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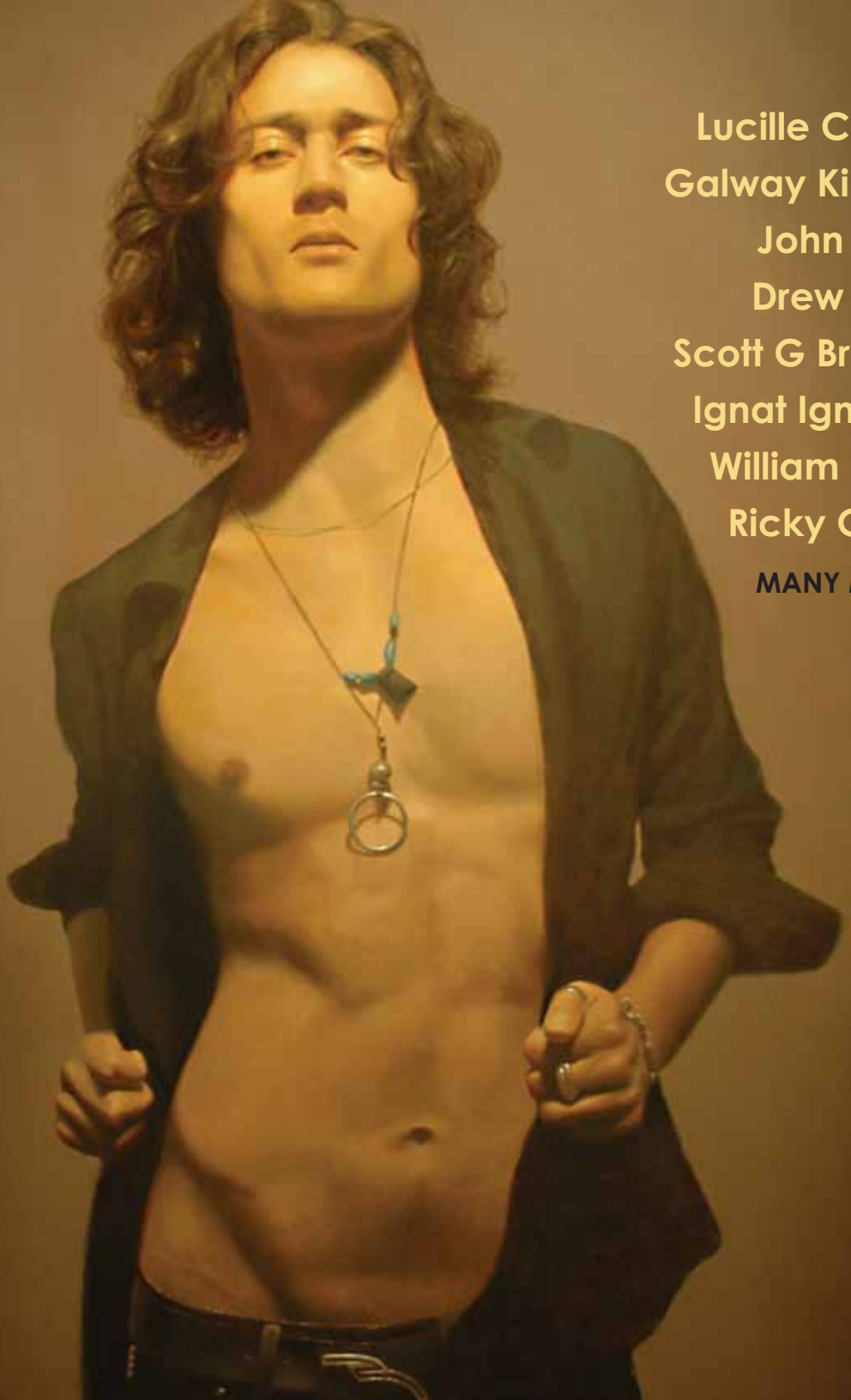

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MANY MORE!

Cover Artist **Drew Ernst**

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Artists

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& Grace Notes:

GRACE CAVALIERI INTERVIEWS LUCILLE CLIFTON

Lucille Clifton **is America's sweetheart. She served as the Poet Laureate of the state of Maryland from 1979 to 1985. Clifton is one of the most accomplished women in the literary world. Owner of Pulitzer Prize nominations for poetry in 1980, 1987, and 1991, the Lannan Literary Award for poetry in 1997, the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize in 1997, the *Los Angeles Times* Poetry Award in 1997, the Lila Wallace/*Reader's Digest* Award in 1999, and the National Book Award for *Blessing the Boats: New and Selected Poems, 1988-2000* (2000) also a National Book Award nomination for *The Terrible Stories* (1996). She has been awarded honorary degrees from Colby College, the University of Maryland, Towson State University, Washington College, and Albright College. Her current book is *Voices* Boa Editions , 2008.**

Lucille Clifton **photo credit: St. Mary's College**

GC: What art forms nourish your poetry?

LC: I'm Interested in everything. I'm so nosey. I want to know about things. I like all kinds of music, Oh, I love jazz; I have a crush on jazz. I love old R & B. I'm interestedin it all.

GC: What was the origin of the title poem in your National Book Award's *Blessing the Boats?*

LC: When I was in St Mary's County, (in Maryland where I lived and taught) there was a celebration every year. Out on an island, they had a thing of blessing the animals and blessing the boats. I thought that was really cool since the boats brought the animals. Everything starts connecting. I don't know why I have that kind of mind, but I do. One thing turns into another.

GC: How does the poem speak beyond its initial event?

LC: Language is all translation and – as they say – a poem is more than the sum of all its parts. A poem is not the words. The words are just indicators.

GC: How would you counsel writers against despair? How do poets keep going?

LC: I don't know what happened to people. People who don't feel despair are not awake, but why *should* you be comfortable? Once I said to my husband Fred Clifton (who's been dead over many years) "I'm not happy all the time." And he said, "Who told you were supposed to be?"

GC: How do you describe the American arch of poetic thought since you published your first poem?

LC: I was first published in 1969. A lot has happened, thankfully. People have learned some things; if you pay attention, you will learn. The Dodge Festival, for instance, had more diversity this year than ever before. Our kids' generation has new different assumptions. I've been invited to Dodge every year and have gone 11 out of 12 years and the poets are more diverse now than ever before in my early time.

GC: What is the most difficult part in writing poetry?

LC: Everything is difficult but mostly to keep honest . . . say what seems to be the truth . . .

GC: What would you say if I told you that you were famous?

LC: Being celebrated is just about other people's impressions of

you, not your own.

GC: What is the one lesson you wish students would carry away from your classroom?

LC: To say "I learned." And that is hard work. And it has nothing to do with how you look, or how you want to be "a poet." One student asked me how people get *empathy*. I was shocked. I thought one was born that way. Maybe we have to relearn it.

GC: How does a new poem begin?

LC: Something catches my attention that I see or hear . . . generally hear . . . I've been called a lyric poet so I suppose it's because I'm tuned in to *sound, music,* and *language*.

GC: I was doing children's programming at PBS and "Vegetable Soup" was on the daytime schedule. How did you approach that writing?

LC: Somebody called and asked me to do it, and it was the hardest job I ever had. I waited 'til the last minute and worried so much. It was difficult for me because nothing came to *ME* I had to go to *IT*.

GC: When you wrote your children's books, what did you discover about yourself?

LC: I don't think I've lost those children who were always with me, those children that are still interesting.

GC: You are considered a spiritual leader – as well as poet – so, how do you describe your relationship with that?

LC: Isn't that odd. People think I'm so religious, and trust me, I'm not religious—I like religious theory as far as religion goes, so I like them all—but people ask me to bless them so I do it. Anybody can bless any one, I think

GC: What does your poetry come from?

