I have to clean my workspace and clear my mind.



New Sheriff In Town ink and watercolor on paper 4" x 6"



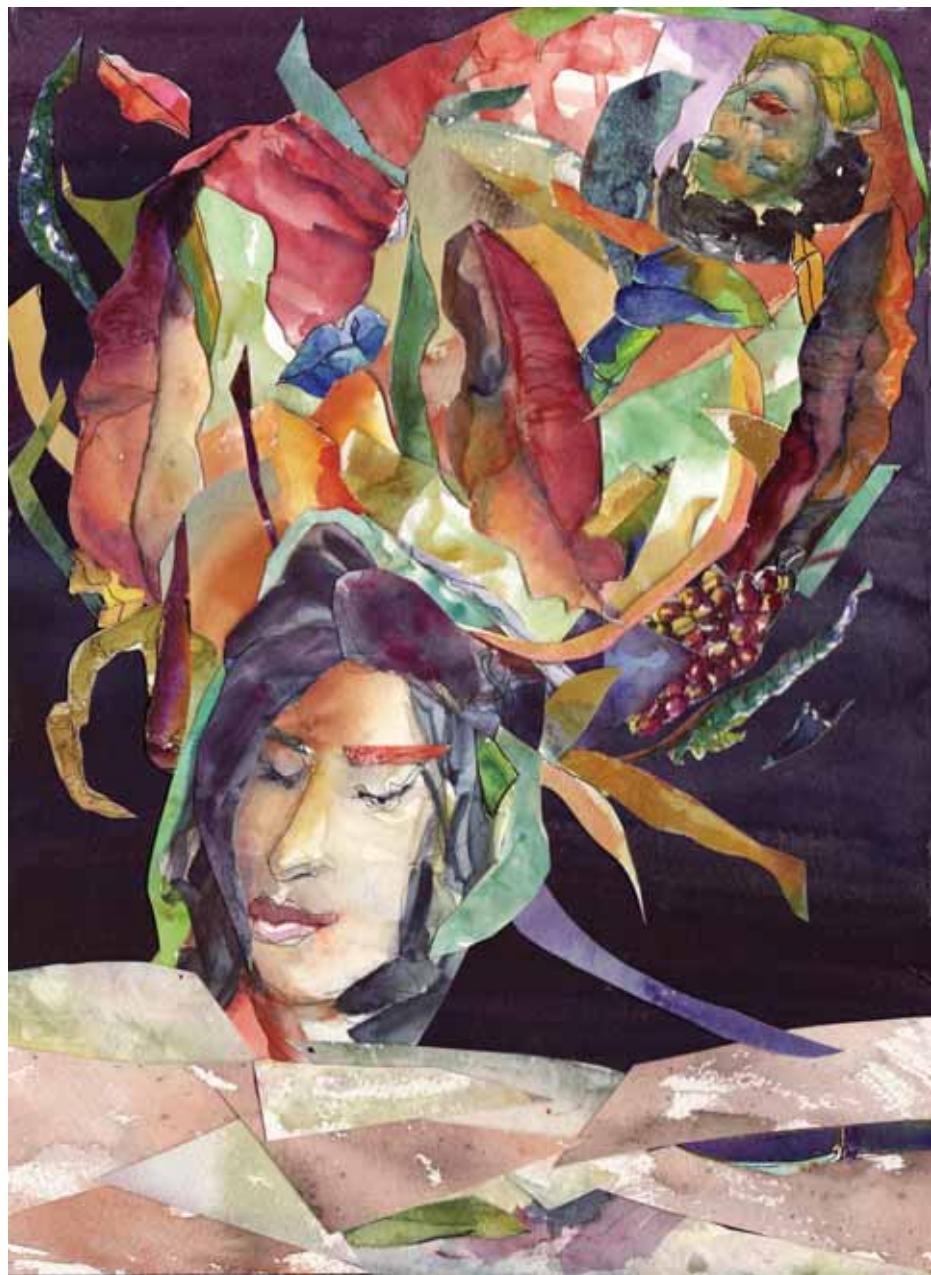
Victoria McKenzie



Party Hat mixed media collage 6" x 8"



Victoria McKenzie



I Don't Wanna Go To Rehab mixed media collage 10" x 14"



Victoria McKenzie



The woman on the far left standing with her hands in front of her waist is Kirk Curnutt's great-grandmother. She is 115 and currently the oldest person in the world. The boy in the right in the overalls is his grandfather.

& Manning the House

SHORT STORY BY KIRK CURNUTT

THIS WAS IN the time when refrigerators were just becoming commonplace, so each morning a fleet of Model As still set out from the DePrez Ice and Coal Plant on the corner of South and Noble streets delivering blocks to homes. The drivers with routes inside Shelbyville were the envy of those who worked the outlying county farms. Once past the city limits only a handful of roads were paved, and even though Mr. Ford was making a reliable product up in Detroit, his pneumatic tires and vanadium suspensions were still susceptible enough to ruts that the men had to putter along at a speed that barely outpaced a pair of strong healthy horses. Only one thing irritated the drivers more than the conditions, and that was the children. Regardless of whether they were walking to school or working the fields, when they saw a DePrez truck they dropped what they were doing to race up to the running boards and beg for flavored shavings. "You're

mistaking me for the ice-cream man," the drivers had been schooled to say. Most of the time they delivered that information a lot less politely than Mr. Daniel DePrez, their boss, would have appreciated. Quite often they improvised a bit of bad news meant to shoo the children back to their chores. "Ain't no ice-cream man coming to the boondocks," they would declare. "Best tell your folks to buy an extra block from me and set you a cow on it. 'Cause that's the only way you're getting ice cream out here."

Ortis C. Huber was one of the few drivers who didn't taunt the children. It was likely the reason Mr. DePrez assigned him the poorest of the delivery routes, which ran all the way out to Blue Ridge Road heading toward Gowdy. That and Ortis had the makings of a good company man. He'd only worked for Mr. DePrez for nine months, having come to the ice plant after teaching nearly half of his thirty-seven years. He probably

would've still been teaching, too, if not for the Snodgrass girl and all the talk she'd started about him. That was why Ortis happily considered himself a company man: Mr. DePrez hadn't paid a whit of attention to those rumors. He just plain hired Ortis, talkers be damned. Maybe driving an ice truck wasn't a path to a quick fortune, but it beat hiring out as a farmhand or working at the furniture factories that were then Shelbyville's major employers. If Ortis played his cards right, he figured he could get off the road by graduating up to mechanic, maybe even managing the garage at some point. And, as it turned out, that's exactly what happened: within a decade, Mr. DePrez would promote him to supervisor of the fleet, and from there Ortis would go on to become an engineer and then plant manager. Even after the ice industry went under and necessity transformed the company into a water distillery (among other things), Ortis C. Huber stayed with the DePrez family. He would still be receiving a paycheck from them when he died in 1982. By that point, he would be ninety-one, and the scurrilous things the Snodgrass girl said about him were long forgotten, even by Ortis himself.

But that was to the future. For now he was content to rattle along Blue Ridge Road, passing the time daydreaming about his customers. He wondered what Hester Cherry would be like had her boy, Howard, not died in the Argonne (Ortis regretted not getting over); whether the cripple bachelor Dar Fately would've had better luck with women if his legs hadn't been eaten off by a thresher; whether poor families like the Pruitts would replace their horses with motor cars had they a dollop of prosperity.

Only one family Ortis didn't care to conjecture about. He'd heard tales aplenty about the widow Brandywine, and they were too reminiscent of what the Snodgrass girl had said to cost him his teaching job. So as he knocked on the mudroom door Ortis made sure he had nothing extraordinary in his expression, lest the woman think he was gossiping to himself about her. Only it wasn't the widow who answered — it was the man. The one, rumor had it, Mrs. Brandywine refused to marry.

The one, rumor made sure to add, whom marriage was the only thing she refused him.

"Jus' checking to see if the icebox needs tending," Ortis said in



as blasé a voice as he could muster. "You know if Mrs. Brandywine's needin' a delivery today?"

"It don't take a 'Mrs.' to tell when the water pan's full. We got a ham in here trying to go bad, so yeah, we need us a new block. Make sure you wrap her tight so you don't dribble on the rug."

The widow Brandywine's man always talked this rude, so Ortis wasn't too offended. He went back to his truck and draped a towel over a block before swinging it hip-high between his pincers.

"You're wondering where she's at," the man remarked inside as Ortis swung the block into the insulated oak cabinet. There was a ham in there, all right. Ortis didn't need to peek into the food cupboard to see it; the smell had seeped into the upper chamber, salty and rich.

"Can't say I was wondering. If it's not Mr. DePrez's business, it's none o'mine."

"'Mrs. Brandywine' as you call her is up on the barn roof, reshingling. She's got her boy up there, but otherwise she's working by her lonesome."

"A roof's gonna need reshingling," Ortis agreed blankly, not knowing what else to say.

"She doesn't think I can do it right, so she's insisting on doing it herself. Her husband and her shingled the house, the barn, and that shed out there, she reminds me. There's not a lot around here she thinks I can do right jus' because I didn't grow up farming. But I'm about to show her. There's too much work that's wasted effort around here. I'm a-redesigning this operation to be more efficient."

"Efficiency's a big word these days," Ortis admitted. "Mr. DePrez had a man from Indianapolis down preaching on it not long ago. The man said 'efficiency' about as often as he said 'me.'"

The widow's man squared his shoulders, but he wasn't at all intimidating. Even though Ortis considered himself a teacher by profession, he'd done enough manual labor in his day that he wasn't about to be cowed by somebody who slicked back his hair with something other than sweat.

"Did Mr. DePrez's efficiency man tell you how inefficient it us for folks to buy their ice from a plant when they make'm home machines what grow their own?"

"From what I've heard those home machines run pretty expensive. I heard of rich men spending twice as



much for one as they spend on a flivver. I heard of them needing a spare room, too, just to house the motor and compressor. Now rich men might have spare rooms, but everyday folk like me and...."

Ortis made a point not to say you. Instead, he said Mrs. Brandywine.

"You been hearing old news, friend," the man smiled, impervious to the insult. "General Electric got'm a model now with the compressor built on top of the machine. It's all of a piece and hums quiet as a dream. The best part is it only costs \$300. They've got an installment plan to boot for folks who can't lay cash on the table. You know how I know all this? Because I just bought us a monitor-top, friend. That's what they're called: monitor-tops. Like I said, I'm a-making this operation more efficient."

The widow's man stopped long enough to take a self-satisfied breath.

"I'd appreciate you telling Mr. DePrez this farm won't be needing more deliveries after today. We're making our own ice from here on out. You best tell him to get used to hearing that news, too. \$300 and an installment plan gonna be tough

competition for his plant."

Ortis nodded, trying to swallow a smile. "I'll let Mr. DePrez know. I'm sure he'll want to hear whether Mrs. Brandywine shares your view of the future ... friend."

It was about as rude as Ortis C. Huber had ever spoken to someone who wasn't the Snodgrass girl or a member of her family. He felt the widow's man eye him all the way back through the mudroom and outside. There Ortis noticed the barn shimmering red against a green-and-gold backdrop of corn some twenty yards off the dirt drive. A silhouette slowly inched across its top, stooped at the waist as a hammer swung and fell over the decking. Ortis didn't need to know it was the widow to tell it was a woman: each time the silhouette took a step, she had to lift the hem of her dress to avoid tripping.

"It's not work what makes a man. It's the quality of his ideas, and I've got plenty of them."

Ortis shrugged and tossed his pincers into his truck bed. He wasn't going to answer the man, but as he started for the driver's side door he spotted an object in the pebbly dirt. Three paces to the right, and his foot would've been impaled.



"I wish Mr. Ford would make a machine what grows its own tires." Ortis bounced the nail in his palm. "Now that would be some kind of efficiency."

He set the nail on his dash as he started the truck and rattled back toward the road. As he passed the barn he spotted a second silhouette on the roof — the widow's boy, Ortis figured. He gave the pair a farewell honk of his horn. He knew the boy well enough: on hot days, Clinton was one of the children who hopped on Ortis's running boards begging for shavings.

He'd finished the day's deliveries and was already past the widow's farm returning to Shelbyville when a truck came barreling down Blue Ridge Road at him. It was neither as wide nor as tall as Ortis's truck, but it was spiffier and acted like it owned the ground it traveled — even the plume of dust it churned up looked regal. Ortis had to veer toward the drainage ditch to avoid getting clipped. Even then the woosh when it roared past sent a shiver through his axle that vibrated all the way up through the steering wheel into his hands. Ortis cursed the other driver until a thought entered his mind. He

turned his truck around and crawled slowly up to the widow's drive, close enough to see the black script painted above the rear tire of the chrome-colored chariot. GENERAL ELECTRIC, it said. REFRIGERATOR. And above the word, in the open flatbed, as if there to rebuke the doubters, sat a fancy white box. It, too, had a crown: an odd, glassy contraption shaped like a pillbox hat.

Ortis watched the driver unload the appliance, the widow's man telling him how to do his job the entire time. When there was nothing left to see Ortis again turned back toward Shelbyville. He was passing the cornfield that marked the edge of the widow's farm when a boy hopped the drainage ditch and ran toward him. Normally Ortis would merely slow and tell Clinton how dangerous it was to jump on a moving running board, but today he stopped his truck.

"I thought you were roofing."

"Ma saw the scarecrow was down."

He pointed toward the ditch, where a cross of wood was wrapped with a plaid shirt and topped by a crocker sack, both stuffed with hay. The face on the sack gave Ortis a giggle.



"I bet you painted that smile yourself, huh? It's the same red as what your ma's barn is."

"Ma said a smile scares the crows more than a scowl. She sent me to prop 'im back up. Horace planted him but didn't tamp the post in deep enough. Crows keep knocking him over."

"Knockin' which over? — Horace or the scarecrow?"

Ortis didn't wait for Clinton to laugh. He didn't figure the boy would.

"'Horace,' huh? I guess I never thought to ask his name. What do you think of that fellow?"

The boy didn't answer. Probably out of respect for his mother.

"Well, I hope I don't offend you when I say I don't much care for him," Ortis went on. "Strikes me as a smart-mouth. Thing is, since he's buying you and your ma that fancy monitor-top, I won't have to put up with it. You're still gonna have to, though. I don't envy you that. I feel so bad for you I've got an idea. It may not take the smart-mouth out of old Horace, but it could give us both a leg up on him."

He swiped the nail off the dashboard and held it toward Clinton.

"All you've got to do is slip this under that G. E. fellow's tire, without him or Horace seeing."

The boy seemed to study the nail. Then his eyes flicked up toward Ortis, and just as suddenly back to the sharp tip.

"I know what you're thinking. You're wondering what Horace is gonna care if a delivery man gets a flat. The refrigerator's already in the house, idd'n it? Well, you're just gonna have to trust me. Something in me thinks that G. E. fellow is every bit a smart-mouth as your —"

He almost said *stepfather*.

"The son of a gun darn near blew me off the road," Ortis told the boy instead. "That's the funny thing about the future. It's always in a hurry to run down the present."

Clinton still hadn't budged.

"All right then. I'll make it really worth your while. I've got some extra blocks back there. What say we crush one up and you can have a cup of shavings? Gotta be hot on that roof. Shavings for the rest of the week could keep a boy like you mighty cool. Tomorrow I'll even bring a bottle of flavoring for you. You can hide it out here in the field and Horace'll never have to know."