LC: I think the work comes from beyond the obvious. Take this new poem I have, for example: "ALBINO" *(VOICES,* Boa Editions, 2008.) There was a white stag in St Mary's County and at that time they were thinning herds; the hunting season was extended. People tried to protect the white deer. Kathy Glaser and I were out riding in a car and we saw one and it stood there as we were watching it. I started writing about it – what was I doing? Here was this large African American lady writing about this white magic, unicorns , and such . . . I lost the poem . . . then I recreated the poem and it was talking about Kathy, our friendship . . . And that was the

unicorn . . .

GC: What kind of trouble can poets get into?

LC: Not telling the truth.

GC: How do you explain the consistent size and shape of your poems on the page — economy, brevity?

LC: I have no idea. People ask me. I try to imbue each word. I try to make each word stand for so much, I want to take it to its possibility, and then when I'm finished, I stop.

GC: Among living poets I hear you talked about more than other poets by generations X, Y, Z. What's your love potient?

LC: I don't know. I haven't the faintest idea, but readers tell me my poems are understandable. I'm friendly with everyone – although I am very shy, even though no one believes that, especially my children.

GC: Are your works translated into languages?

LC: Oh at least 7 or 8. My children's books also. My favorite is the Japanese. There's Slovenian, whoever heard of Slovenia, also Finnish. My first translation in the 1960's was Norwegian. Norway had a big big interest in black poetry.

GC: Where are all those things and your letters and personal papers?

LC: Emory, in Georgia. My letters are there. When I had my Kidney transplant there are wonderful letters from poets from all over.

GC: Is it true your computer screen saver featured some sexy male musicians?

LC: I admit it. I love Kenny Burrell's music and kept his image up for awhile. Now I have my youngest granddaughter who just ran her first 1/4 mile marathon. She's three.

GC: What is precious from your college days?

LC: We had a great time at Howard in the 50's. I was with AB Spellman, Leroi Jones, Roberta Flack, William Cook, all who went on to do great things; and my first crush in my whole life was Joe Walker. I had said "something was *more* unique." He said "There are no gradations of unique."

GC: What do you say about the people who know you and love you?

LC: I've been lucky with the people who are in my life.

Rebecca Urbanski's Art

REVIEW BY **CHERYL TOWNSEND**

REBECCA URBANSKI is a self-taught artist and the Assistant Curator of City|ART Gallery in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. Her eclectic style floats from vogue portraits of moxie women in washed-out sepia tones to vivid red, red, redheaded vixens that lure you in, like mute sirens. There are cityscapes that either dissolve before your very eyes or entice you in to play. Interspersing collage pieces to either convey a message or just enhance an image, she extends her creativity into multifaceted glimpses of glitz, gloom and hutzpah.

My first encounter with her work was when she donated three pieces to a W.A.R.M. Fundraiser for a local Battered Women's Shelter. I fell in love with a pixie-ish redhead portrait and won the highest bid to take her home.

In January of this year, she was one of a group of artists called "Raw Umber" whose artwork was stolen from True Art gallery in Cleveland. Only eight pieces of the thirty-three stolen have since been recovered.

She was a featured artist in the new Pink Eye arts magazine in NE Ohio.

From some of her on-line galleries, I chose pieces I felt gave a savory taste of her diversity as well as a subtle hint to the artist that they stand as favorites.

COLD

OBSESSION

In "Cold," a cigarette puffing beauty stands before an almost Van Gogh "Starry Night" background, feeding her addiction through obviously cold lips, parted in that oh-so alluring "o". The breeze flicks her hair across her face, making the viewer want to reach out, feel it, brush it back away. Her blank, indifferent stare fixates you. Those eyes, almost watering from the stinging cold, yet exuding a desired warmth, make you wonder . . . what is she doing out on such a cold night? - What heart did she just break (and is she really that callous not to care?)

"Obsession" gives another view of that macho feminism via a

MONDAY'S FORECAST

Marlene Dietrich glamour shot. Those fine-line eyebrows arched in ambivalence, as if saying it doesn't matter, whatever it is, she's strong enough to get over it. Those lips, you just know are painted blood-red, shine an invitation only the bravest dare to accept. Peek-a-boo eyes look away, unconcerned and again, indifferent, while still soft enough to make one stumble in contemplation... "Should I?"

SISTER PAUSE

"Sister Pause" furthers that feminine strength in double. Redheaded twins stand, breast-high in a field of possibly wheat, appearing to be intruded upon. One glares at you with disdain, almost defying you to step closer. The other looks away, lips pursed in a seethe, teeth clenched - causing her cheek bone to jut out. Her eyes are narrowed and one arm is almost restraining her sister, her hand griping. "Just forget it, let's go on." The drips in the background paint .. the darkening sky.. give yet a further ominous feel.. "I shouldn't be staring ... I should just leave."

'"Monday's Forecast" obviously calls for rain. A muted beginning to the week, newspaper read, she's off to work, still blank from the weekend. Her long hair rolled into a knot atop her head, one wonders what she woke from that morning...and can it be hidden in the print transmuted into/onto the painting?

Then, there are her cityscapes. Bleeding images of buildings and dire skies – foreboding and daring. In "City Souls" one can envision the melting of a city as it burns, rain pouring down, ineffective, and the loss of those who dwelt within its confinement. Ghostly faces almost appear, arms reaching out of the abyss, the inferno.. the Hell. Then there is "Beckoning Ruins," like a graveyard, white tombstones standing stark against another fiery sky. Tendrils extending from subterranean depths, reaching for whatever remains. Hungry and gluttonous. It seems there is nowhere safe.

But the city is not always her nemesis. Stepping outside it into suburbia, there are almost childlike visions of lollipop trees alongside In "Night Neighbors," there are Seuss-like homes, carbon-copied to exemplify the monotony of American mindsets, on rolling hills stripped bare of foliage except for designatedly

CITY SOULS

BECKONING RUINS

NIGHT NEIGHBORS

proper landscaping with their perfect manicures.

With varied strokes, paints, and compositions, Rebecca's work expands and expounds genres with ease. Unfiltered by academia and structure, she creates within her own confines...which as we clearly see, are nonexistent.

A short interview with the artist;

Cat: What brought you to this genre?

RU: I've experimented with a lot of subject matter and different media, this just seems to be where I'm most comfortable expressing myself.

Cat: Do you have a preferred technique?

RU: I really love to paint on a textured canvas. I usually spread modeling paste on a canvas, let it dry, prime it, then paint, usually with watery acrylics.

Cat: You implement other materials in your work, is there a symbolic reason for their incorporation and placement or is it just a visual enhancement?

RU - Usually my use of other materials in my work is symbolic. I love to use bits of my journals and notebooks in my paintings... just fragments of them. They help tell little stories. When I choose to use news print, that is usually more of a visual element, it is less personal to me, but I still love what newspaper can represent in a piece of art . . . just the idea that there is a story hidden in the combination of written or typed or printed letters and paint and modeling paste, that idea is what draws me in. I want to draw others in too. I do like to occasionally place bits and pieces in my work

that only I would see as a symbol. I don't usually use recognized symbols . . . nothing religious or political. Nothing that represents too much worldly conflict. I like to escape from most of that . . . express more personal stories in my work.

Cat: What type of brushes do you use?

RU: I use a variety of brushes, I like the soft ones, especially since I use a watery paint. My strokes are free flowing, pretty fluid, pretty loose.

Cat: Is there a prerequisite mood for you to paint?

RU: There is rarely a time when I'm not in the mood to create something. I paint almost every day. I have lot's of inspirations; old movies, new movies, abandoned buildings, occupied buildings, interesting people, boring people . . . I'm greatly inspired by other artists too.

Cat: Are there any favorite painters for you?

RU: I love so much art, it is hard to pinpoint just a few, but Gustav Klimt and Alphonse Mucha are my tops.

Cat: Is there an emotional release when you paint?

RU: There is definitely a therapeutic aspect to creating a piece of artwork. It is nice to get lost in my process, to escape for awhile.