Ortis had just about given up



when Clinton finally plucked the nail into his own grip.

"Strawberry and spearmint," he said in a near whisper. "That's how the hokey-pokey man at the fair serves his shavings."

The boy had disappeared back into the corn before Ortis had a chance to wonder where in Shelbyville he might find a bottle of spearmint syrup.

He sat for a while before deciding a G. E. driver would never waste time waiting for a mere iceman to pass him by. He drove a mile or so to where Blue Ridge intersected with Range Road. A mile up it, a little creek cut diagonally across the farmland. Ortis parked by the marshy bank and unwrapped a ham sandwich he'd packed that morning. The ham didn't smell half as rich or salty as the one the widow's man was probably relocating into his new refrigerator at that exact moment. As he chewed Ortis thought about Clinton and how oddly he'd looked at that nail. Like he was afraid of it or something. Like it might jump up and bite him. Then, after about twenty minutes, without warning, something unsettled Ortis's stomach, and he rewrapped what was left of the sandwich and pitched it into

the creek.

What he remembered concerned Clinton's father. The husband whose death left Mrs. Brandywine a widow. The one whose death left somebody thinking she needed a man.

Lest he was mistaken, the husband and father whose place Horace wasn't quite fit to take had died of lockjaw — after stepping on a nail.

So as Ortis returned to Blue Ridge Road he felt the future trampling down the past again—only this time he was the future. He was so irritated at himself for pushing mischief on the boy that he didn't take a lick of pleasure when he passed the G. E. truck, which sat listing away from the drainage ditch, its back left tire so flat the steel rim had carved its own rut in the dirt. Ortis pulled his truck over and stuck his head out the window. "You need a hand?" he shouted over his shoulder.

"God done give me two," the other driver huffed as he unbolted his spare from its storage spot atop his side fender. "They ought to serve me well enough. I do wish they'd pave these goddamn roads before they ask me to drive 'em, though. You never know what in hell



you're running over out here in the boondocks."

Ortis only wondered how much efficiency that new refrigerator brought the widow Brandywine's farm for about a week. He made sure the boy got his daily cup of shavings, but other than presenting Clinton his promised bottles of strawberry and peppermint, he never again mentioned the nail. Mr. DePrez didn't seem too worried about competing against monitor-tops, either. Ortis was there when his boss crossed the Brandywines off the company ledger with a light stroke of his pencil. "The thing about those installment plans," Mr. DePrez told his favorite driver. "You miss a single payment, and the store comes calling for its machine. A big company like G. E. won't float a customer through hard times. My guess? The widow's man will be back with his tail between his legs. Probably stuck there by the widow herself."

That day had yet to come when Ortis next saw him. He was working his usual route on Blue Ridge Road when he spotted an odd sway in Mrs. Brandywine's cornfield. He slowed enough to see it wasn't due to a breeze or a loose cow. The sway was caused by the widow's man —

that Horace — who was snapping a switch-stick into the corn with a sloppy, unfocused violence that said he probably wouldn't have been any use laying shingle. What he was whipping couldn't be seen; it was obscured by the chest-high stalks. Ortis had a pretty good idea, though, and it chilled him with fear and guilt. The nail was his idea, after all—he'd pushed the mischief on the boy. Ortis jerked his gearshift into neutral and jumped the drainage ditch, yelling, "Let him alone! Let him alone, dammit!" as the dangling thicket of unshucked ears thumped his chest.

Only it wasn't Clinton on the receiving end of that disciplining. It was the widow's scarecrow. The switch-stick had popped the buttons off the tattered shirt that held its stuffing, so hay spilled everywhere like dry innards. "I'm in charge here!" Horace screamed. He was so caught up in proving it that he didn't even notice he wasn't alone anymore. "I run this farm! You hear me? I do!"

The object of his beating was so compliant in taking the punishment that its expression didn't change a lick. The smile Clinton had painted on the crocker sack just kept on grinning, red hot as a taunt.

Even the widow's scarecrow couldn't help but laugh at her man.





Brooklyn Copeland

brooklynCopeland.blogspot.com.

Brooklyn Copeland was born in Indianapolis in 1984. She is the founding editor of Taiga Press, and the co-editor of the poetry journal *Taiga*, which seeks to publish original work, translations from the Scandinavian, Baltic and Slavic languages, and brief interviews with young musicians. Her chapbooks include *The Milk for Free* (2008), which is available electronically from Scantily Clad Press, *Borrowed House* (2008), which is forthcoming from Greying Ghost Press, and *Pearl of Siberia* (2009), which is forthcoming from Wyrd Tree Press.



UNEVEN BUT NOT ODD

Winter wears on,

as it does, and has, flash frozen and vampiric.
For three

weeks we delay our arrival.
We are one smirk, Siamese

shorn-skulled.

Our sun,
its pilot light

unlit, flares white.



The paintings of Glenn Harrington are recognized and collected internationally and have been featured in such publications as American Arts Quarterly, American Art Collector, International Artists Magazine, the covers of American Artist & US Art, New Art International, The New York Times, and Philadelphia Inquirer. He has had numerous solo exhibitions in New York, Japan, Charleston, South Carolina and Pennsylvania, and has exhibited at the Norman Rockwell Museum, The Museum of American Illustration, the Medici Gallery in London, and the USGA Museum.

His portrait work is highly regarded, having received the Draper Grand Prize in 2007, the Honor Award in 2008 and 2005, and Certificate Award in 2004 from the Portrait Society of America's international juried show. Harrington's portrait of Maria Callas was used to promote the Tony Award winning play "Master Class." Glenn is represented in Manhattan by the Eleanor Ettinger Gallery.



photo: Glenn Race

Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

John Sargent; for his design, mastery of light and color, draftsmanship, and facile execution - making look simple what is very complex.

How do you choose your subject matter?

Observation is crucial in selecting imagery. Usually, it's derived from nature or natural human emotion. Sometimes the imagery selects itself and I have only to notice it. When designing a painting, it tends to be a matter of experimenting with a subject, remaining flexible, editing possibilities until something interesting appears.

What is your opinion of digital art v. traditional art?

I'm open to anything lasting being produced in the digital medium. There are painting principles that transfer to an electronic approach, but I feel they are inherently quite different. There's something raw, unplanned and independent, about picking up a brush or pencil in an attempt to say something about an experience. All the senses are at work. I love the feel and smell of it; colors have distinct scents, brushes wear down and become familiar, the feel of the canvas varies. Each stroke is a track, a thought, it's 3d and exposes the planning and skill in the artist's intent. I'm amazed at what's being produced digitally, but feel at present, a certain homogenization that is limiting.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

I've been fighting against one for years, I don't want the process to become mechanical, repetitive. Yet, without packing all the habits we've learned on the way as we strike out into new ground would be futile. So, I try and stay loose within a planned framework, always allowing for a spontaneous change of direction. Having infinite possibilities at hand helps- solutions to new problems as they arise- this has surfaced after many years of grappling with it.



Glenn Harrington

Iridescence oil on linen 40" x 30"



Hemlock Ledge oil on linen 24" x 36"



Glenn Harrington



Silken Scarf oil on linen 14" x 11"

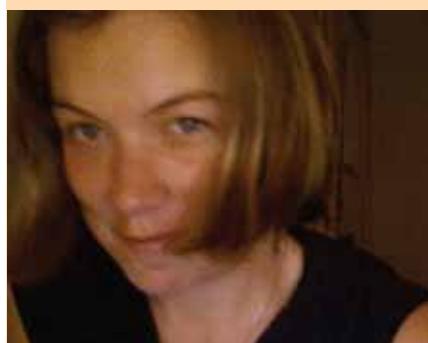


Glenn Harrington



Emily Kendal Frey

Emily Kendal Frey
lives in Portland,
Oregon. Recent
work is forthcoming
in *Spinning Jenny*,
Warbler, *Bird Dog*,
Fou and (with
Zachary
Schomburg) *Anti-*,
Pilot, Sir! and
Jubilat.



MATADOR

You don't have
to live
in the kitchen
with the bones.

SEX

She's looking at me
like I have cake
in my hair.

THERE

A crow is eating
the matador's
shadow.

MATADOR

Beauty that is not shaped is heart-buckled
Beauty lives across the divide from the other-shaped beauty
I have lived on the other side of beauty
I have lived this side of beauty
Beauty the scale we measure loss against
Beauty the fence
Beauty the fence we climb
Beauty the hole we step through
Make a hole-shaped place for beauty
Each hour a sacrifice to beauty
Beauty sacrifices itself

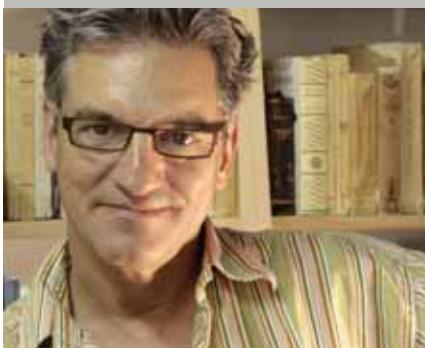




Paul Béliveau obtained his Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts from Laval University in 1977. Recognized for his expertise in drawing, engraving and painting he has since then had more than sixty solo exhibitions across Canada and the United States. His works can be found in many public and private collections throughout the country and has to his name some fifteen works of art integrated into architectural sites. The recipient of numerous prizes in visual arts and of multiple grants from the Canada Council, Béliveau has taken part in several committees and juries as specialist in the visual arts. Paul Béliveau lives and works in Quebec City, Canada.

Currently represented by the following fine galleries :

- Galerie de Bellefeuille, Montreal
- Stricoff Fine Art, Ltd, New York
- Plus One Gallery, London, UK
- Arden Gallery, Boston
- Winsor Gallery, Vancouver
- Robert Kidd Gallery, Detroit



Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

I could say Rubens for his genius as an artist, unifier, cultured man, diplomat, businessman who has been able to gather assistants and collaborators who have "nourished" his genius. Throughout my career (30 years now) I have been influenced with some very talented artists who have had completely different career paths, such as the inevitable Picasso who went through the 20th Century like a comet, burning almost everything on his way. Pop Art has a large influence on my work as well, with Warhol who understood American people with their qualities and failings. I am an ardent admirer of Bauhaus style with Gropius and Rohe, those who have literally transformed teaching and design during the 20th Century.

How do you choose your subject matter?

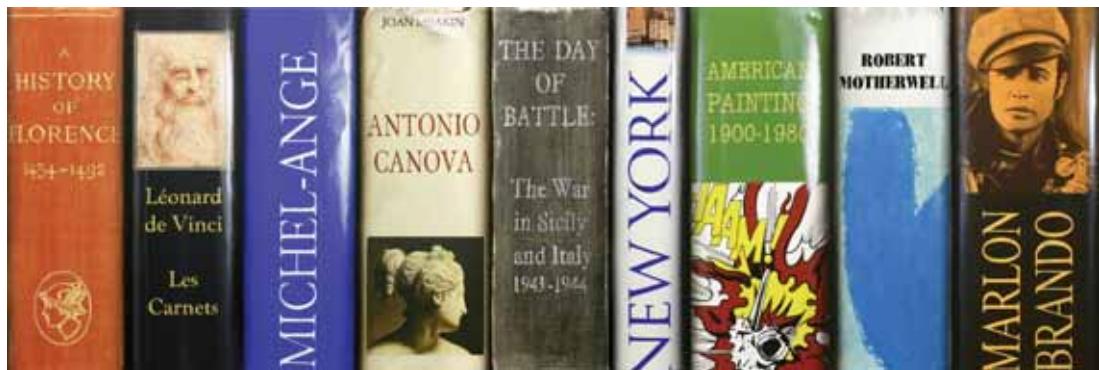
The series "Les humanites" originates in my search for giving the book a different look than the one we are used to, that is put down a table (close or open) with very traditional scenes. Opting for a "close-up" of the book spines, vertically or horizontally arranged, has allowed me to count more on the formal and semantic issue on the painting. Each work holds a different subject according to the books used and this way I sort of create a utopic library.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

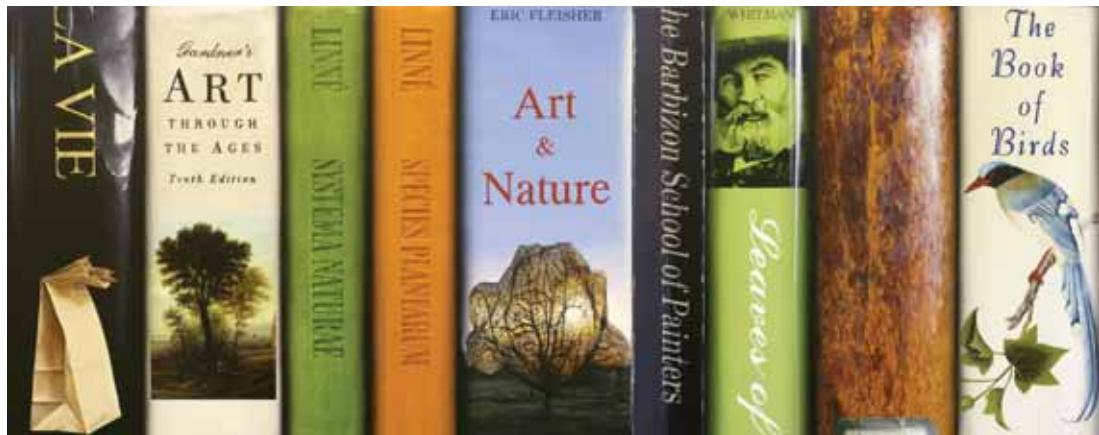
Although my painting is figurative, I love doing things on the spur of the moment. My ritual lies more on the fact that I come to the studio every morning at 7:15 Monday-Friday and during summer I take my bike to ride to the studio, it prepares my mind and body to a very productive day. I would say I am very "well-disciplined".

What is your secret weapon?

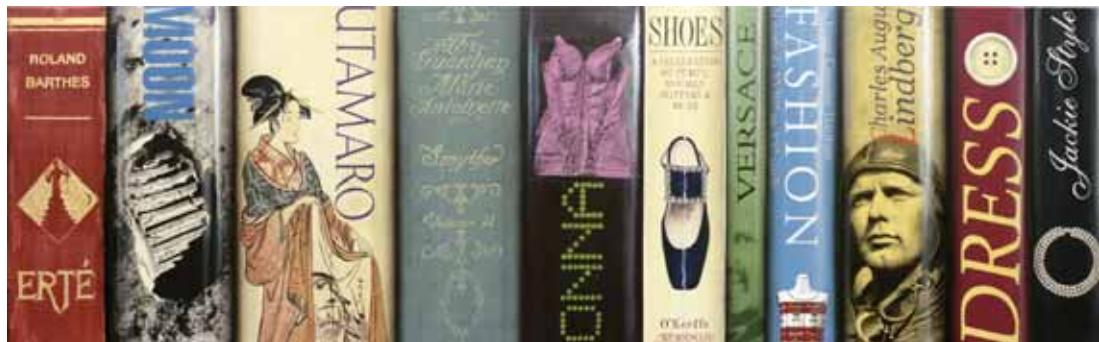
I would say my secret weapon is intuition, good feelings. I avoid long Freudian analysis. I like to rely on my instinct and this way my intellectual potential arises, becomes nervous and is very helpful of a tool. In my creation repentance exists as well in, but I would say the essence of each work has a lot to do with intuition.