Cat: You do a lot of portraits of voguish women, mostly redheads, how do they relate to you?

RU: The redheaded woman could represent so many things. In popular culture we tend to think of her as more emotional, more expressive, bolder than a brunette or a blonde. She could represent to me, that part of myself I wish could let out. The women I tend to paint also represent a period in time when women were exploring their strengths and paving the way for the rest of us to become whatever we were meant to be as individual women, they are strong and capable, but still vulnerable.

Cat: What mediums do you use? Which do you prefer?

RU: I use acrylic paint. Sometimes I will work with pen or pencil. At this point, I prefer acrylics over everything.

Cat: f you had to write a review of your work, third person, what would you want emphasized most?

RU: I think I would point out the stories each piece could tell. Even a voguish woman, painted seemingly for her beauty alone, is capable of drawing a viewer into an epic tale with just her gaze.

Rebecca's works can be viewed at;
www.rebeccaurbanski.com

Ricky Garni

Ricky Garni was born in Florida, raised in Maine and New Hampshire, and has lived in central North Carolina for twenty years. He has been producing poems since 1979 and has produced twenty-odd books of poetry and prose in limited editions as well as over a hundred publications in print and on the Web. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize on three occasions and featured in anthologies by *Pif, Mitochondria,* and *Megaera.*

Over the years, he has worked as a teacher, a recording engineer and arranger, a wine merchant, and a graphic designer. In the mid-90s, he organized a series of local readings and operatic arias in the Triangle called *101 Secret Wing Dings.* Slated for 2009 is *The 1865 Project,* in which the audience and speakers will be either younger than 18 or older than 65, and all invited to share parts of the world and history that they dearly love and wish to voice and preserve.

Mr. Garni is presently in the process of completing *Make It Wavy,* a compilation accepted for publication by Oyster Boy Review's *Off the Cuff Books.* His long-term favorite enterprise is a collection of autobiographical comic multimedia poems entitled *The Eternal Journals Of Crispy Flotilla.*

DAREDEVIL

I watched Daredevil pull a tooth out of his mouth with a pair of pliers because he had been in a fight and I suppose the tooth was damaged beyond repair at that point and I thought that this might inspire me to pull a tooth out of my own mouth I am thinking of one tooth specifically that is causing me a great deal of grief so much in fact that I don't even like jumping up and down anymore like when Trudy said Guess what I got accepted at Harvard and all I could do was say That's great and she said Then why aren't you jumping up and down and I didn't want to explain about that one tooth in particular because it would distract from the conversation about getting into Harvard and I really would have preferred to just pull it out right there with a pair of pliers and then jump up and down and say Wow that's great you got into Harvard and Trudy would say I can't believe that you just did that thing with the pliers that was so manly it's something that even Daredevil wouldn't do and he's a daredevil but then I would have to tell Trudy the truth No Daredevil would do it but he wouldn't do it in front of anybody he would do it in his secret HQ with the light off and with no one around you see superheroes have no friends even though they are brave and handsome and interesting because they can't bear the idea of putting their loved ones or business associates or dentists or anybody in jeopardy and so they pull their own teeth out in the dark with no one there to say gee that's manly No Trudy their lives are so dark and they are so alone so isolated so unloved But Trudy said I hope that's not you Trudy said Is that you Guess what Trudy said I'm pregnant

TV GUIDE APRIL 7, 1956

Saturday, April 7th, was a particularly good day for Mighty Mouse. On this day in history, Mighty Mouse swooped down to the aid of a wagon full of helpless mice who were about to be attacked by a bloody-thirsty Indian tribe. Soon after that, however, a baby seal rescued his friends (a big dog and a little puppy) from a menacing goat. And just moment or two later, Mr. and Mrs. J. Harrington Rooster announced that they are expecting a 'blessed event,' probably a baby.

Mighty Mouse was quite pleased to save a wagon full of helpless mice from bloody-thirsty Indians, but he was rather sad that people didn't have much of a chance to congratulate him for rescuing a wagon filled with helpless mice before everyone was off to watch the baby seal rescue a big dog and a little puppy and Mr. and Mrs. J Harrington Rooster announce their blessed event, probably a baby. And that's not all: there was a pig who is having an adventure in the Swiss Alps that very day! Everyone was excited about that! How often can you see a pig having an adventure in the Swiss Alps? Hooray for the pig and his adventure (in the Swiss Alps!)

"Where did everyone go?" Mighty Mouse thought to himself. The prairie whispered nothing to him, there was nobody in the wagon, and the world suddenly seems like a strange and cold place to Mighty Mouse. He may be a mighty mouse–no one will disagree with that–but after all is said and done, he is also a lonely, bitter mouse.

A Magician Of Poetry: *Catching Tigers in Red Weather* Poems by Andrew Demcak

REVIEW BY **GRADY HARP**

three candles press, 2007, 88 pages

Andrew Demcak is a polished professional. Though his poems have appeared in many very fine journals, this appears to be his first published collection where the stage is his and his alone. His style is unique: each of the 66 poems is written in six stanzas of couplets and each poem lives on an individual page, and from this 'confinement' that would restrict other writers in scope of content and conveying a mood or atmosphere or short story, Demcak creates his magic.

The range of emotions and images and topics and observations he touches is so vast that Demcak is able to address any reader of poetry and enhance previous flights of thought with completely new visions. Equally at home in describing nature and people and memories of poets past, he draws upon what seems like an endless vocabulary which he uses in ways that causes our infatuation with words to blossom with fresh meaning. An example:

SLEEP IN THE MOJAVE DESERT

We doze and swelter in a comfortless
desert. Stars ignite the lengthy evening.

Crickets congregate in their armor-plate.
Grains of sand retain the day's heat. We lie

queerly here, objects of obsidian.
The rabbit's sad cry from owl talon.

The sky splits at sunup to dearer air,
cool dew gliding from the blue horizon,

the straight distance without road or address.
Noonday earthstones connecting dry lines,

guarding their pallid salts, where lizards creep
like firecats emerged from cinders.

Extracting one poem from this bounty contained in *CATCHING TIGERS IN RED WEATHER* is almost cruel, so completely fresh is every poem and profound. Demcak is able to cross gender lines as well as any poet today as his *LAST LOVE* proves:

'So everything came into place, He tore
the gauze to the core of my boyhood,

sliding in while my eyelids turned plum.
His bitter mouth, the insistent red veil

of the Gaza sun, my thighs like twin doors
held open. I had chosen the closest

man, cut my bandages like a runner
testing his legs. I unfolded myself

a loose-petalled Narcissus, Anxious
for his erection, condomless, straining,

unaware that his body politic
was followed by the viral campaign.'

Andrew Demcak is an important new voice, a man who will surely change literature and the way we enter the unexplainable places that poetry finds and describes. This is a rich book of brilliant jewels. Highly recommended!

Jarrett Min Davis

www.jarrettmindavis.com

"My work is about what we consider normal or exotic from the bias of Eastern and Western culture. It is about what happens when you mix Dutch landscape traditions with Korean hip-hop artists. It is about the merging of the exotic from various traditions to create a "new"normal."

Jarrett Min Davis was born in Seoul, South Korea. He attended the University of Dayton for his BFA and received his MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art. He currently teaches and has exhibited his work in Philadelphia, Delaware, Virginia and Baltimore.

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?
I would have to say Pieter Bruegel the Elder's work was so influential in getting me to look at landscape once again. Also I steal as much material as possible from this. Old German and Flemish painting is where it is at.

Is there one recurring theme in your work?
Absolutely. Painting is about the drive to explore answers to questions through image making. I keep on painting work about Korean history and about how Asian-ness absorbs and adapts to modern and post-modern society because it forces me to discard my own stereotypes about Asians and Western Culture. It gives me a chance to see the possibilities of the interplay between old and new, past and present, Eastern and Western, real and fake.

How do you feel about formal training?
I didn't work nearly hard enough when I was in undergrad. I was immature and arrogant about my work. I took several years off and worked a lot of crappy jobs for very low pay. Not much job adverts for BFA's. But I worked on my work and eventually got into a pretty good grad school. I vowed to work my ass off to take advantage of every opportunity that was offered. I learned a ton in grad school and I applied that to my work. I loved the experience and was well worth the investment of money and time.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?
I like painting at night. I think better and am more awake. I always make sure that I listen to Queen at some point on my iPod while painting. Even if the painting is going badly, Queen makes me smile and relax then I can continue on with the piece and rework my mistakes.

Are you a starving artist?
Still not even close to being out of debt.

Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?
I would go classic and get Da Vinci to do it. It would take forever and he might not finish it but I think his portraits are really psychological, plus I think he'd be interesting to observe and talk to while he was painting.

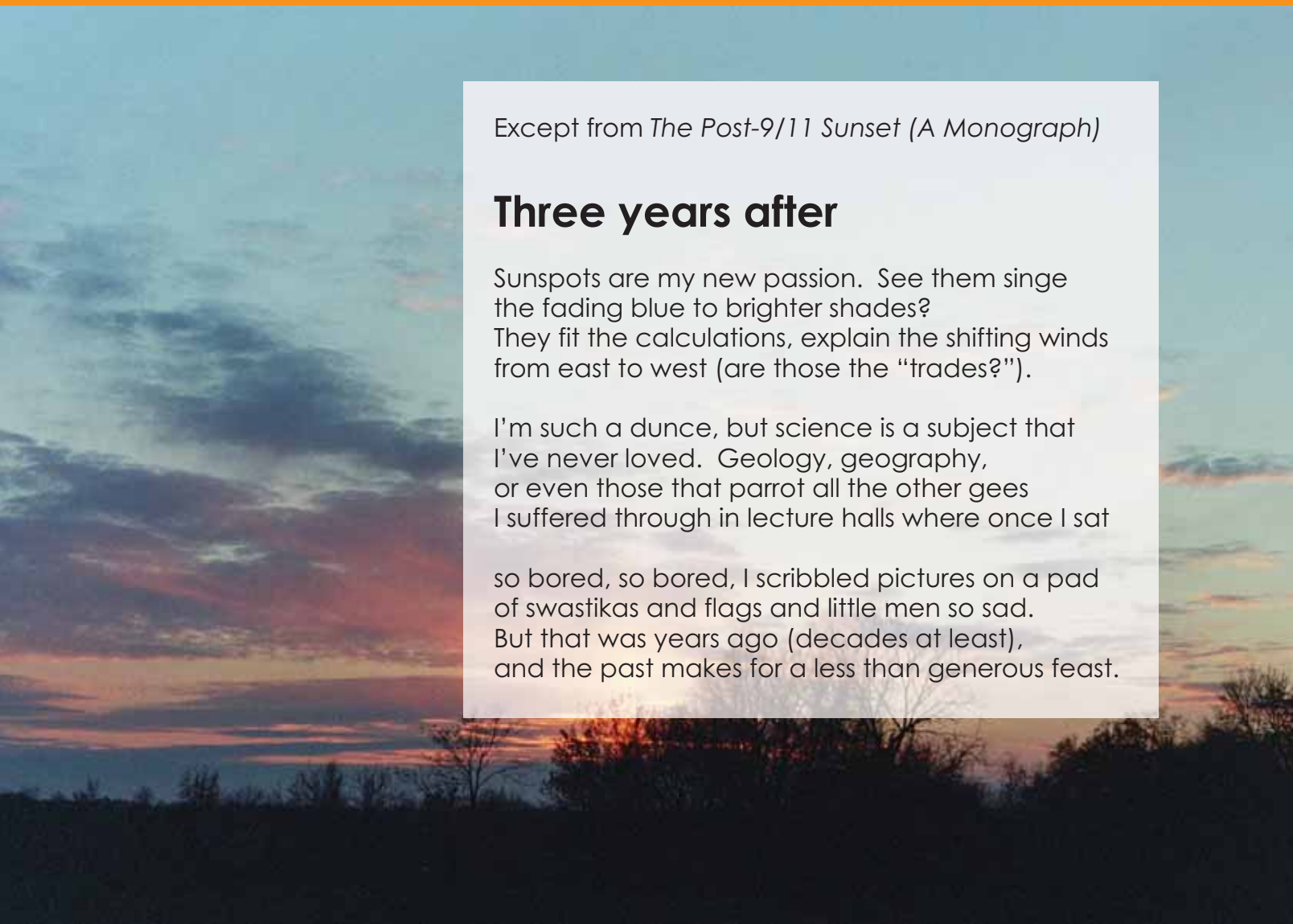
Moon Ballet oil and charcoal on linen 28" x 38"

Shinwa oil and charcoal on linen 42" x 50"

Winter oil and charcoal on linen 42" x 50"

Tara Birch

Tara Birch, 52 years old, is a true internet poet. Ms. Birch did not begin writing poetry until 2001 when she began posting her poems in various internet forums devoted to posting and criticizing poems online. The majority of her published work in the last seven years has been in journals or other print publications published or otherwise overseen by Didi Menendez, a remarkable poet in her own right, and a great friend and mentor for many people whose poetry careers have been conducted outside of traditional academic settings, such as, for example — Tara Birch.



Except from *The Post-9/11 Sunset (A Monograph)*

Three years after

Sunspots are my new passion. See them singe
the fading blue to brighter shades?
They fit the calculations, explain the shifting winds
from east to west (are those the "trades?").

I'm such a dunce, but science is a subject that
I've never loved. Geology, geography,
or even those that parrot all the other gees
I suffered through in lecture halls where once I sat

so bored, so bored, I scribbled pictures on a pad
of swastikas and flags and little men so sad.
But that was years ago (decades at least),
and the past makes for a less than generous feast.

William Coronado

www.williamcoronado.com

William Coronado was born in Weehawken, NJ, 1973. He is an instructor at the Cicely Tyson School of Performing and Fine Arts

Selected Group Exhibitions

2008: "Catastrophe," Atlantic Gallery, New York, NY

2007: "Rice & Beans, Black Eye Peas & Collard Greens and Other Stuff," Conco Lofts, Jersey City, NJ

"WHYGTS 2007," Atlantic Gallery, New York, NY

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2007: "Escaping the Rectangle," Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ

2005: "Societal Transmogrification," Chashama Visual Arts Gallery, New York, NY

"Fleeting Forms Reinterpreted," ISO Tower, (Temporary Installation), Jersey City, NJ

Selected Two Person Exhibitions

2008: "The Body Signifier," Gallery 744, Newark, NJ.

Awards

2008: New American Paintings (Issue #75)

"My work explores physiological and psychological states of awareness using the human body as a vessel for investigation. I use the human body not for its representational qualities but for its ability to evoke philosophical and psychological questions about our existence. The human body in its physical and mental form is the common thread within all my work."

William Coronado

Q&A

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?
Kiki Smith is currently my biggest influence. Her work has the ability to transcend my mind into another realm with its mystical and powerful qualities. I particularly admire Smith's work because it is also about the body and metaphorical.

Is there one recurring theme in your work?
The recurring theme in my work is the body on physical and philosophical stratum.

How do you feel about formal training?
Formal training is important in one respect because it brings an awareness of the history of art, which in turn broadens artistic opportunity. To the contrary, a danger of formal training lies in the potential to directly copy past or present techniques or styles, sometimes without being aware.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?
I certainly do. Life is simultaneously ritual and process, and the creation of art is no different. The trick is not to be in control or perhaps even be aware of the ritual itself while working.