Les humanités CCCLXXVII acrylic on canvas 24" x 72"

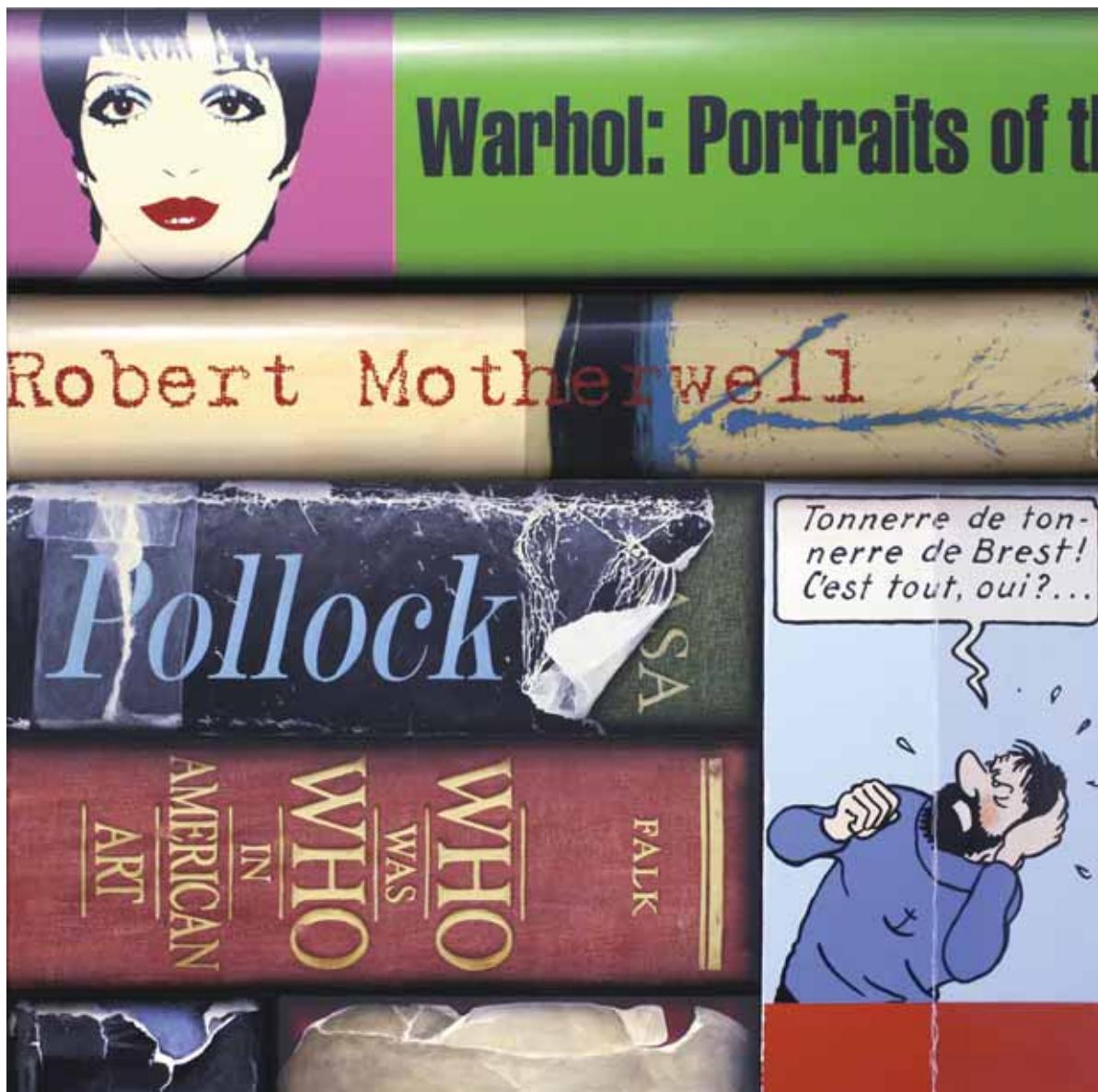


Les humanités CCCLXXXII acrylic on canvas 30" x 75"



Les humanités CCCII acrylic on canvas 26" x 80"

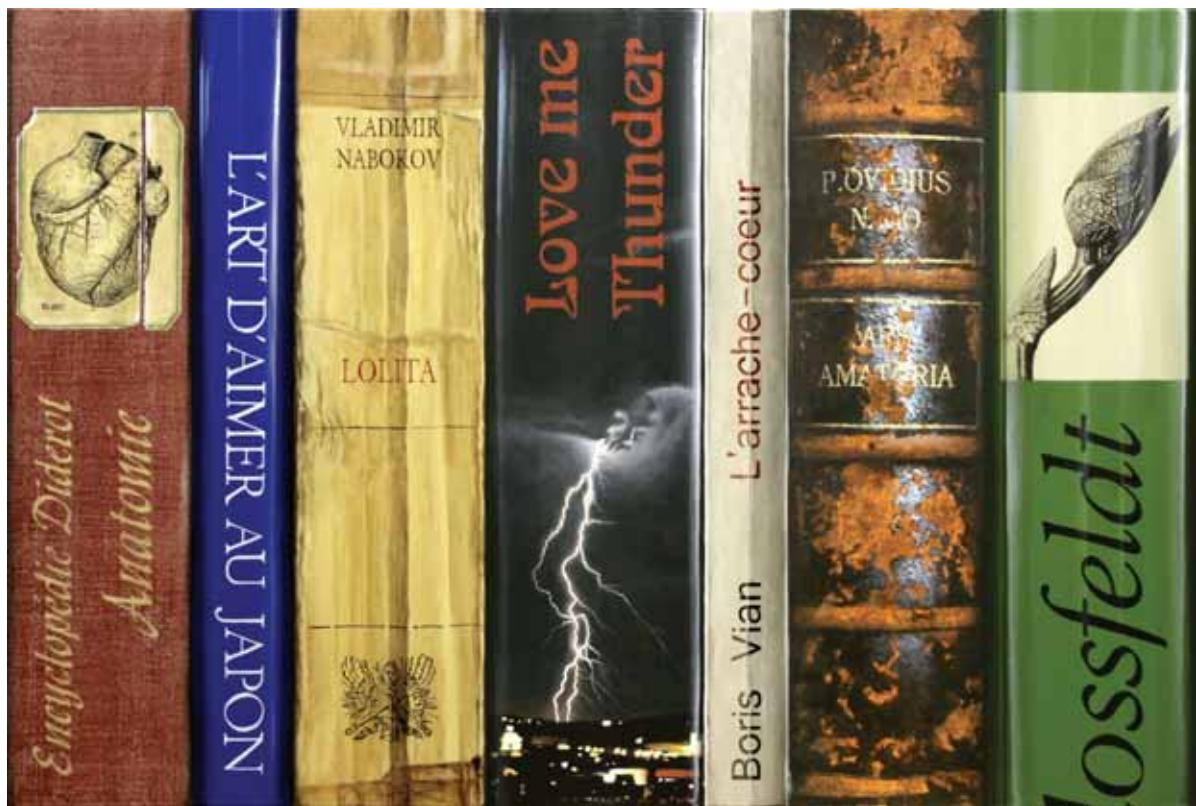




Les humanités CCCLXV acrylic on canvas 54" x 54"



Paul Béliveau



Les humanités CCCXXVI acrylic on canvas 40" x 60"



Paul Béliveau



Peter Ciccarello is an interdisciplinary artist, poet, and photographer, whose work experiments with the fusing of language and visual imagery. He has studied art and design at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI, and Parsons School of Design, NY.

RECENT SELECTED GALLERY SHOWS AND EXHIBITIONS:

PETER CICCARIELLO: Recent Work
Uncommon Vision at the Gallery Above, Providence, RI
- June 19 – July 15 2008

Speech Acts: Art Responding to Language, Rhetoric, & Politics
Harvard University,
Dudley House, Lehman Hall,
Cambridge, MA - 2008

Conceptual Poetry and its Others
- 2008 Exhibition of Visual Poetry,
The University of Arizona Poetry Center

Souped-up Pontiac - Group exhibition at the Museum of New Art in Pontiac, Michigan - 2008

First Prize winner of the Donnie 2007 Contest, MOCA Museum of Computer Art – February 2006

First Prize Co-winner of the MOCA Museum of Computer Art - October 2006

First Prize Winner of the Corel Manipulated Photography Competition, July 2006 and 2007

ViSual POetry* Exhibition
Harvard University,
Dudley House, Lehman Hall,
Cambridge, MA - 2006

Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

Albert Pinkham Ryder & Marcel Duchamp.

How do you choose your subject matter?

It chooses me, it finds me.

What is your opinion of digital art v. traditional art?

Digital art is tomorrow's traditional art. A computer is a tool and a tool is nothing but a tool.

What was the first piece of art you were paid for?

An abstract painting done with paint rollers.

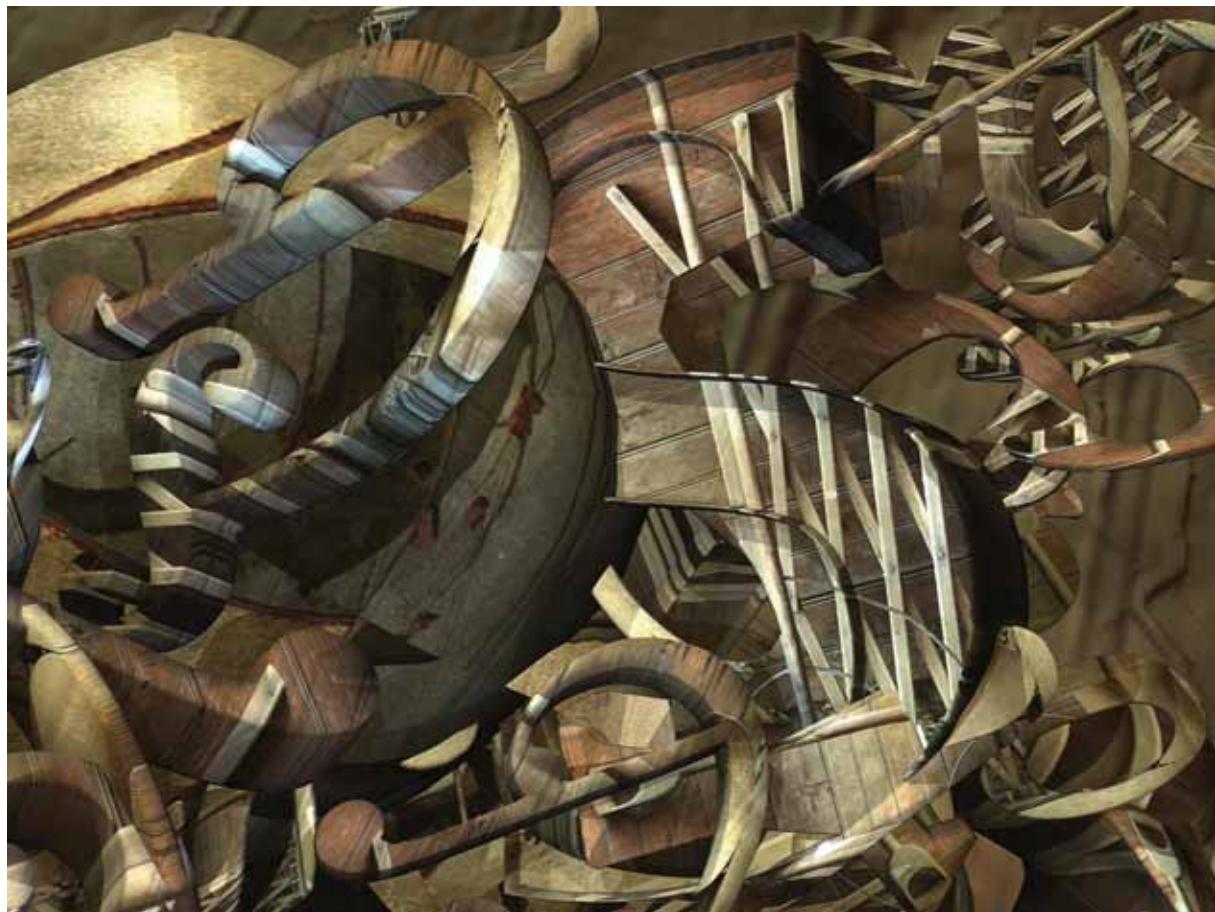
Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

I surrender then take no prisoners.

What is your secret weapon?

Unmitigated temerity and the empirical knowledge that absolutely nothing is real.





Glyph Poem 11 fine art limited edition pigment print 18" x 24"



Peter Ciccarello



Glyph Poem 1 fine art limited edition pigment print 18" x 24"



Peter Ciccarello



Glyph Poem 8 fine art limited edition pigment print 18" x 24"



Peter Ciccarello

Hummingbirds And Fish

BY JACK ANDERS

Notes on Bob Hicok

There is no cliché in the present moment. The way that a hummingbird flits about the feeder, were I only to observe it as sharply as it is, cannot be a cliché because this is the first time I have seen this and the first time I have said it to myself in my mind. A cliché is a image fixed to the point of banality. The present moment is not fixed. Within the images of the present moment, the cycling of possession and dispossession, presence and absence, displays and effaces itself, as can be readily made apparent if I were to ask you to describe to me what the fuzzy oval of a hummingbird's wings looks like, or, the turning colors of its narrow pointed body – colors like those of a pigeon's neck or carnival glass, acidic and sweet pinks and greens of a Christmas ornament. The possession and dispossession cycles so fast in the thresh of a hummingbird's wings that its presence is infused by absence, just a blur. In the words of Bob Hicok:

**The hummingbird
no living person's seen,
blue unless red until green.**

(Hicok, from "The Invisible Man").

The Greek aphorist Heraclitus wrote once, "it rests by changing." The colors of a hummingbird are visible only as they are in movement, arising as they fall, as in certain images from Rilke, for example that of a fountain falling through its upward thrust, and so here, even as the color blue is said, it is changing to red, or then again it goes green. The cycling of appearance and disappearance in the hovering flight is a partially effaced blurriness (the flitting wings never truly visible or truly invisible, like the soft circle-blur of a helicopter's propeller). Likewise the iridescent colors of a hummingbird's darting body change in the sun like the colors in soap bubbles or to use an image from Mark Doty describing the skin of mackerel at a fish market:

**Iridescent, watery
prismatics:
think abalone,
the wildly rainbowed
mirror of a soap-bubble sphere,
think sun on gasoline.**

(Doty, from "A Display of Mackerel").

The changing is only fixed into words as paradox, with the frozen and symbolic quality that entails, like a picture by Escher or an infinity loop, the endless quality becoming vulnerable, exposed as being illogical, compromised by sight, like the angles of a hypercube which can't all be ninety degrees in this merely 3-D world. And so in Hicok's poem it is the hummingbird "no living person's seen."

**The hummingbird
no living person's seen,
blue unless red until green.**

The pleasure of these three lines has something to do with the faintly archaic rhyme, which has an effect of slightly increasing the accent on the word "seen," along with the use of the comma and line break to isolate that word; this is an organic reflection in form of the point being made in content that the colors of the hummingbird are constantly changing and so to describe them as blue or red or green is imperfect and even to add temporal modifiers such as "unless" and "until" does not wholly correct the imperfection.

Thus an imperfection of observation or of description is incorporated into the presentation – which is a good thing, since it's true to reality.

Birds in poems are often used as images at the verge of a void. Just like a bird in flight is literally the only thing you may see against the void of the sky behind it, in poems we often find a bird deployed as a sort of last or liminal image along the margin of a void. For example from Wallace Stevens:

**The palm at the end of the mind,
Beyond the last thought, rises
In the bronze decor,**



**A gold-feathered bird
Sings in the palm, without human meaning,
Without human feeling, a foreign song.**

**You know then that it is not the reason
That makes us happy or unhappy.
The bird sings. Its feathers shine.**

**The palm stands on the edge of space.
The wind moves slowly in the branches.
The bird's fire-fangled feathers dangle down.**

(Stevens, "Of Mere Being").

The bird is a bridge, a link, a messenger, like an angel (the word "angel" is etymologically related to the Greek "messenger") even if with Stevens' aesthetic skepticism, it sings a foreign song without human meaning. The bird is at the edge of space, at the edge of a void, at the end of the mind, beyond the last thought. By virtue of that placement it is heightened as an image accordingly, fire-fangled, golden. Recall also the "green freedom of a cockatoo" in Stevens' much earlier poem "Sunday Morning," and its ending:

**And, in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.**

The birds occupy a liminal space before a void. They are final findings or possessions of the eye before that transcendent or nihilistic dispossession (nothing to see) of the void. They are beautiful in themselves, and their beauty is as if heightened by the imminent negation of the void which follows them. The birds are paradoxical – "ambiguous" – symbols of the imminent dispossession of sight, loss of images. The void as dispossession of sight is fearful because as Nietzsche said, when you look into the void it looks back into you. I.e., in looking at the bird before the void, you are starting to look into the void as well, in a figure/ground sense, and you are in danger of falling into that void, there is nothing for your

eyes to grab hold of and stand on, and the void without the image becomes a forceful dispossession because it is hard to see how poetry can exist without the image.

And so arguably in this sense the lyric poet must endure or tolerate an unpoetic, apoetic, de-poeticized area (the void), in order to access the image (the bird).

Chinua Achebe has written that “the psychology of the dispossessed can be truly frightening.” To view the liminal image at the edge of the void is truly a fearful situation because the closer the image, or the word itself, gets to the edge, the more absolute and reversible it gets – the closer it comes to total dispossession. There is the ambiguous nature of Stevens’ birds. Likewise ambiguous are Rilke’s guardians of the void, his angels. Are Rilke’s legendary angels positive or negative figures, in a passage like the following?

**Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels'
hierarchies? and even if one of them pressed me
suddenly against his heart: I would be consumed
in that overwhelming existence. For beauty is nothing
but the beginning of terror, which we are still just able to endure,
and we are so awed because it serenely disdains
to annihilate us.**

(Rilke, from “The First Elegy”).

Despite all of Rilke’s wondrous metaphysical efforts to salvage a believable angel out of western nihilism, after reading him, do you really believe in angels as being more than ciphers for death and void? There is some strength to the contention that Rilke is a death poet and not the benign Rumi-esque figure proposed by Stephen Mitchell and others (which is not to disparage Mitchell whose translations of Rilke into English are as good as A.E. Poulin’s underrated translations into English of the poems Rilke wrote in French). At the liminal margin all and naught are strangely reversible and, for the word, angel, you might as well use the word, zero, or, nothing, because there is a strange reversibility of the all into the nothing, a continual usurping of absolute possession by total dispossession, and to the extent that a poet inhabits this psychology, it can be truly frightening.



In this sense the simple study of poetry can be dangerous, not in a physical way like the handling of guns, but in a psychological way because knowledge itself is experience, and to put thought into words is to experience thought, and there are many thoughts which are painful and dangerous especially at these limits, where figure-ground relations become asymptotic and gorgeously agonized, the figure crystallizing and encrusted with iridescence and diadem in correlation to the ever-greater emptiness of the void. The image coruscates with its imminent dispersion.

This sort of *in extremis* imagism or seeing of the thing may however simply be the natural way of seeing things, for the lyric poet – the naked lunch, if you will, the way the meat on the end of the fork really looks. It is the ubiquity of its unbearability which leads to potential strain on the lyric poet's psychology and to the pathos of the lyric. T.S. Eliot said that we can't bear very much reality, and there is a continuity to how he accepted the conservative religious structures of the Anglican Church even as he endured the radical nihilism glimpsed in "The Waste Land." It is necessary to resort to some formal protection against the desert of the real. Thus Stevens' fire-fangled bird at the periphery, or just this side of the void, or, likewise, the golden mechanical bird which ends Yeats' poem "Sailing to Byzantium," similarly encrusted and diademed, but now just that side of the void, over in the safety of the artifice of eternity:

O sages standing in God's holy fire
 As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
 Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
 And be the singing-masters of my soul.
 Consume my heart away; sick with desire
 And fastened to a dying animal
 It knows not what it is; and gather me
 Into the artifice of eternity.

Once out of nature I shall never take
 My bodily form from any natural thing,
 But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
 Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
 To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;

Or set upon a golden bough to sing
 To lords and ladies of Byzantium
 Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

Like these poets, Hicok has his own survival strategy which negotiates and manages the void. For one thing, he is an unusually sociable poet. He has done poetry slams, traveled around on the road with other poets, he teaches poetry classes, etc. So often it is the presence of one or more other people and the sort of sociable lightness or humor that accompanies that, which keeps things from getting dark. Consider the following extract:

The person
 who drove me home
 said my smile was a smeared
 totem that followed
 his body that night as it arced
 over a cliff in a dream.

(from "What Would Freud Say?"). You can see a preserving humanism and society: the other person, the companionship of the two, even as one goes into a dream.

Another example from later in the same poem:

To be loved
 by Blondie, Dagwood
 gets nothing right
 except the hallucinogenic
 architecture of sandwiches.

Humor and American pop culture as saving graces. Again, the poem has other people in it – something that's often missing from lyric with its tendency to self-obsession. Another example:

I've known a few singers who've done well
 locally, they have gigs, fans, they own microphones
 and water their voices, one wears a red scarf

around his throat like it's a Christmas tree. They say
 they feel abandoned when the night ends, when the crowd
 breaks into particles, into dust, I've imagined this grief
 as skin made of butterflies when the butterflies leave.
 There is no business like show business, nothing like the voice
 reaching out, nothing I can do except listen, and scream,
 and every morning, when I put bread to my ear, I hear fields
 coming closer, wind walking fingertip by fingertip
 across the wheat, singing nothing, nothing but eat.

(Hicok, from "Consideration of Song").

Once again, you can see the sociable aspect, not only in the presence of other people in the poem, but also the conversational tone. But I don't get the frequent take others have on Hicok as being a humorous poet or a light/witty poet in the main; I see an intermix of darker tones. In this passage though I want to focus on the significantly placed words "grief," "scream" and "eat." The first two words relate to despair and loss of control at the level of content. The third word, eat, is placed ambiguously close to such a relation, by being deployed outside of its normal discursive context. "Eat" is a word of necessity, in a sense an ugly, unpoetic word. Simone Weil made an entire metaphysics out of the spiritual ramifications of that word. She died of illness secondary to starvation because she refused to eat more than the rations allowed to the populace by law during the Second World War. In a notebook, Weil quoted the following from Heraclitus: "Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, living each other's death and dying each other's life." Weil interpreted the passage in these terms: "To live the death of a being is to eat it. The reverse is to be eaten. Man eats God and is eaten by God." The interesting and or terrifying quality to the word, eat, can be seen if it is decontextualized. This quality in the word is not found if I say, "I want to eat a sandwich," which would be ordinary context. If we isolate eating and look at it in a more naked or lyrical way, it becomes quite peculiar and absolute, if not terrifying. The way meat looks, the naked lunch. If I die of a virus, the virus is eating me, it is living off my tissue. We will all eaten by worms, or staph infection, or the mouth of an oven, and by taking the word eat out of its normal use in a sentence such as "I want to eat a sandwich" and in recontextualizing it in a fabric of words which includes words such as grief and scream, and putting it not in a human mouth but a mouth of wind, as in Hicok's poem, we now see the

word eat more along the lines of the way that Weil used it.

The final image in the poem I quoted an extract from above was as follows:

and every morning, when I put bread to my ear, I hear fields
coming closer, wind walking fingertip by fingertip
across the wheat, singing nothing, nothing but eat.

It may be compared to:

The feel of things, if I cherish, helps me live
more like a minute than a clock. Rain crossed
my neighbor's field at the speed of a million mouths
per second kissing corn. Just before my house,
it stopped, then started on the other side of my life
with a sound like the valley being told to hush.

At the mailbox, I saw the mailbox had been beaten again,
I sat, looked down the road at the fallen loaves
of metal bread.

(Hicok, from "Odyssey").

The similarity between the image in the first poem of the wind across the fields and the image in the second of the rain across the field is apparent. There is also a similarity between the comparison of wind and fingertips in the first, and rain and kissing in the second. And again, between the image of bread in the first and in the second. The conflux of these images in the two different poems raises the question of whether it was an intentional or known conflux for the poet or whether it was unconscious. The conflux is apparent, but its meaning is less so. Heraclitus said that an unapparent connection is stronger than an apparent. Here, there is a strong connection between the images I have mentioned, as is evidenced by the fact that we find the same conflux in two different poems. However, what the images mean is ambiguous. In this sense Hicok's poetry has a quality of unifying without reducing the question. Stated differently, it brings together without reducing the mystery. He says in an interview that writing "is the unifying activity of my life," and the poems do appear to be a unifying activity.

The poems have fragments which are becoming subject to a unifying activity which is nothing other than the lyricism of the pursuit. As an example:

**When it was her turn to pee, the body's excuse
for reading graffiti –**

**Life is like trying to hang a painting of the sky
to the sky**

**My boyfriend curves to the right but votes straight
Democratic**

(from "O Canada").

His method here is cognizant of the fragment as a dominant aesthetic mode over the last 100 years, but the feel of the poem is of fragments moving toward unity as opposed to moving toward greater disjunction; you could call him an optimist in this sense. The individual images, motifs, or quasi-fragments, can be somber, in the way that Chopin can be somber, but the relationship between each image or motif generally has a feeling of a unifying activity at work and there is a certain pleasure to the text in that respect. Both Stevens and Barthes said text must give pleasure and with Hicok I think it is done in part through using narrative and story modes in his poems, which act as connective tissue. The lyric moment is diffused through the temporality of narrative. Whereas Ashbery like Stevens is more strictly lyric and constitutionally incapable of plot, character or dialogue (try reading Stevens' play in *Opus Posthumous* if you don't believe me), Hicok is generous with story effects. For example the following has a sociable aspect that indicates how he includes narrative, dramatic, or short-story techniques in his poems as opposed to staying on an obsessively lyric axis:

**At least once you should live with someone
more medicated than yourself. A tall man,
he closed his eyes before he spoke,
stocked groceries at night and heard voices.
We were eating cereal the first time,
Cream of Wheat. He said that she said**

we're *all out of evers* without explaining
who she was or how many evers we had
to begin with or where they were kept.
I slept with an extra blanket that night.
This was strange but that year
I had to read Plato for a grade,
each circle's the bastard child
of a perfect O I remember he said,
and Kierkegaard I thought was writing stand-up
with the self is a relation which relates
itself to its own self but my roommate
nodded as I read this aloud, he'd stood
so long before carnival mirrors
that the idea of a face being a reflection
of a reflection of itself was common sense.
On the calendar the striptease of months,
dust quietly gathering on the shoulders
of older dust and because he'd not taken
the microwave apart and strapped its heart
to his head or talked to the 60-watt bulb
on the porch he thought he was better
and flushed his pills. Soon he was back
where windows are mesh and what's sharp
is banished and what can be thrown
is attached so unless you can lift
the whole building everyone is safe.
We had lunch a year later. Or
he spun the creamer and wore skin
made of glass while I ate a sandwich
and by that I mean I was hungry
and he was sealed in amber, a caul
of drugs meant to withstand ants and fire
nor did his mouth work but to hold words in.
I'd wanted to know all that time what happened
to our evers, to ask if he remembered
what he said and explain to him

he was an oracle that day, I wanted him
 to tell me about the woman who whispered
 or screamed that our chances were up
 because the phrase had stayed in my life
 as a command to survive myself.
 That was the day I learned you can sit
 with someone who's on the bottom
 of the ocean and not get wet.
 By the time he said things were good
 he'd poured twelve sugars into a coffee
 he never touched

(Hicok, "Bottom of the Ocean"). You can see the conversational tone at work there and the use of storytelling strategies and willingness to put other people in the poem, to get away from the self. As another example, in the below passage from another poem we see a strategy of dialogue which like something you would find in a story, although it is tweaked tonally, line by line, in a way which is lyric:

What do you think of the bible?

—I own one or two, don't read them, I enjoy
 turning the pages, the paper thin as slices
 of garlic.

Garlic slices are thicker than that.

—Slices of cloud.

Though it would be cool, cooking with the bible.
 When someone asked you, how's the spaghetti, you could say,
 needs more bible.

—I could say that anyway.

But you don't.

—Nor dolphin toothpicks or advanced
geothermal calisthenics. Why do you ask about the bible?

I'm trying to inject one into my arm.

(from "The Religious Impulse").

There is a measured quality to the words. The emotional inflections of the phrases are modulated. The lines throw off overtones; various potentialities of the comedic and the tragic are actuated and blended or modified by each successive line. The use of dialogue here, or of feints toward dialogue, is similar to passages found in Louise Gluck's *Meadowlands*, for example:

We don't have a dog.
We have a hostile cat.

Why is it always family with you?
Can't we ever be two adults?

They're nothing like us; they don't
travel. That's why they have a dog.

(from "Meadowlands I"). In these and other passages in Gluck's book we hear echoes of dialogue of two spouses reflecting an exhausted marriage. The technique is all the more interesting since Gluck is typically very lyric and dialogue which is narrative or dramatic in nature is typically absent in pure lyric. But to note these story aspects in Hicok's work is not to deny the passages of pure lyric, for example these three examples:

I've imagined this grief
as skin made of butterflies when the butterflies leave.
*

Life is like trying to hang a painting of the sky
to the sky
*

Slices of cloud.

The repetition of butterflies in the first bit and sky in the second indicates the potentially tautological aspect of lyric. An image still more liminal than a bird on the sky is the sky on the sky but that is when the image disappears. A tautology is a statement of the form, $A = A$, and but for the possibility of a poetic statement, it may be the most accurate thing that can be said about a thing. It has no doubt. But it is empty. It is true only at the expense of meaning nothing, as Wittgenstein would say. Hicok uses movement to prevent the tautology from affixing itself too severely. In his images above there are gestures of movement: the butterflies leave, someone tries to hang a painting. These gestures of movement are critical to prevent the fixity of tautology which when it occurs in poems resembles a desiccated emptiness, a gray taste like the gray that occurs when mirrors reflect mirrors. We seek emotional identity, emotional truth, and emotional truth and color that is not strictly logical – cannot be strict tautology. Yet from a logical point of view, it is difficult to see how any statement of the form, $A = B$, can be as true as the statement, $A = A$, since in the example of $A = B$, there is a differentiation or a variance between A and B which is in conflict with strict identity. But equality need not be identity, and that is the emotional truth we seek in poetry: a way of seeing us as the other, or to use the phrase of Rimbaud, “I is an other,” equality of being which is not identity – allowing the other to be other (not I) yet equal.