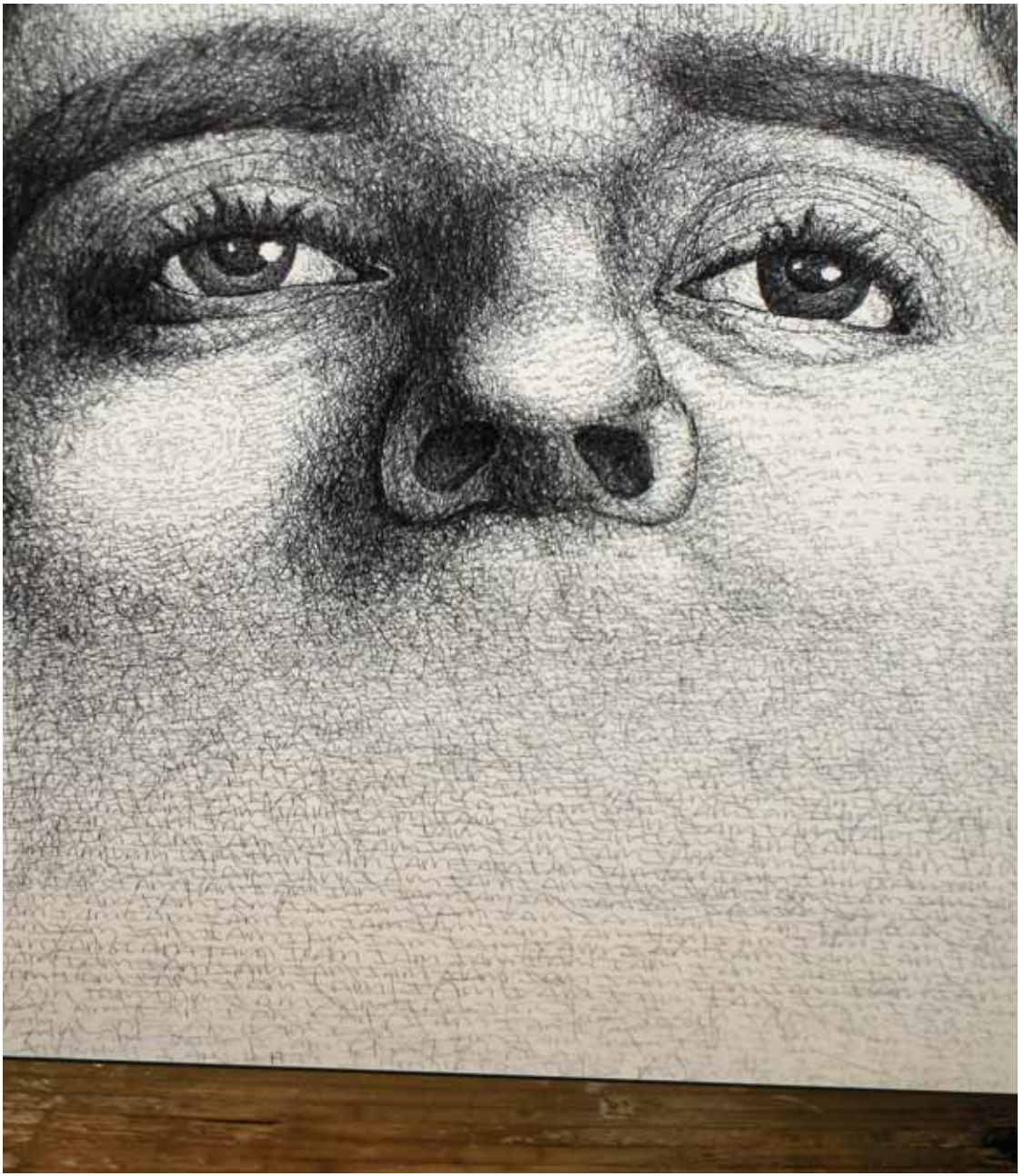
Are you a starving artist?
I am not a starving artist in the sense that I am missing the basic necessities of life; however, I believe every artist is starving for success in what he or she does. The challenge is that success is difficult to define since my personal definition of success is constantly changing.

Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?
This is a difficult question, but without a doubt my answer is Chuck Close. I would love to see my face abstracted to mere shapes and color with my personal gaze still apparent. Chuck Close does this so well.

American Dream oil on cutout canvas 5' x 4'

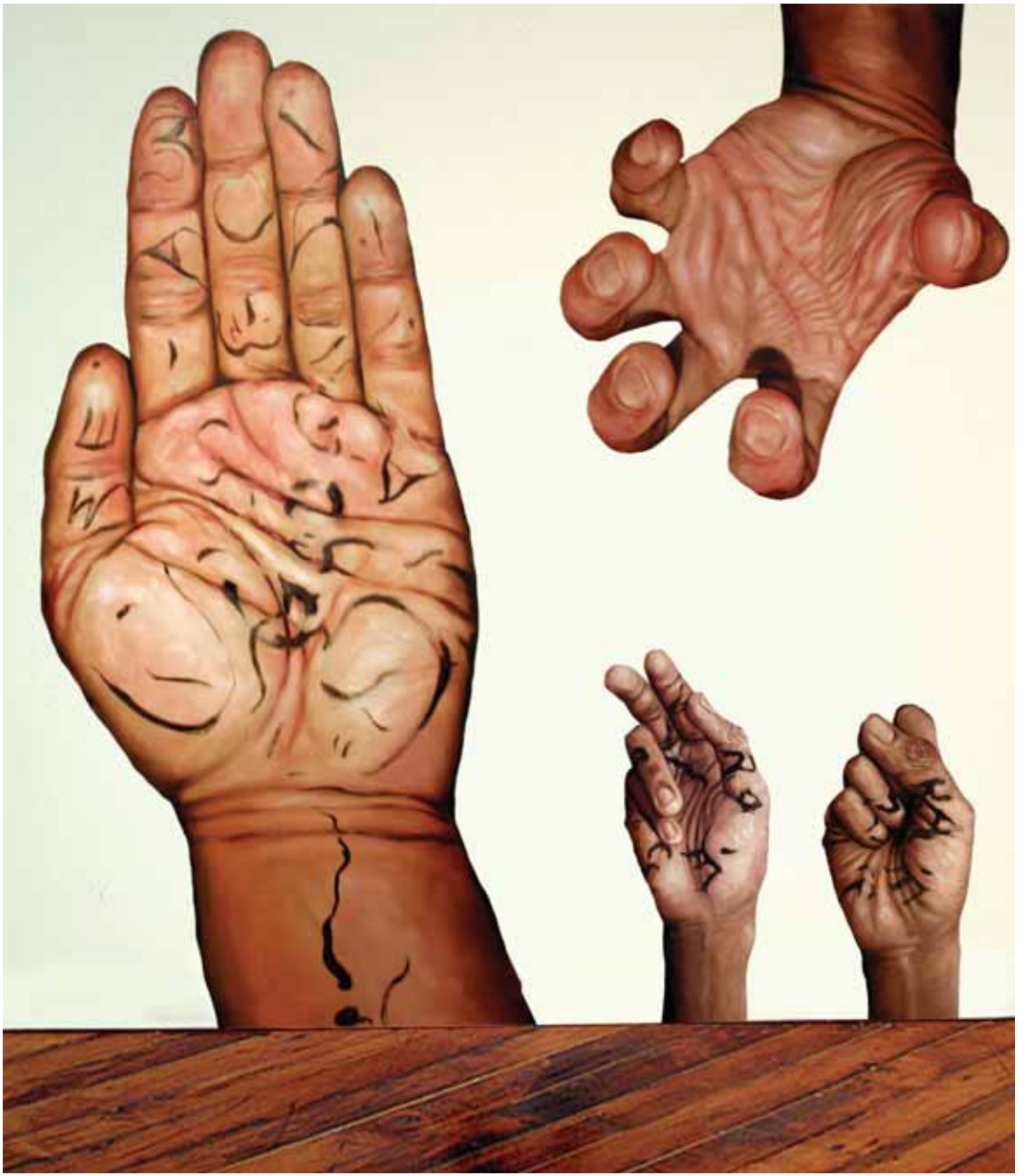
William Coronado

The Long Wait oil on cutout canvas 5.5' x 4'