Hicok's poems are interested in emotional truth as being something received, and in some fashion to be kept separate from the essentially rational and logical care which is the mere craftsmanship of poetry. His poems represent a delicate ongoing negotiation between craft, which is at its worst a denial of the wildness of talent, and talent which need not be negated by craft insofar as talent may not be anything the self can construct or control but rather something that speaks into the poet from elsewhere, something the poet simply receives and cannot take credit for. This was Czeslaw Milosz' poetics and he was a poet with great talent and great craft. Milosz said his poems were not something he could take credit for because he was taking dictation from what he called a “daimon,” which other poets might call, the muse, or, inspiration (to be breathed into, as if physically receiving a voice from the other). Like Milosz or Yehuda Amichai, I think that Hicok wants to receive (and not take credit for) an emotional truth, which is not controllable by the ego, which comes from a wilderness separate from deliberate craft, and which can only be corralled,

pastured, or sufficiently formatted and framed so as to be put forth in a poem, as a result of the most exquisite craft, and this being not only a craft of words but of self, since the self but be humble and selfless and a receiver of the other, of the muse, to be a poet.

And so the morality of the poet lies in the part of the pursuit that he can have some control over without interfering with the raw other or the necessary wilderness; and Hicok is clearly a poet who works diligently at craft. He is not as much of a “first thought best thought” virtuoso – or fool – as Ashbery or Kerouac. Rather, Hicok’s skill and folly is that of daring to believe that humble day-to-day unromantic craft can be something that is possible. A lot of writers try to follow the “I never revise” practice without having the specific virtuosity that would allow such a practice to not be damaging. On the other hand, a lot of writers damage themselves through the application of craft and of revision when it has the effect of freezing out the necessary childishness, irrationality, and potentiality of failure which is inherent in allowing otherness to come in without control, from the wilderness. Otherness, the raw voice of poetry, has a childish aspect. Milosz told Seamus Heaney once that he felt like a child playing next to a river. One must become like a little child to see the kingdom of god; those who enter the kingdom are like little ones, says the Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas. Forever is a child playing checkers; the kingdom is a kid’s, says Heraclitus. There is a sense of optimism in such statements, not the less because of the wondrous heartbroken quality found in them.

Hicok falls into two categories that I always treat with great suspicion and trepidation: he is a professional (he teaches at a college), and he is conventionally successful (books published, awards). He stands for the proposition that perhaps it is possible to be successful and to survive and get along with others and even win poetry awards without being a banal mediocrity: in this sense, again, Hicok is in some sense an optimistic writer. It is an optimism with plenty of ambiguity and nuance such as in Emerson, not something vulgar. The optimism we despair of is the optimism that seems tied to denial and obviously falsifiable belief (think: the optimism of religious fundamentalists)—an optimism which is tone-deaf to the fact that a necessary precondition to it is the denial of any allowance that the other could also be optimistic in their own way. The other must be sad for the crude optimist to be happy. The Christian fundamentalist says all Muslims go to hell; and vice versa. There is a mirror aspect

to degraded optimism: the Christian and the Muslim fundamentalist negate each other's optimism which, ironically, they mirror. It makes us despair often in secrecy because by its nature a false optimism seems often to be one which no amount of communication is able to reach: it is a deafness. You can't talk the person out of it; you often find it in people who in so many other ways are sweet and empathetic people. For example from time to time where I live, I meet someone who is nice, kind, considerate, thoughtful, sympathetic, but then it turns out they are also racist. They do not know that this is a false belief: the evil is too subtle to be reasoned with or argued out of. It's like when I try to argue with one of those Mormon tag-teams that occasionally knocks on my door. They have no doubt. It is insidious because sometimes unless someone has at least a little bit of doubt in what he thinks or believes, there is no way you can engage him in a discourse about it. And doubt is also painful. When I hear a perfectly sweet and sympathetic older lady tell me that it is only because of her faith that she has been able to handle her husband's death, and, that Muslims will all go to hell because they have a different faith – what am I supposed to say? The faith that is wrongheaded also holds her together. Further, the corrosive and vertiginous aspects of continuous doubt probably have something to do with many of the fragile or what Rilke called "exposed" qualities I find in lyric poets. Keats was right that what he called "negative capability," or, the ability to doubt without denial, is integral to poetry. But is also dangerous and painful. It is to be dispossessed of certainty. But then, when I come across someone like Hicok, I wonder, maybe it does not have to be so painful? In this sense I see Hicok as a poet of the middle way, someone who is legitimately able to engage in lyric and at the same time, not go crazy – which is, when you think about it, a real achievement.

This optimism is a precious thing when it is found in a poet. To locate a poet who has actually been able to negotiate the corrosive shoals of American business and academic life while still accessing the wilderness of the other in his writing is a good thing. The ability of someone to access that wilderness, and still hold down a job and survive in this society, is becoming more tenuous. America today has the highest incarceration rate of any country that keeps such statistics. The median among all nations is roughly a sixth of the American rate. The wilderness of the other has led to violence. The suppression, denial, and ridicule of the other in American societal circles is evident in daily life. The pessimist in me believes that this is not just a condition of America but of human life in general.

To survive we have to eat. Life is based on exploitation and killing. I am not sure that there is any way around this. Eating demands a context which is safe and non-terrifying, but that context is fake. One's possession is another's dispossession. The psychology of the dispossessed can be fearful. And so to me there is a purity to be found in a poet inhabiting profound dispossession, for example Jean Genet, who was not only poor, gay, but in jail as well, during World War II (a sort of dispossessed trifecta). Or Holderlin, Nietzsche, Artaud, the sanctity of insanity as a refuge. Or Hart Crane, Kerouac, Verlaine, Cocteau, Baudelaire, the sanctity of the extreme. Poetically speaking, those may be easier places for authenticity, than, say, if you were in an administrative committee meeting at an English Department somewhere. I can demonstrate this by pointing you to the horrible politicking that goes on among the poets in those departments, the corruptive pressure of poetry being tied to preferment and career; this often leads to a stylistic entropy in writing. Look at the blurbs poets write for the backs of each other's books; the awfulness of book prizes, of selecting and editing as political acts when the forces that drive the process include the economic aspirations of those involved. In the end they force the poet's mind to spend large amounts of time dedicated to and thinking in a corrupted and banal prose discourse which can't help but infect his poetry. The gap between what he really is thinking about (promotion, position, self-doubt, self-image, banal chores of the day) and what he is writing about becomes too great: a sucking entropic effect emerges out of the disparity between the life he lives and the one he would write about. What an icky situation to be in. I think that is why writers such as William Stafford so persistently tell us to look at the small things, the little details, the daily moments, as sustenance and for poetry, because at least there, the life we lead and the life we write overlap.

With Hicok, there is a sense of the moment as something in motion. Look again at these two images:

**Rain crossed
my neighbor's field at the speed of a million mouths
per second kissing corn.**
*
**I hear fields
coming closer, wind walking fingertip by fingertip
across the wheat**

Chinua Achebe also said that although fiction is fictitious, it can still be true or false. There is a sense of that in these images: of an emotional veracity in the images, though they are overtly fictive in the sense that rain does not have mouths nor breezes fingers. Both of the images give a fleeting sense of something too large to be sensed. We can barely handle sometimes what our one mouth feels; how much less could we possibly handle what a million mouths feel. In the same manner, when it rains it is impossible to hear or count every separate raindrop. By using the figure of a separate mouth for each raindrop, we feel a momentary expansion of the senses or a momentary sense of seeing more than we can really see. So we have felt otherness just for a second. The same thing happens in the second image, where now the stalks of the wheat or the invisible fronds of the wind are described as fingertips. The figure is similar in both passages: the mouths in the first, the fingertips in the second, each as a way of allowing a fleeting experience of multiplicity, of the numerous nature of the drops of rain or the ears of corn, the bits of wind or the stalks of wheat. The use of gestural motion by Hicok connotes multiplicity. Personification of a nature image is a traditional motif; but the deployment of it across multiplicity is specifically contemporary and brings to mind meditations on similar themes by Jorie Graham and Mark Doty:

**It has a hole in it. Not only where I
concentrate.**
**The river still ribboning, twisting up,
into its re-
arrangements, chill enlightenments, tight-knotted
quickenings
and loosenings—whispered messages dissolving
the messengers—
the river still glinting-up into its handfuls, heapings.
glassy
forgettings under the river of
my attention—
and the river of my attention laying itself down –
bending,
reassembling—over the quick leaving-offs and windy**

obstacles—

and the surface rippling under the wind's attention—
rippling over the accumulations, the slowed-down drifting
permanences
of the cold
bed.

I say iridescent and I look down.
The leaves very still as they are carried.

(Graham, "The Surface").

Suppose we could iridesce,

like these, and lose ourselves
entirely in the universe
of shimmer—would you want

to be yourself only,
unduplicatable, doomed
to be lost? They'd prefer,

plainly, to be flashing participants,
multitudinous.

(Doty, from "A Display of Mackerel"). I think the use of the word "iridesce" by both Doty and Graham is indicative of their wish to catch something as it passes and attach words to transience. Iridescence is a moving glimmering. The iridescence of a school of fish is like that of the moving surface of a river. Attachment of the lyric to themes of multiplicity is not only a way to stretch lyric beyond the single moment into a temporal series, but also, a way of focusing the lyric on something besides the romantic or confessional "I." Doty, Graham, and Hicok all avoid the devastated "I" figure we see in Robert Lowell, John Berryman or Sylvia Plath. The key may be the selflessness of multiplicity, which however introduces a new set of questions. Consider how Doty finishes his poem, which is a meditation upon the sight of a bunch of mackerel fish laid out on ice at the fish market:

**How happy they seem,
even on ice, to be together, selfless,
which is the price of gleaming.**

Although the end is ambiguous in its illumination of the absence of self which occurs with the presence of the selfless, I would not characterize its tone as ferociously negative in the manner of Lowell's confessionalism. Lowell's observation, his image, is always overlaid or intermixed with the ongoing drama of his self, its suffering and exhilaration and conflagration. To continue with our aquatic theme, compare the above example from Doty with this from earlier Lowell which indicates what I mean:

**Where the heel-headed dogfish barks at its nose
On Ahab's void and forehead**

(from "The Quaker Graveyard at Nantucket"). The poor fish here is individualized, single, is somewhat abused by the pummeling of the words "heel-headed" and "barks," and then is immediately tied into a tormented human ego-figure, Ahab. Another example from Lowell:

**Once my nose crawled like a snail on the glass;
my hand tingled to burst the bubbles
drifting from the noses of the crowded, compliant fish.**

(from "For the Union Dead"). In this case too, the separate image of the fish is only there for a little while on its own before it is overlaid with or mixed with something bluntly human, individual and mortal that takes us back to the concerns of the "I," of the speaking and dying self stated in lyric terms. Doty is less like Lowell than like a hybridized postmodern self which is somewhat lighter and gestures toward the suppression of the explicitly confessing self in favor of the freedom of observation of multiplicity. Both Doty and Hicok are closer to Elizabeth Bishop than to Lowell. Consider Bishop's fish poem:

**I looked into his eyes
which were far larger than mine**

but shallower, and yellowed,
 the irises backed and packed
 with tarnished tinfoil
 seen through the lenses
 of old scratched isinglass.
 They shifted a little, but not
 to return my stare.
 —It was more like the tipping
 of an object toward the light.

(from “The Fish,” Elizabeth Bishop). The tone of the “I” here is intangibly lighter than that found in Lowell, perhaps because of a humility which prevents the “I” from the presumptuousness of explicit suffering, or because the observation of the image is allowed to portray the image rather than the self. The things in Bishop’s poem feel more as if observed on the spot; those in Lowell feel more as if recalled from memory. Doty with his lightness of tone is closer to Bishop than to Lowell, however he is much more explicit with the use of the subjective “I” than Bishop; in this respect, he like so many others has been influenced by Rilke. Now if I compare all of the above to a Hicok poem (with a fish in it to boot) we can see how his tone at its best has an otherworldly optimistic lightness, and he writes in a measured moderate fashion which may be a survival strategy for avoiding the conflagration of the “I,” of the romantic and confessional self:

Chairs move by themselves, and books.
 Grandchildren visit, stand
 new and nameless, their faces’ puzzles
 missing pieces. She’s like a fish

in deep ocean, its body made of light.
 She floats through rooms, through
 my eyes, an old woman bereft
 of chronicle, the parable of her life.

And though she’s almost a child
 there’s still blood between us:
 I passed through her to arrive.

So I protect her from knives,
 stairs, from the street that calls
 as rivers do, a summons to walk away,
 to follow. And dress her,
 demonstrate how buttons work,
 when she sometimes looks up
 and says my name, the sound arriving
 like the trill of a bird so rare
 it's rumored no longer to exist.

("Alzheimer's"). Somehow this avoids bathos. The ending of that poem is pitch-perfect, and I think you can see how addressing a subject that could easily take the poem into entirely negative territory, the tone is somehow in a subtle way optimistic. In part this is achieved through the use of metaphors which are in themselves, all else being equal, positive: "child," "a bird so rare," and the fish described in a manner that brings to mind those strange illuminated transparent deep sea fish found in the pages of National Geographic.

The Alzheimer's poem tells us how to possess anything in this world is, at another juncture, to be dispossessed of it. Everything must die, all things must pass. Further, to possess anything is to be dispossessed of that other possession, or that absence, which preceded it. For we cannot possess an infinite number of things and we cannot hold an infinite number of things in our attention. To turn attention toward one thing is to turn it away from another, and as one thing possesses the attention, another thing is dispossessed by it. There are things that we possess that we swear we will never lose, we can never lose. Those things leave trails in our memory once they go away. How we handle, or better, how we are handled, by that state, is the beginning of elegy.



Bob Hicok



Jorge-Alberto Gonzalez was born in Cuba and emigrated to the US in 1965. He presently lives and works in Baltimore, Maryland, and paints under the name of Jorge-Alberto.

He is the recipient of many honors and awards including a bronze medal for his work at the International Biannual of Contemporary Art from the City of Florence in 2001 and most recently: 2006 Still Life /Florals. (Second Place) International Artist Magazine.

Shows:

MUSEUM TOUR 2008-2010
"The New Reality: The Frontier of Realism in the 21st Century"
Art by International Guild of Realism Artists.

2008 Artists' Choice. (Group of selected Artist) Principle Gallery, Alexandria, Virginia.

Corporate Collections:

Eastern National Bank, Miami, FL

Banco Santander International, Miami, FL

Fundación Universidad de Palermo, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Jorge-Alberto's displayed art are courtesy of the following galleries:

"Sphere and Obelisk"
Troika Gallery, Easton, MD

"Capricious Love"
Principle Gallery, Alexandria, VA
"The Martirdom of St Sebastian"
Gallery RoCa, Habre de Grace, MD

Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

I always admired the masters especially Michelangelo da Merici da Caravaggio, he has had the biggest influence on my work. I also enjoy the work of IXX Century American trompe l'oeil painter William Harnett. Contemporary artists that I admire include French trompe l'oeil painter Jacques Poirier, Chilean painter Claudio Brabo, and Norwegian artist Odd Nerdrum among others.

What is your opinion of digital art v. traditional art?

I was a graphic Designer for 18 years before I decided to dedicate myself to fine painting so I am quite familiar with digital art. Today I use this knowledge to help me in the creation of an idea I want to paint. I think is important, like the artist of the Italian Renaissance period, to be able to know and take advantage of the tools available to them and make good use of it.

What was the first piece of art you were paid for?

My fist piece of art I was paid for was copying a painting by Henry Raeburn Inglis title "Boy and rabbit"

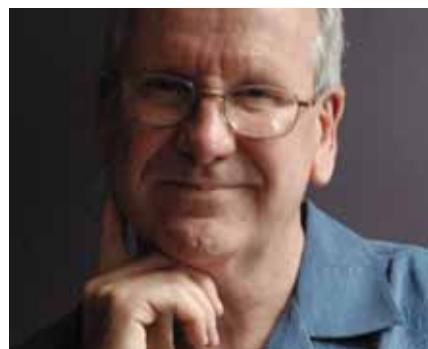
Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

As I begin to paint, my primary focus is to be true to the subject I am working on, whether it be a still life or the figure. I was trained to paint from life and my goal is to create a life-like painting.

Although sometimes I might introduce some element from my imagination I always go back to the source of inspiration and that is the setup in front of me. All the information I need is there to be captured.

What is your secret weapon?

Hard work and attention to detail.





Sphere And Obelisk oil on panel 8 1/4" x 8 1/4"



Jorge-Alberto



Capricious Love oil on linen on wood 44" x 32"



Jorge-Alberto



The Martyrdom Of St Sebastian oil on panel 51" x 37"



Jorge-Alberto



Cathryn Cofell

www.myspace.com/cathryncofell

Cathryn Cofell's fifth and latest book comes from Parallel Press, titled *Kamikaze Commotion*. It's also a fitting descriptor for her poetic style, personality and parenting abilities. You'll find examples of the poetry in places like *MARGIE, Slipstream, Prairie Schooner, Nerve, Cowboy and Main Street Rag*, but you'll have to travel to Appleton, Wisconsin for a look at the latter two.



Appeal For Eclipse

Enough about the damn moon.
Bulimic bitch, four fits
of clothes, all that cellulite
and she still prances,
still tries
to light up the sky
when he wants only to be dark,
to be Johnny Cash and strum
the train ride right out of her.

Enough from the poets,
the artists, the astronomers.
Quit humping her behind his back.
She needs to learn the ways
of a docile woman,
to be viewed askew
from inside a cardboard box,
her trashy peep show ass
puppeted from the earth,
strung up behind the sun,
a promise
of horrifying blindness.

High-Speed Connections

I took a digital picture of my hand
and sent it away,
emailed to a psychic in West Bend.
At first, it was *undeliverable*.
Then a *suspicious attachment*, needs
authentication.
A third time she replied,
said my palm was fuzzy.
I became her \$20 Pay Pal
and suddenly she had clarity,
a map quest, a maze of intersections.
She saw a scoundrel's name,
Lucy or *Cin*,
a flamboyant but unremarkable life.
Wrong, I said, that was not my life-
line she was reading,
it must have been a silver hair
caught on the lens as the shutter closed.
But she held firm,
said it was more than just the palm
she read, she knew me, she saw
how my lines crossed with others,
a flash of pain in every touch.
She saw a future as a circus act
or a hit man and I knew she had me,
caught in her sites, that day
I let you fall from my slick palms,
that endless Hitchcock drop,
hands forever clutching,
cliffs of straw and chaff.





Justin Wiest lives in Connecticut. He paints full-time and teaches part-time at the Silvermine Arts Guild and The Lyme College of Fine Art. His primary focus is painting portraits and figures; he believes they have been and will continue to be a central element of Western art.

Galleries:

**Gallery Roca,
Havre de Grace, MD**

Stricoff , NY, NY

**Principle Gallery,
Alexandria, VA**

**Silvermine Galleries,
New Canaan, CT**



photo: Dean Fisher © 2008



Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

Ann Didusch Schuler was my first teacher and instilled my love of painting at a young age. Subsequently I was fortunate to study with Will Wilson (who taught me how to paint), Eric Fischl (who taught me what to paint), and Vincent Desiderio (who taught me why.)

How do you choose your subject matter?

I paint models and observe how they interact with the setting. With still life it is a matter of setting players on a stage, however my paintings don't delve into allegory or symbol.

What is your opinion of digital art v. traditional art?

My training started in a traditional atelier-type school. Since then I think any means of getting the best image is fair game and digital art and its process is very important.

What was the first piece of art you were paid for?

The first painting I sold, I think was "Lait pur Nicholas", which was a still life of a milk bottle and butter? A dairy theme as I remember. It didn't sell for that much but the buyer bought 12 other paintings over the years, which I'm very grateful for.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

My daily ritual is making my paint. I grind powder pigment with a special oil I make. It takes about twenty minutes and in that time I focus on what I need to do that day with my painting. I think the optimal tools can make the experience of painting all the more enjoyable. My overall process is very heuristic, creativity through experimentation. I wrestle with an idea in my head and do oil sketches. The final painting is usually much different than my original idea.

What is your secret weapon?

My secret weapon would have to be Maroger Medium, there is no substitute. There probably is but I haven't found it yet.



Donuts oil on panel 20" x 24"



Justin Wiest



Justin Wiest

Requiem oil on paper 19" x 30"



Sandra Reading oil on linen 48" x 60"



Justin Wiest

¶ A Snap-Shot Narrative Of A Snap-Shot Life: Grace Cavalieri's *Anna Nicole: Poems*

REVIEW BY JEREMY HUGHES

Menendez Publishing, 2008

Before the reader reaches the poems themselves, Cavalieri begins with the caveat that "these poems are fantasy, not fact. Any resemblance to persons, living or dead is purely coincidental, or pure luck": if the reader were tempted to conflate this Anna Nicole with the person of the same name who led her life in the media spotlight, they have been warned. It is necessary rather than disingenuous, and commits the reader to reading these poems as poems. What follows is an exploration of the life of a physically beautiful young woman who is, by turn, innocent, abused, betrayed, worshipped, exploited, troubled and vulnerable.

Essentially, the book is a biography of a modern-day Aphrodite seeking happiness which, due to her particular sex-goddess profile, proves to be a more difficult quest than most. Each poem is a

snippet from Anna's whole story, a snap-shot narrative of a snap-shot life, surrounded by a cast of interviewers, designers, critics, trainers, doctors, lawyers and lovers. Through writing Anna's story, Cavalieri exorcises and investigates the particular contemporary concern with celebrity-worship, and gives the bimbo she has created a voice and platform to which she would not usually have recourse. Cavalieri even manages to put the pen in Anna's hand so she can speak for herself, however bluntly, in a cathartic outburst:

she took a big fat crayon and wrote SHIT
all over the white wall.
Then the pavement outside
SHIT SHIT SHIT.
She knew now what it was to be a writer.
It felt good, cleaned out.

('And Even More Than That') It also

represents an individual who struggles with an inner self, a person who has not had the opportunity to be anything other than an object of visual and sexual gratification.

The book opens with "Anna's Estate", enumerating and summarising her life: ". . . the moral issues, the legal issues,/the spirit of the law, the letter of the law,/the cause of death, junkies, drug addicts,/probable criminal cause, bodies exhumed,/frozen sperm, mystery sons,/living in sorrow, wrongful death,/undue influences", preparing the ground for the poems that will explore Anna's over-arching search for happiness in love, a difficult alter ego, the way others regard and use her and her self-conscious attitude to her 'intellect'. This innocence – or naivety – is such that when she sleeps with the rich old man who 'buys' her, it is "like being a little girl when your mother/would make you hug your smelly/Aunt". She sleeps with her bodyguard, also, but never feels "quite right" ('Bitter to Better') because it is not the "True Love". She experiences what she believes is happiness quite unexpectedly from 'Rent-A-Guy'. She specifically asks for a professor, someone a million miles away from her own artificial world of hangers-on, who arrives in the guise of a PhD student, Rushkin, whoring to

pay "his way through anthropology" ('Toytown'). To the reader's relief, he possesses a moral integrity far more profound than the other people in her life: "He told her this was his first day on the job/and he couldn't go through with it." Here is a man who will talk to her and, more significantly, listen, "a sweet soul, an intellect" ('Reveries'). Coming from such disparate worlds, the reader's suspicions that it will not last are hinted at in the gap between their minds, since "Rushkin was teaching her a lot of verbs. They were called action words" ('It Started Out a Perfectly Wonderful Day'). The gap widens in 'Recreational Prozac' in which "the college took him away" and 'Starburst', which plays poignantly on their different definitions of a noun: "Rushkin had gone to take his orals. She thought he was not all that good at it". Here Anna's ignorance balances neatly with a naïve expression of her sexual prowess. Nevertheless, in 'Even the Stones Have Hearts' the connection she feels boils down to the simple declarative, "But she loved Rushkin".

The relationship she has with her self is just as tortured. There are several poems here accessing her psyche through what she refers to as Anima, initially presented as her twin who died at birth, her "Angel of



contradiction" ('House of String') and who "claimed to be a helping angel" ('Wealth, Talent, Fame'). In fact, when Anna is hospitalised, Anima represents that part of her which is abnormal – "the mad twin" ('Anger is an Issue') and which is interpreted by medics as a voice she is hearing ('Didn't She Almost Have it All'). Yet Anima is physically part of her, "swimming in her blood" ('Anima Says Life is a Balance') and therefore impossible to destroy. Whatever Anna does, she cannot get away from her body.

Her physique, especially her breasts, is the organ through which she senses the world and the world senses her. In essence, she is a product, something which will make herself and, more importantly, others, a great deal of money. This is most evident in 'Showtime' in which she is the object around which a team work to get right: a blind make-up artist, a dresser, a person to put on the shoes, and a couple of creators identified as Henri and Yvonne. Essentially, she doesn't have a relationship with these people, but exists in the whirl of some big game. And being presented to the world as a product rather than a person, her 'fans' are not actually meeting (if that is the word) her real self. Whatever it is that they love, it is not

Anna herself.

This is typical of Anna's life. Throughout the book there are repeated references to the lack of what is necessary for her to believe that her life is worthy. Her lack of education enables a simple expression of uncomplicated Christian belief, in which she will find salvation. "She knew Jesus would save her" ('A Flock of Ravens'), and in hospital she hopes the doctor "will hold her in the warmth of his wings" ('Dead Eyes'), implying that he is an angel. More secular angels, birds, are a recurring motif. There are benign species such as wrens and pigeons, but the most affecting are the typically black and portentous ravens, for which the collective noun Anna learns, is "an unkindness" ('A Flock of Ravens'). They bring misfortune – "a flock of ravens/ landing in your hair means you will be forever lonely" ('The Music Man'), they herald the arrival of Anima – "a flock of ravens would gather on the roof" ('House of String') and comment retrospectively on Anna's relationship with Rushkin which, ultimately, fails, their presence a mocking told-you-so – "A flock of ravens over the roof cawing her name" ('Air Kisses') before they fly on.

Denied happiness with Rushkin, she is also denied motherhood, her



body and mind sensing maternity strongly and biologically when she holds the maid's child, "she loved how it felt/with the baby" ('Unlikely Relationships'), and when she hears the cook's baby cry "all the honeybees/gathered at her heart" ('Bitter to Better'). In hospital Anna meets a woman who has had three children by three different men, "a good idea,/Anna was jealous". It is sadly humorous, showing us a woman whose moral compass is faulty and leads her in directions rather different to generally held acceptability. For Anna to be a mother would, in some respects, be a baby looking after a baby and, in any case, it might seem obscene: holding the maid's baby against her chest feels "like a new rug on a dirty floor" ('Unlikely Relationships'), the child merely perpetuating Anna's gross way of life.

It is a life upon which Cavalieri imposes the sensibilities a poet may be assumed to exhibit, explicitly in Anna's own thoughts explaining that she does not know how to show her grief:

**she wouldn't
know to hang it out on a
tree and watch it, as poets did.**

She also says that poets, like children, feel the world in a particular way but that she does not "know the name for poetry" ('A Tiny Boat Caught Sideways'). Within the context of the book this awareness of poetry and poets jars a little with a persona whose response to the world around her is more usually physical. It could be the ignorant idea of what poets are or poetry is i.e. people who respond in a 'special' way, a way unknown to her. In a life bereft of poetry, Cavalieri bestows poetry consciously to beautify an otherwise meretricious life (rather than a meretricious person). Firstly there are the quotations of others, as when the "True Love" quotes Celan, Shakespeare and Rilke, and secondly her own memorable lines such as "the flat wet hand of grief/against the hot cement of her heart" ('And Even More Than That'). Cavalieri asserts that poetry is found even in superficial lives lived in a superficial manner. It would be too easy to suggest that the Anna who lives in these poems is just a dull blonde since she is as complex as the next person, in whom the spiritual and secular co-exist uneasily, struggling to understand the world without and within.





Dana Clancy is a painter and an Assistant Professor at Boston University's School of Visual Arts, College of Fine Arts. She received an M.F.A. in Painting from Boston University and a B.A. from Vassar College. Ms. Clancy has had solo exhibitions at the Danforth Museum of Art, and the Sherman Gallery at Boston University and has exhibited her work in group exhibitions, including shows at Delta Axis at Marshall Arts, Memphis, Bowery Gallery, New York and Gallery 100, Saratoga Springs, NY. Her work has also been shown in New England at Green Street Gallery, the Boston Center for the Arts' Mills Gallery, FPAC Gallery, the South Shore Art Center, and ArtSPACE@16, and is in the permanent collection at the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park. She is currently working on a solo installation of portraits in conjunction with the Brattleboro Museum's portraiture show, scheduled for December, 2008.



Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

My time in the studio is necessarily solitary, but I tend to like to surround myself with a crowd when it comes to influences. Painting is less lonely when I'm in conversation with images and memories of paintings that have transported me, changed me, and challenged me. Combinations occur that help me through my work. Ellsworth Kelly's cool shapes + Edouard Manet's cool subjects. That Piero della Francesca's tightly organized paintings evoke more than they answer + Philip Guston's brave, honest and immediate responses to Piero and to himself. The private and public moments unfolding within the stunning geometry of space in paintings by Hishikawa Moronobu.

How do you choose your subject matter?

Most of my subject matter in the past ten years has to do with calling the viewer's attention to the act of looking, though on the surface the work has ranged widely from paintings based on webcam images, to self portraits (some with binoculars), to the current paintings of viewers in museums. I work in series toward completing a body of work. When I am in the midst of this series there is a flow - while painting one piece another comes to mind, though the finished painting may be very different than what I initially imagined. The choice of subject matter that I'll work with for a couple of years usually happens when I am just working in my studio trying out ideas or when I travel to a new place with both distance from the studio and a sense of attentiveness to what is new. The series of binocular paintings came about because I had a pair of toy binoculars and I was looking through them and saw myself in the mirror. The series of museum paintings came out of a trip to the Tate Modern where I was struck by the experience of seeing so many levels of space at the same time, and by the geometry of the space, and the way the figures in this space reminded me of what I love about Ukiyo-e imagery.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

I really need to spend time at the beginning of each session mixing color, and I love the process of laying out four bright colors to begin with and ending up with a range of subtle grays next to acidic greens and saturated reds and being excited by how much a color changes depending upon where it is placed in the painting. I also have the slightly corny habit of choosing an album that, in my mind, fits the mood or even place that I am trying to evoke and playing that album whenever I begin work on the painting. For "Split Vista", of the Tate Modern it was David Bowie's Hunky Dory. For the paintings of the Venice Biennale it was Electrelane.