William Coronado

I Am wall drawing 8' x 12'



William Coronado

Hands Of Thought oil on cutout canvas 4' x 5'

Nanette Rayman Rivera

Nanette Rayman Rivera, two-time Pushcart Nominee for non-fiction and poetry, is the author of the poetry collection, *Project: Butterflies* by Foothills Publishing and the chapbook, *alegrias,* by Lopside Press. She is the first winner of the Glass Woman Prize for non-fiction and has poetry on *Best of the Net 2007.* Her story, *Puhi Paka,* was best of issue in *Greensilk Journal.* Publications include The *Worcester Review, Carousel, Carve Magazine, The Berkeley Fiction Review, Dragonfire, Arsenic Lobster, ditch, MiPOesias, Prick of the Spindle, The Wilderness Review, Pebble Lake Review, Mannequin Envy, Dirty Napkin, Pedestal, Lily, Wheelhouse, The Smoking Poet, Cliterature, Stirring, Snow Monkey, Wicked Alice, Tipton Poetry Journal, Three Candles, Velvet Avalanche Anthology, The Pittsburgh Quarterly, Red River Review, Flashquake, A Little Poetry, DMQ Review, Her Circle, grasslimb, Barnwood,* and *Chantarelle's Notebook.* Upcoming: *Offcourse, At Large* and Featured Poet in *Up the Staircase.* She is listed on imbd, Turner Classic Movies and Yahoo Movies for her roles in *Stephan's Silver Bell* and *Guns on the Clackamas.* She is shopping her memoir around to agents, a true story of what really goes on in the New York City's homeless, welfare, food stamp and public housing system. She graduated from The New School University.

near my window

a lonesome cigarette begins the day,
fine-tuning is turned on to understand
the rabble of halos writing by the window. The morning
is static, still at once, it might court me. Yet

their penmanship does not go halves, lost somewhere in sense
memory. How providential the light is red and wants
no novel on its blankness. I have written savagely,
been written upon unfairly, an ode
of complexity embedded. I know the plot by heart,
rail the lingering urgency, the race upward to collect coronas.

Shaynah-Linda – Pretty-Pretty

Jose

I'm jazzed to love him not for his horse muscle-budge so much
as the injure on my hips to help me grasp
beauty's cargo
shan't be mislaid
even when homeless.

What am I doing?

Mosquitoes are hovering over the hero-
in my storm, squashing what I know, gulls diving too squat.
His talk is Camano-cloud air tickling my ear.
I might need some xanax. an annex.
I just need someone to get over
my face and give me a job and a place
to live forever and ever
a mantra to repeat over and over
to get him outside me.

he's just a shot away

I had to stop cutting his fingernails behind the kitchen door
and go talk to the social worker or else.

My yen for him stalked after
my legs and although its veracity had not
altered, its essence had,

as if it were a hand caressing at the jut of my collarbone
and I know when I turned my back, that through the glass
partition he wept for me, he kept persisting, perhaps
he really is a gift, this browbeating

of my chest is a consistent cadence.
If he keeps this up, this worship of my face,
I'll turn into a violin, you'll witness me wired
as if at any moment I'll become an open string,
a .38 or rupture. And the social worker
on the horn to the cops, won't let us touch.

five years later

on this anniversary of getting an apartment
we did little; I rocked you when you hallucinated
pigeon-people eating rye in our kitchen.
I wanted to rend my dress, cry Unsoiled, cry Spanking new

I wanted to know how it is we were thrown
together. How it is that leper and leper
dwell samely, unseemly with pretty faces?
I dwell on thoughts that I'm sad. No, not true.
Aleninu – it is our duty
Es nuestra responsabilidad – it is our duty
and all at once I'm glad you're the denouement
of the prescribed heat hurrying though
me. I know you. I am you.

forever

so i was pretty, so. buttons. was i hired? did i make it onto the silver screen or one episode of Law and Order? oh, wait, that's me in the corner, losing, but the face still *shaynah*, still *linda.* that's what they tell me. anomalous old ladies. men in gyms. forever 21.

so you were schizophrenic. zip. it. you're forty now, already your mind is a bomb. i could stroke it with wet fingers and put it out. burning lovely. under head of hair your brain skirts dynamite like *Road Runner*, and run you do, out of my arms, into my arms, up onto my breasts, out to First Avenue, all the way through *Don't Walk* signs. you've slackened the screws in your own head. the sound is rowdy. it's what I need to wake up. ex parte won't help us; lawyers aren't in love with you.

i dream of sitting in my own garden. walking Truro's dunes. i sit at the computer you pieced together from First Avenue rubbish ingredients. i sit looking out at the river, a blazing beautiful view for a woman in a ghetto. i take scissors from the kitchen drawer and cut dead sapling leaves, scatter them over my skin, the hyacinth and cacti which are dry, scraggly and sickly. so. sew.

i know this is my lot. the plot's played. know I've sewn oats and your socks on the street that led to ignominy as you pull me into another fantasy and cling to me - your paean words lead me fast to ecstasy, your back-body still the V of gulls, you shelve your insanity for hours to show me not all's lost--- music begins here where we die and revel in the smash up of sex-sloth, one breath of you, you're my atlas my lobster, my rock, my peppercorn got a hankering - sofrito smolders eyes i itch i ogle and play on your belly pepper grinder butterly bay-bay - cigarette ex-cons still on our lips, finding you in me in the morning I get a huge craving to live.

Furious Lullaby by Oliver De La Paz

REVIEW BY **JIM KNOWLES**

"Furious Lullaby", by Oliver De La Paz,
Southern Illinois University Press
6x9 inches, perfect bound, 68 pages.

I often stare at little lectures on what poetry is supposed to be...or not. To me this belies what seems to be a fact hiding in plain site: that poetry is, foremost, a personal experience, as far as the pieces that really leave one smitten, stricken, or taken. For those moments, I am open to anything that is "words as art."

What does that have to do with "Furious Lullaby"? Oliver De La Paz certainly has a lot of skill at his disposal, and uses it across a range of styles and modes. I was in and out of focus on this, perhaps not up to it at times, but I found great moments as the event warmed up, like at a concert.

It all opens with a short clear-eyed deconstruction, in "Holiness". This has a precision and faith to truth, a sharp indictment at the end. I like this type a lot, especially when the case is stripped of harping until the end.

"The Hour of Dawn" follows, with scene and sense and word-sounding carved down to a very intricate minimalism.

There is a series after this with Aubades and Devils, Apostasies, etc. to round out the first half, where I found each line or few lines to be clever and strong, but I couldn't get into the whole thing on the larger scale. This is not an issue with many readers. The "fevered phantasm" modality is well developed. In pieces like "My Dearest Apostasy" and "My Dearest Conflict" the sense of drama is of a hypertrophic style:

> ***Urged, I chose to celebrate the body***
> ***with rocks and stilettos.***
> ***I've hollowed the tips of my bullets. I've poisoned***
> ***the mouthwash.***

As with a play, different people will have different reactions to high drama.

Given Oliver's variety and ability, I pressed on. And then there was "What the Eye Said", still dramatic, this time in a grand-oratory way, but I did get more entrained by: "..and lay the shade in gauze..", or "I give you my ether, my other night.." Maybe if I just let myself go with it, I thought. Things pick up speed and a flowing sounding in "On the Pores of the Flesh", a seamless piece with a surreal center that does not ring hollow.

"Aporia" is convoluted, dramatic, and breathless, but it got ahold of me. The use of concrete poetry technique actually clarified and drove the speed on this one. Challenging, but more thrilling than bewildering. There is a certain earnesty strung into the the passing riffs and shifts of the wind. I read this a few times more.

This would be my favorite.

The aubades at the end are more infused with the continuous streaming and narrative picked up in the middle pieces.

This was a collection with many twists and turns, and I found some sections resonated with me more than others. Still, when I could tune De La Paz in, his chance-taking paid off. With me, at least.

"The painting of these works is fueled by raw emotion. It's the feelings that goes into these paintings that matter. In addition to emotion, I am striving for beauty that may not be readily seen on the surface of the work."

Drew Ernst

Drew Ernst
drewernstart.com

Drew Ernst graduated from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 2002.

Drew is a modern, figurative painter. His paintings live in a modern world. He works with each painting for several weeks to months and, therefore, runs the gamut of emotions while painting.

His new work is very modern in presentation. He paints on aluminum panels. He likes the idea of the material for the new pieces being indestructible and man made.

RECENT EXHIBITIONS

2008 Winston Wachter Fine Art, Seattle, WA (November 08)

2008 Zenith Gallery, Washington, DC (December 08)

2007 Winston Wachter Fine Art, Seattle, WA

2007 Zenith Gallery, Washington, DC

PUBLICATIONS

American Art Collector, Dec 07

Southwest Art, "21 Young Artists to Collect Now," Sept 06

New American Paintings, Juried Exhibition – in – Print, No 65, Sept 06

Home and Design Sourcebook, Fall/Winter 2006

Mid-Atlantic: Philadelphia/ Washington DC Gallery Guide Cover Story, 12/06

Hillrag (DC), 12/06

Q&A

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?
I think the old masters have influenced my work overall, but these days it seems living artists influence me the most. When I was younger, Andrew Wyeth was my hero. Currently, I like John Currin, Vincent Desiderio, and Andy Goldsworthy. Recently, I've been really into photography. My father is a photographer so that's where the interest in photography came from.

Is there one recurring theme in your work?
The recurring subject in my work is the figure. I think the recurring theme is the lighting I use on the figure.

How do you feel about formal training?
I was trained formally at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. I do think it's important to have a foundation to jump off from as an artist and formal training provides that. However, I don't think formal training is an absolute necessity. What is important is that you find your voice as an artist.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?
First thing I do when I get to the studio is put on music.

Are you a starving artist?
This is the first thing people ask me when I tell them I'm an artist. I'm not starving. I'm fortunate that I can paint and sell work. There are tons of artist making a good living doing what they do.

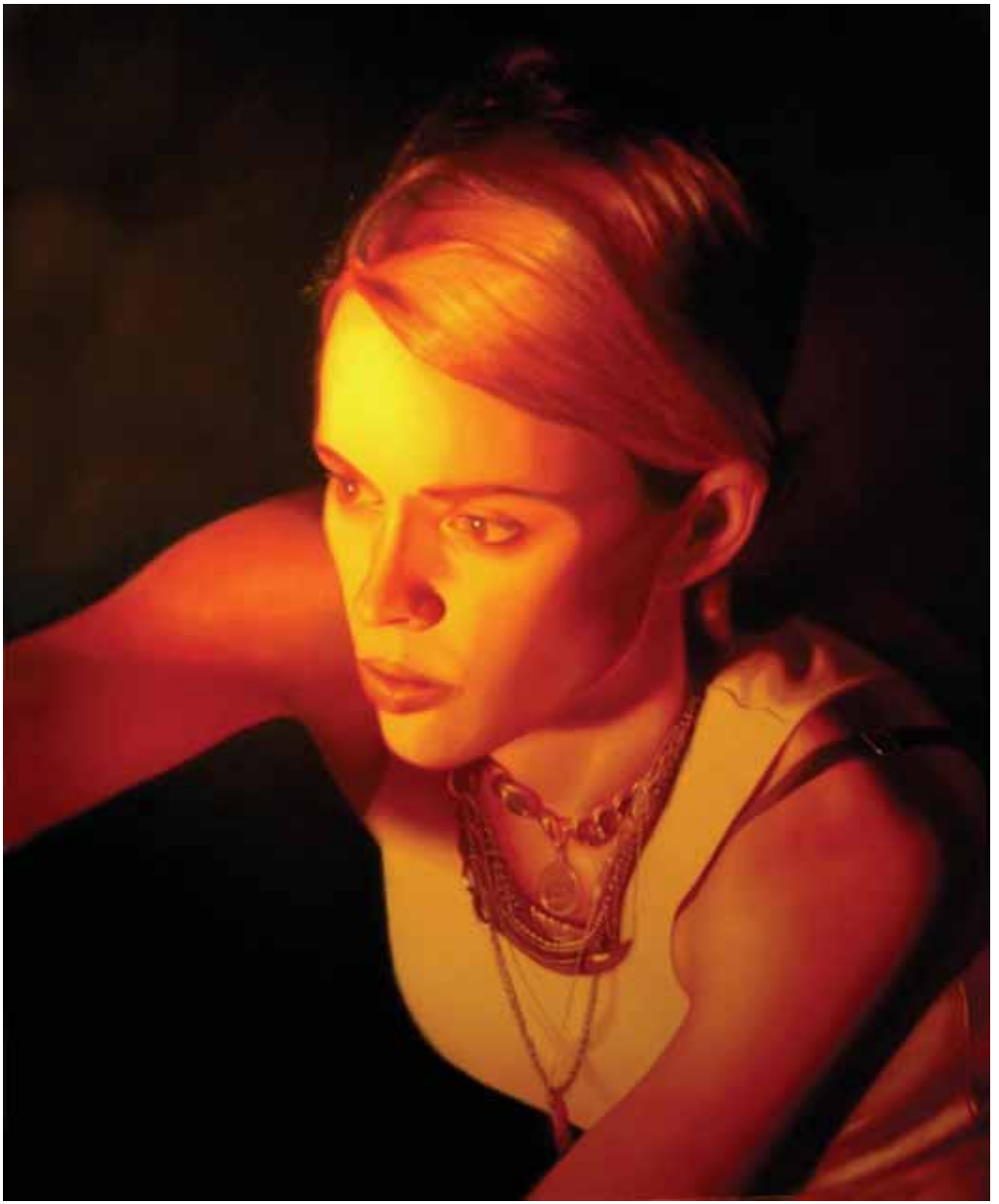
Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?
Leonardo Da Vinci. It would be amazing to see one of the greatest geniuses of all time at work, to see his process.

Sadness & Alcohol oil on aluminum 48" x 36"