Spin oil on canvas 58" x 58"

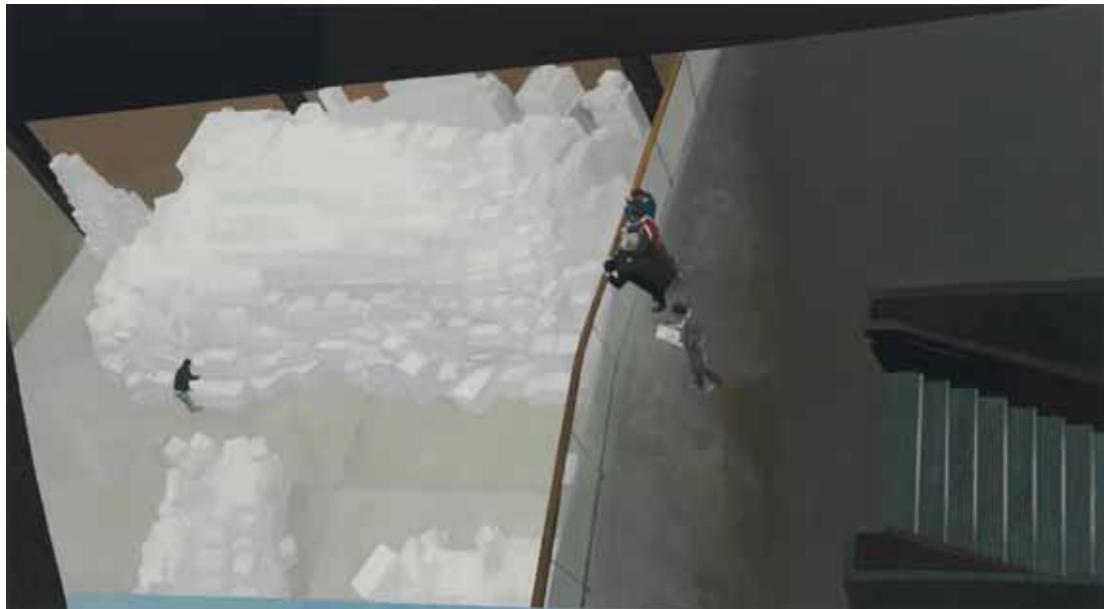


Dana Clancy



Dana Clancy

Carry It With You oil on acrylic on canvas 52 1/2" x 48"



Written Material oil on acrylic on canvas 24" x 44"



Split Vista oil on acrylic on canvas 24" x 48"



Dana Clancy



David MacDowell

www.macdowellstudio.com

David MacDowell is a self taught artist who paints with acrylics on canvas. His subject matter focuses on the Lowbrow / Comic Surrealism, and often take a satirical view of popular culture.

His works can be seen in galleries throughout the US, including:

Thinkspace in CA

AdHoc Art in NY

and

The Gallery of Atlanta in GA.

He Paints 9-11 hrs a day, is open for commissions.



Q&A

Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

As a kid, I was always blown away by Norman Rockwell and the caricatures in MAD Magazine. Growing into my own, and in fear of being categorized or influenced, there's not one individual or group of artists that I focus on. I'm constantly learning, and pushing to enchant my own individual style into reality.

How do you choose your subject matter?

I'm always trying to make my portfolio stronger, so if I feel the need for a simple portrait, I'll do it. Lately my work has been molded to market into group show themes. I fit the theme, and then try to usually make the visual a satirical statement or parody.

What is your opinion of digital art v. traditional art?

Any movement that can change or improve the future of art should surely be embraced. Whether it's on canvas, a computer, or macaroni glued to a paper plate, "Good art is Good art," regardless of the medium.

What was the first piece of art you were paid for?

I won \$50 in a Fire Prevention Poster contest when I was 9. I remember spending it all on games, Snoopy models and Flintstones figurines to paint!

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

I always start with a short prayer over a blank canvas. I'm a big "planner," so I try to get the illustration as fully realized as possible before I paint. I love painting more than drawing, but it's something that needs to be done. I always paint with a small script brush, in order to cram in as much detail as possible.

What is your secret weapon?

Being humble, kind and gullible.



Jack acrylic on canvas 24" x 30"



David MacDowell



Go Ask Alice acrylic on canvas 24" x 30"



David MacDowell



Feed The Children acrylic on canvas 16" x 18"



David MacDowell

Grace Notes:

GRACE CAVALIERI INTERVIEWS DANA LEVIN



Dana Levin

Photo by Debbie Fleming Caffery

GC: Death is the esthetic in your new poetry (see the July/August 2008 issue of *The American Poetry Review*). Would you speak of the paradoxes, in that family deaths brought you the richest gifts?

DL: Ah, well. To have three of five members of my immediate family die (father, mother, sister) in a four-year period was life - and self - altering. The deaths of my mother and sister were particularly shocking,

as both, four years apart, were unexpected and swift and due to the unremarkable, if hidden, failings of the body.

I think, more than the actual absence of their physical selves,

Dana Levin is one of America's best promises. Her poetry is wry, tragic, funny, ironic, bittersweet, lyrical, hip, tough. She is a narrative poet who jettisons the line to new directions of meaning. Dana's first book, *In the Surgical Theatre*, was awarded the 1999 American Poetry Review/Honickman First Book Prize and went on to receive nearly every award available to first books and emerging poets. The *Los Angeles Times* says of her work, "Dana Levin's poems are extravagant . . . her mind keeps making unexpected connections and the poems push beyond convention . . . they surprise us." Levin's poetry has garnered fellowships and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, PEN, the Witter Bynner Foundation and the Library of Congress, the Rona Jaffe Foundation, and the Whiting Foundation. A 2007 Guggenheim Fellow, Levin teaches in the Creative Writing and Literature Department at the College of Santa Fe. Her most recent book is *Wedding Day* (Copper Canyon Press, 2005).

it has been the total dissolution of the family construct, the swift destruction of assumptions about stability, longevity, family and home, that has jarred and moved me. I now really get impermanence – and have realized, and was startled by realizing, that most of us don't. We can understand it intellectually – but to feel it, know it, I think is nearly inconceivable without undergoing a trauma of physical loss: through devastating fire, catastrophic illness, plane crashes, freak accidents, the unrelenting dailiness of war, famine, plague. And yet, encountering the absolute indisputable irrevocable fact of our impermanent natures has also been intensely liberating. I feel very humbled and grateful that I was

asked to endure, for a while, loss after loss; they have made me a wiser, more relaxed, more grounded person – if with a certain unshakeable . . . sobriety of spirit. A tempered personality. And a lot more periods in the poems!

I suppose the paradox of art from death is the paradox of life from death. But that's a lesson we're being asked to learn all the time: spring from winter, and all that. We deem it 'paradox' because we generally have such a hard time really accepting that life/death is a whole package.

GC: You speak of your spiritual life. This is more present in the line than ever before. Do you believe your form is different on the page? What are the changes since

your first book, *In the Surgical Theatre*?

DL: An interesting question. My current work certainly seems a lot more interested in a whole sentence, a whole line, not heavily enjambed, if enjambed at all, even to the point of developing some prose poems, a form I've never much worked with. When I track line length from *Surgical* through *Wedding Day* and into the new work, the line does seem to get longer and longer – not always, but more often than in the past. My intuitive hit on your question is not that it is spirit that drives this longer, more complete line, but the encounter with death: as if writing against death, despite death, to be less inclined towards breakage.

GC: Please talk about compassion in your

poem "White Tara" (to read the poem and essay commentary on it, see the APR issue cited above or read it online at www.aprweb.org). It's a poem of many facets, but most of all, the poem examines compassion. If asked what compassion is, how would you answer?

DL: Compassion literally means to "suffer with," which I take as having empathy for the sufferings of self and other. In the case of the poem, I was really wrestling with the experience of missing and loving my dead mother, and being astonished and devastated by that, since while she was alive I was much more ambivalent about (and with) her. The APR essay goes into the details of this, but I guess what I could say here is

that true forgiveness, of self and other, is impossible without compassion: to move beyond (usually mental) indictments of behavior, interpersonal dynamics, and feel into the suffering that made them so – to become an actual "bleeding heart."

Compassion and kindness are of course well-known Buddhist precepts, to the point of seeming like 'isms.' But what I find most buoying and amazing is to remember that the injunction to practice kindness and compassion towards self and other is made in the context of accepting impermanence. If I can phrase it my own way, I would say: we are all going to die; why not be kind to one another? Which seems utterly, utterly sensible.

GC: You value

psychoanalytical thought. Does the writing of a poem release blocked feeling, or shift it elsewhere?

DL: Both, and not with every poem.

GC: What distinguishes your work is the declared experience, the perception of the experience and then your response to this – all within a single poem. Can you speak to this?

DL: "Poem as act of perception and reflection" I wrote below this question. Then I thought: well really, that is what the experience of being conscious is: perception and reflection. I guess I'm interested in poems (writing them, reading them) about being conscious. A certain kind of literal self-awareness interests me (and of course, to be truly

self-aware depends on the capacity to stand outside the self, become some other witnessing and evaluating thing).

GC: You seem to write in the Confessionalist tradition without falling into its traps. What do you think courage is in writing the personal; and how do you try to teach it?

DL: I try to teach historically and with encouragement to not buy into the dos-and-don'ts of any period style. It can take a lot of courage to write unfashionably. The problem I have with our current poetry climate has to do with knee-jerk assumptions and generalizations. Today it seems 'confessionalism' is a word that stands in for all sorts of things of which the Confessionalists themselves (from

Lowell to Olds) never had sole ownership. Things like: Emotions. Psyche. Family. Trauma. The Egoic self (that thing in each of us that has a firm sense of "me-ness," or at least more firm than how that me-ness can play out in dream and art). These have driven some of the greatest poems in English since *Beowulf*. And not just poems in English: Read Homer (and Dante, and Cervantes, etc.) and these same elements are in play. It is a pity that we have a knee-jerk avoidance response to raw feeling, family issues, personal issues, trauma issues in a lot of our poetry today. A pity because: are these not authentic human experiences? Is not poetry supposed to give entrance to authentic human experience? The courage rests in allowing yourself to

be fully human on the page.

I guess my view is fairly Hegelian: something new comes that helps refresh the art (and us), gains ascendency, then hegemony, gets stale and predictable, ceases to do much for the art (and us), and so then the next thing comes, often with qualities that present corrective. Thus Confessionalism, and then Language Poetry with its general reminders: to try to get back to lingual textures and a more fluid sense of self/p.o.v, which is what post-modern poetics in general reminded us we had in the tool-box, after 20 or so years of end-state Confessionalism: plain-speech, firm "I", true-personal-fact poems. It's been very important and fruitful to be reminded we

have sonic play, lingual texture, and poly-self experience to use for our art. And yet: Confessional poems don't have a monopoly on dullness or conventionality.

Ultimately, in our current poetry climate, the tight-ropeing those of us who feel compelled to write about the personal, the psychological, the familial, the traumatic must do in order to be emotionally authentic and artistically interesting is generative, as much as it might be torturous. The poetry I myself am most drawn to reading often walks this tight-rope. Anne Carson walks it. Gluck walks it (just look at "Averno" and see how she herself has incorporated avant approaches). Any number of emerging poets. I want

emotional authenticity AND I want art! Something a lot of tail-end confessionalist poetries ceased to give us.

GC: What would you have to say about good and evil as compared to right and wrong?

"I want emotional authenticity AND I want art!"

DL: Good and evil: we're made of both. To pretend we're not seems related to absolutes of 'right' and 'wrong.'

I'm no longer of a mind that 'nurture' is the most powerful component in creating evil. I don't mean this in some kind of hell-fire, Judgment Day kind of way – more in a phenomenological

way: sometimes you just encounter something, someone, that seems the essence of malevolence. You feel it on a gut, non-thinking, animal level. I actually think such encounters are rare – most of what we deem 'evil' is cruel, cold, bungling and/or thoughtless in varying proportions – but such encounters do happen.

I do also think there are good, 'right' codes by which to live well, most of which can be distilled as 'Do No Harm.' A relative statement in practice (such is the stuff from which lawyering is made), but it's what we've got.

GC: How do you get away with talking about getting 'the clap' or a cat 'crap-box' in poetry and still achieve such a high resonance of



beauty? A Janis Joplin howl is not easy to maintain.

DL: Wow! Interesting notion, 'to get away with.' Maybe it has something to do with sonic pleasure, in "White Tara" at least: 'the clap' in slant-rhyme with 'attack,' 'crap-box' relating to an earlier 'rot' and later 'cats.' And 'crap-box' in particular feels great to say: the broad a sound and sharp ex, getting a little growl with the *r* (as *r* lets us do). And I suppose 'get away with' assumes these words break some kind of poetry decorum – as they do, I guess, our idea of poetry as a vehicle for more fragile and exotic beauties. I know dropping such words in a poem with a generally vatic or dissociated atmosphere feels grounding to me, as if no poem gets to forget we live

embodied, crass and raw, even in the midst of marvelous vision.

GC: What is the new book coming from Copper Canyon Press? How do you describe it?

DL: Well, first I have to submit it and then the editors have to decide if they want it! Which I hope they do, as they run a great press and have been wonderful to work with.

Death and Spirit inform the new book. I suppose awareness and awe of both go hand in hand. New poems seem to be integrating these death/spirit experiences by engaging cross-cultural responses to death and birth. Poem subjects range from Tibetan Buddhist burial practice and philosophy of impermanence to Aztec human

sacrifice, from the sterilized, clinical embalming room of the mortuary to the Forensic Anthropology Center at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, known as The Body Farm. I spent a lot of time researching corpse decay and tantric Wrathful Form deities, the process of insect metamorphosis and Japanese Buddhist approaches to the sticky question of 'soul' in regards to abortion and miscarriage. I guess I went to the world of art and knowledge as salve for the world of loss and suffering. Not an unusual path.

GC: From what side of the family did you inherit your gorgeous hair?

DL: My father's, along with bad teeth, allergies and cracked heels. I am completely grateful for the hair.



Nahem shoa was trained by the painter Robert Lenkiewicz from the age of sixteen to twenty six. He also completed a degree in Manchester University and later a Post grad in drawing in The Prince of Wales Drawing School. His work has been exhibited in major British museums such as, The Royal Academy and National Portrait Gallery, London. In the last four years he has had four major one-man exhibitions in museums across England, and his work featured along side Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach, Robert Lenkiewicz and David Bomberg. In August, 2008 his work is to be included in Threadneedle figurative art prize, The Mall galleries, London. His has five paintings in National collections around England.



Victoria McKenzie



Which artists do you admire or have had the biggest influence on your work?

There a many great artist throughout history and today that have inspired my painting practice and changed my life. If I had to make a list, Rembrandt, Titian, Velazquez, Tintoretto, Veronese, Bellini, Vermeer, Ruben's, Chardin, Goya, Ingres, Turner, Constable, Gericault, Delacroix, Courbet, Degas, Monet, Cezanne, Rodin, Van Gogh, Bonnard, Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Morandi, De kooning, Rothko, Bomberg, Auerbach, Freud, Bacon, Uglow and Lenkiewicz. There is at least another fifty names missing from this list. My biggest influences are the painter Robert Lenkiewicz, who taught me painting for ten years. If it weren't for him I wouldn't be an artist today. When I paint I am always thinking of Cezanne, Monet and Freud, somewhere between the three of them is my vision of nature.

How do you choose your subject matter?

I never choose my subject matter and have no idea what the next project will be. What draws me to things is often quite random, but once I start to paint and I can grasp the unlimited potential of the subject, this usually leads to a series of works on the same theme. I get deeply inspired by things that at first I didn't even see, that's natures magic. I tend to work slowly and spend up to a year on a painting and up to two months on a drawing.

What was the first piece of art you were paid for?

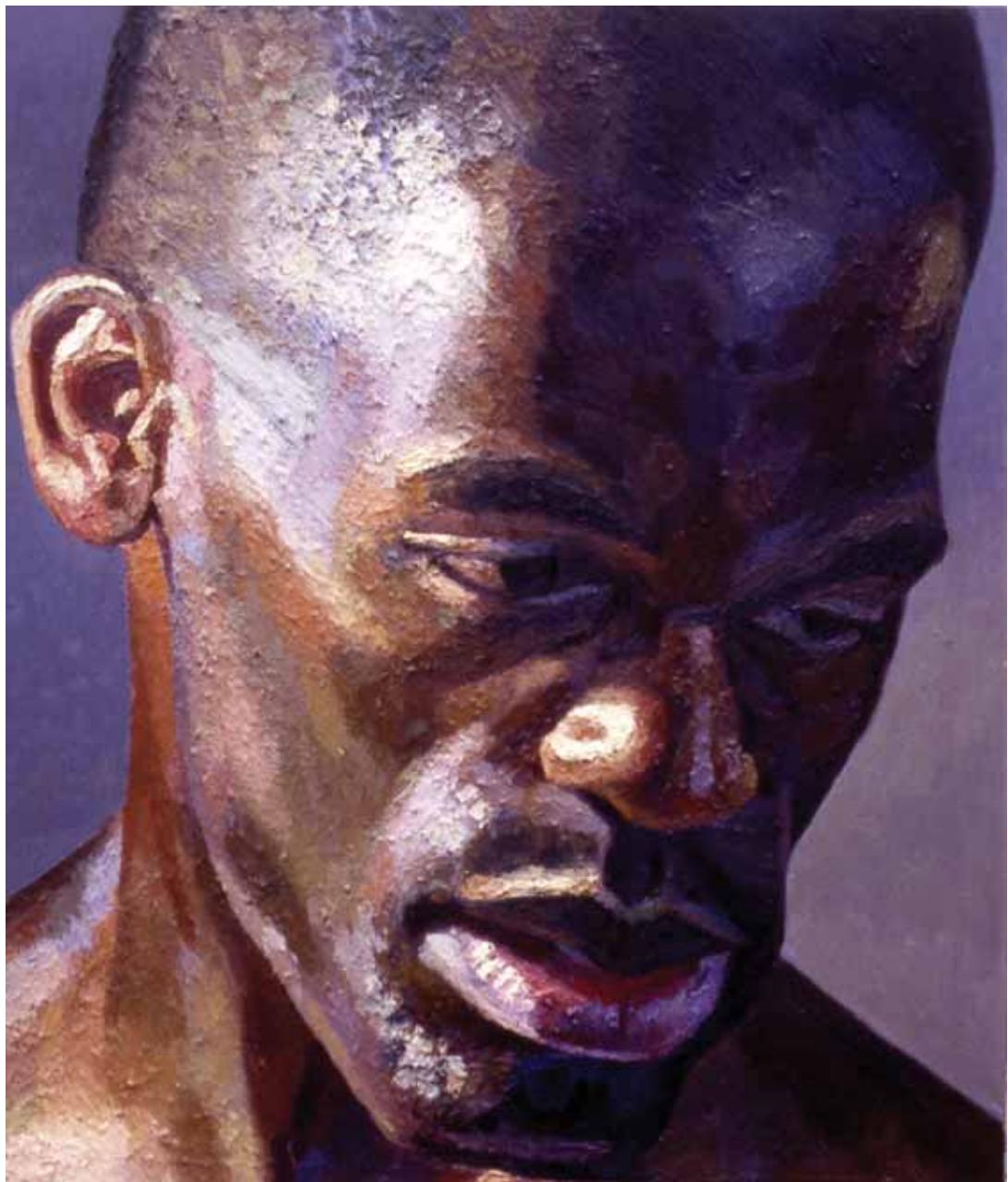
When I was a first year painting student in Manchester I used to paint copies of 18th century portraits for my local Butcher, who used to pay me in meat and vegetables.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?

I don't work with a specific process that I follow when creating art, but there is a kind of pattern that I follow. I tend to repaint almost all of the canvas each time I work on it because I always want my painting's to be about the now, painting what I see when I see it. I don't trust if areas of my paintings come too easy for me, and will always paint those bits out. I would hope that by the end of a picture that the paint itself has become a force of nature in itself and not a mere copy. My motto is, "you are only as good as your last painting," this drives me to always take my work further.

What is your secret weapon?

My secret weapon is knowledge combined with vision. Being trained by Robert Lenkiewicz was the greatest prize life could have given me.



Big Ben 2 oil on canvas 74" x 64"



Nahem Shoa



Caroline 2 oil on canvas 60" x 48"



Nahem Shoa



Nahem Shoa

Self With Hand oil on canvas 60" x48"

Anon by Chris Pusateri

REVIEW BY CHERYL TOWNSEND

Anon by Chris Pusateri - BlazeVOX Books /
1934289671 / 76pps

If Picasso were a poet, this would be his signature. Juxtaposed mismatched fragments of observation and generalization lain into quick paragraphs of Burroughsesque tellings that, as a whole, splendidly jive. The snippets of quasi-philosophical thought, as in "chapter 1.1" where we are informed "West is not west if you're west, south or north of it." for some reason had me thinking of The Wizard of Oz's Scarecrow. Then "The senior author is the first one listed, an et. al. Othered at the ass-end of the listing experience." brought his receiving his diploma (brain) scene to mind.

Then a sullen eloquence sneaks in .. "Listen to my lips is a deaf breath" replacing Oz with a more sultry visual. Misty and humid. I think Mickey Rourke & Faye Dunaway in Bar Fly .. deaf breaths of intoxication ... both of lust and liquor. And they listened. Intently.

There is a cornucopia of great lines in each piece; "Rage is anger that doesn't follow the recipe." - "Wouldn't it be funny if all wars were the products of misinformation?" (You mean they aren't?) - If you have a vivid imagination, you don't need anesthetized." - "He said: if it's culture I need, then I'll lease it." - "It melted his

ice cream to think so." These are all excellent bumper-sticker material. Zingers! I'll buy them by the dozens.

Allow me this poem in it's entirety, as my favorite:

vi.x

The hangover crept up on him midafternoon. Sing to the bird its song. Syntactical tomfoolery, void where inhibited. He's from the Canadian Midwest, which isn't much better. Batter-dipped cover corner, but no mention of apartheid. Danger, beauty, then danger more, however, how not now, then when? Every price has its discount. Prisoner stripes are horizontal and referee stripes are vertical. It had all the makings of a trust issue. Nobody orders it for the parsley, but no one would stand to be deprived. White is equated with surrender. He was white and getting whiter.

It brings to mind one of those puzzles where all the pieces are there, in front of you in a nice tidy box, and you have to arrange them to create the intended picture. Yeah... that's what it's like.



Patrick Duggan

<http://duggan.idiolexicon.com>

Patrick Duggan has studied photography & literature at Emerson College in Boston, and writing at California College of the Arts in San Francisco. He is editor and co-founder, along with Elliot Harmon and Marcus Merritt, of Idiolexicon, a Black River chapbook finalist, and his poems have appeared in numerous journals including Beeswax, Floating Holiday, Hazmat Review, Mirage: A Periodical, Monday Night Lit, Noö Journal, Parthenon West Review, Traffic and 26 Magazine.



Still-Life of Alien Autopsy

-for Matt Swagler

1. Raising your hand to be recognized as a blind astronomer
burning cigarettes
in a thirty year rain storm.
2. A snowball.
A tiny, crowded desert.
3. "Are we talking lonely lonely or Elvis lonely?"
4. A mistranslated man and his inkwell.
The horizon a rusted iron buffalo,
umbrellas, space ships.
5. Clovers growing out of the door jambs.
His face has been stenciled in.
6. There is architecture
just as there is mathematics
to self-pity. Men and women on a beach
holding kite strings with no kites.

The alchemy of painting
turns most of us on. "Is that
the I-Ching?" Small talk. Baseball.
"No, just basic addition." Our bodies at rest
mountain ranges
visible only from space.

7.

A poet jittery against a pink wall.
His stubble is making inroads.

8.

A wet canvas of busted bicycle tires.
An avenging angel of espresso and bluegrass
all robot tattoos and damaged longitude.

9.

His clouds
are the bones of a coelacanth
kissing the wingtips of pigeons.

10.

America goes on laughing.

11.

An Etch-A-Sketch knot of denim.
One hundred sentences in which I'm a car.





excerpt from

The City Is Burning

#

Unapologetic
beach, pino grigio, hardcore punk
through an open car window.
You, a fallen acoustic angel
a morning star searing skin making war
against my daydreams
chained and blue. Every line I end
is an exorcism of hope, a burial
a wish and you
an alert halo of air,
eyes the sky's color at five
in the morning. I've managed the past
twenty-four years without a cell mate,
tattooed awkward artwork
from picture books, portraits of saints.
I am a sheet rock wall
over hollow space - knock
on my skin
it echoes.



Patrick Duggan

Babbling And Strewing Flowers

COLUMNIST TALIA REED

On Squinching Naked Before the Masses

If you're reading this then there is a good chance that you're considered the "artsy-fartsy" one in your family. Perhaps you are the one who studied something interesting and "impractical" in college, like writing — especially writing poetry. Your grandmother or aunt introduces you to friends as "the writer," or the redundant "published author," though they never inquire to actually read any of that stuff you write. Being an impractical poet in a world of *streamlining* and *high mobility* seems archaic, but this is not a column lamenting the woes of a society that fails to appreciate the arts. Rather, this is a column about being the one who does.

So, you have a poem in a literary magazine. You hand the printed book to your mom and dad to show them, "Look! I'm published! Someone thought my poem was valuable enough to do so." You do this because you don't think they ever really understood what it was you do with your poetry (who reads poetry?), and now you have some proof that it

does matter. You really don't care that they read the poem, and they really don't know what to say about it. You don't regularly share your poems with people who don't appreciate them, let alone people who know you, people to whom you are vulnerable.

Or maybe you don't even bother to show them after all.

Or you send them a link to your poem online, and imagine their crinkled up faces as they try to decipher what childhood memory you're referring to and are they responsible for this? Is this some kind of charge upon their upbringing of you? Now, you're just embarrassing the family.

Nicole Cartwright Denison, author of the chapbook *Recovering the Body*, (Dancing Girl Press, 2007) and Co-Editor of Tilt Press, describes this strange phenomenon she experiences with her mother as "the squinch:"

**Upon her initial reading I feel squinchy,
as if she'll figure out I wasn't always a**

virgin, trying to suss out some hidden event, or wonder where she went wrong in parenting, feeling responsible for my dark, poetic feelings. Usually, she mutters something about how she can't understand all the "hidden meanings" and how she just doesn't "get" literature, especially poetry, sometimes. Again, the squinch overtakes me since she's the woman who's responsible for my literary background; I cut my teeth on her books and she read to me and bought me any book I asked for, and even some I didn't. She was always an astute student of literature and imbued me with a deep love and reverence for it. She's my greatest influence and for that I'm eternally grateful. She's also the first person to receive a copy of my chapbook: I'm not sure she's read it yet, but it's there with all the others, waiting in its vainglory. It doesn't hurt she bribes me with presents upon publications either; it's kind of like still being on The Honor Roll.

It's that sort of a bittersweet accomplishment: there will likely be some questions incited by all of those images of body parts and explosions. I recently took part in a reading in downtown South Bend, Indiana. Another participant brought along her mother, and during her portion of the

reading, dedicated a poem to her. The poem was beautiful, raw, and exact; depicting a mother whose privacy is invaded by her children, while she nakedly attempts to shave her underarms. Despite the quality of the poem, I couldn't help thinking that such an unveiling of truth, even in art, can feel like the stark bright lights of inspection being shone upon one — right there in a public café crowded with people whose eyes are darting between poet and the mother of whom she was speaking. To borrow a phrase, I squinched. I held my breath. I wondered how my own mother might react, but the mother of this scene proudly wipes a tear from her eye as the speaker takes her seat amongst applause. The poem does its job of encapsulating veracity, candor, and brilliance, even if nakedness — literal and figurative — is a part of that equation.

Then, there is the topic of sexuality which the customary American eyes and ears encounter in ways that are not necessarily in the vein of the aforementioned benefit of art, but rather in an element of scandal. So, offering your beloved poetry to someone with the untrained eye (read: second-rate Hollywood amusement-driven) becomes a gamble, but the writer knows that it

isn't for the opinion of the work itself that it is being exhibited, but rather for the appreciation of those whose judgments are realized. This issue of writing about sexuality might become a consideration when one's own children happen upon the writing. Charmi Keranen wrote and published a short non-fiction piece, "Train Language" in the online magazine *Slow Trains*. In it she compares the thundering, powerful trains heard outside her bedroom windows to the activities taking place within the bedroom. The trains become a soundtrack and metaphor to the sentiment of lovemaking. "Train Language" won an award and was published by her University, and it is very likely that her teenaged children have read it.

The fact that I write empowers my kids to write. They see it as a valid means of expression and exploring the world. They don't seem to be embarrassed at all by my topics. In fact, they show my writing to their friends. I think it also helps them see me as a whole person, not just as their mom. The other day [my daughter] Jojo said, "Before I get married I'd like you to buy me a sex book." I said, "Okay, how soon should I be shopping?"

Naoko Fujimoto, a graduate student at Indiana University has a solid stock of darlings of her own, across the globe in Japan, cheering her on in her educational endeavors here in the states. They know their daughter is a talented writer — they can find her work online, but when they use Google Translate something gets lost in the translation — like a context for all of these sensual images.

Film Director David Cronenberg in an interview with Scott Macaulay in September 2007 says something about art that might explain why the squinch experience occurs when one's bare naked poetry is exposed in broad daylight to the lion's share of society: "The idea of a mass audience is an invention of the Industrial Revolution."

We the poets are ever so aware of this by the piling on and injecting of labels and categories of contemporary poetry. We camp out with schools of thought and try to predict, create, and join movements, and none of this is apparent nor of any relevance to the non-poet. Instead our poem stands before him, looks him dead in the eye, and smears the raucous essence of ourselves out in front of him for him. How could we possibly ask the trusted thing to do anything less?





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