Drew Ernst

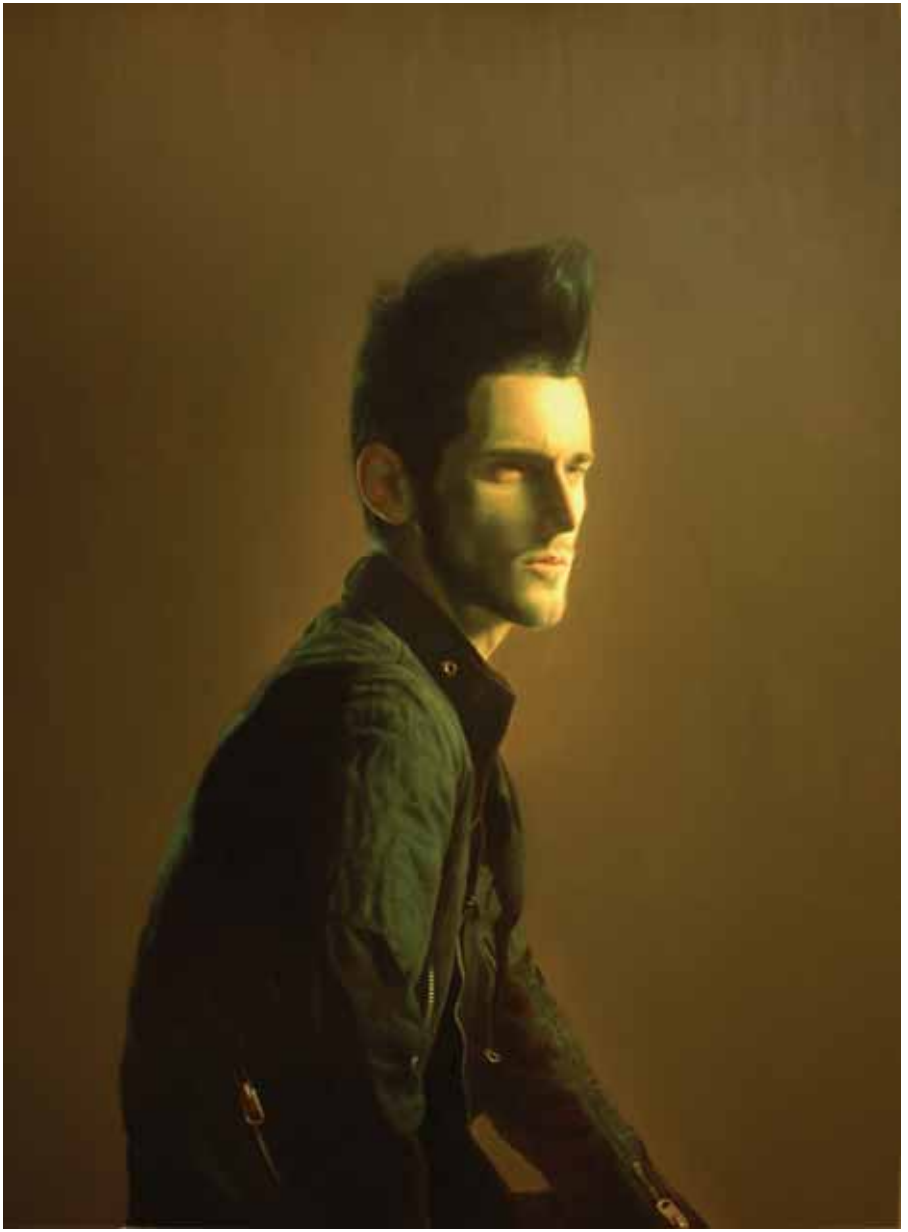
Scrape Bottom Again oil on aluminum 48" x 36"

Drew Ernst



Please Don't Let Me Go oil on aluminum 60" x 36"

Drew Ernst



Fix Me I Was A Vampire oil on aluminum 48" x 36"

Drew Ernst

Drew Ernst

Razor oil on aluminum 48" x 36"

MARY MORRIS lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico and publishes widely. She is the winner of the Rita Dove Award and a recent finalist for the Stan and Tom Wick Book Prize, as well as the St. Petersburg Review Prize.

HOTEL PAIN

Built for illness, one house for so many—
kidneys and lungs, the heart, milky gristle,
and porous bones.

I stayed there once for an entire month
all wrapped up and sucked in to hurt,
lowest slave to the lord of the plantation
harvesting pain as a crop for the master

of misery, while nurses, seraphs, angels
sang on about fluids of the body,
chanting the 'Gospel of Suffering'
in their muffled voices. I imagined them
even on the roof top garden,

figures in air moving through red
geraniums, ministering to the sick.
Here drools the blood, sinister and biblical,
amber secretions of wounds like nectar
of honeysuckle, froth of infection.

In the traffic of needles, a stone path
leads through ancient columns of the spine:
lumbar, thorax, cervical.
At night, a dark field of mustard, at night
the little doorstep of a dream in the drifts of snow.

The body next to me, once a smoking chimney,
lies like a fallen house with cinders and fire in the lungs
hooked up to thunderous machines: tubes of oxygen,
defibrillator, pacemaker, extenders of time.

In the traffic of celestial bodies, we hear rumors
of a winding staircase below the stars,
red flowers that keep throwing out flames,
patience tight as a fist, defected purpose, moon of tin.

The floor, so many miles from the bed,
some sort of vertical wonder from the horizontal dead.

Rubber tires wheel their chairs
in the recovery ward of fluorescent bright,
travel through viral air
under ceiling swords of light.

It all came so slowly, the nights so long,
you think of the swampy grounds in Memphis
each brick of Graceland, set by a mason
to build the mansion of sleep in a drip.

Inn for the collapsed, lodging for the body
being eaten through, like decomposition
of a mollusk in a shell, falling away from its skin.

At the end of a long hall, a red neon sunrise
announces, 'Exit.' There is no other way to leave

unless you see the light before the finish line
in the brain, like dusk on the garden at home

where your child holds a peach, transports the scent
of orchards in sunlight,

hundreds of birds collecting

the air, all blue on the gate
of your pale, porous body.

BORN ON REMBRANDT'S BIRTHDAY AND OTHER PARABLES

It was July.
The delivery, separating the selves, exhausted us all.

Jars of paint emptied into our lives, jewel colors.
I had the taste for iron, soup of gold, and half tones,

mica, pigment, red lake, lead white,
and ultramarine for the mother of Christ.

In the mirror I caught a glimpse of him, Rembrandt,
self portraits, broken blood vessels,
the corner of an eye or lower lip glistening,

deepened in mineral, ochre, shadow
in boneblack, char and ash. Soaked in my light.

*

Do you want to hear a joke? my mother asks
as we deposit another quarter in the massage bed
at the amusement park hotel?

And then, *don't tell your father I told you this*
and with her cigarette, forms three little piles of ashes
then looks up and asks, *Now which one is Joan of Arc?*

The bed is a parable for sadness and loneliness
but we think it's hysterically funny.

My mother asks questions:
What makes teeth inscribe in the delicious?

Poetry, I tell her.

But our mouths lean into the teeming of meat.

To burn meaning, one is given grief.

We are servants in the house of lessondom:
mustard and cinnamon, the prodigal son,
rich fool, lost sleep, sheep.

You want bliss? You'll have to burn wondering
which shelf during the night of a tornado

in darkness of a storm cellar are jars of sugared figs,
yellow brandied cherries blushed pink, salted quail,
rose petals in wine at Rembrandt's table.

Say remember and you will think of pure thoughts,
of synonym and metaphor—the page, a wild horse,
the pen a lasso.

Insomnia, and then the sun rises from the past
in a perfumed labyrinth where I weep

for the beautiful corpse
that was my father, a painter of flesh.

BODYGUARD

Find grace and the immune system branches,
your place, then your body dances.
Find your drive and your blood borders on ecstasy.

I am alive because my intuition turned
those eager surgeons away—blood thirsty
as vampires, blade ready, honing carpentry
instruments—saw to cut through bone, skull.

I am alive because you slept by the white
coffin of my hospital bed,
you, a very personal body guard,

because once an angel fluttered
in my womb, whispered
Hang on, I'll need, need a mother.

MADONNA WITH CHILD, CHRISTMAS EVE

—Physician's diagnosis: December 24, 1984, female, five months pregnant, cerebral hemorrhage, right arterior venous malformation. Critical condition.

The head was boiling with bees,
droning to get out.

The wound, futile.

Your tiny hand appeared by sound, a sonogram.
I listened.

It was the darkened month,
season without apples.

I thought I fell asleep in your dreams—
a three day coma.

A wolf's eyes flecked with mirrors,
its jaw, the hinge to the door
of the underworld.

The moon was the mouth of a saxophone,
sexy and malignant.

It was midnight,
Jesus about to be born again
for nineteen hundred and eighty-five times.

The Christians were roosting
in the chambers of their choir boxes
singing commandments and prayers,

erupting with mangers, malls, reindeer,
little red and green lights blinking like heart monitors.

When I woke, your namesake appeared
from the nurses. They were vespers from the snowdrifts
of midnight

brought into a room the world boxed up
with heavy postage,
ready to be shipped off.

Their eyes, the shape of almonds
from far away continents.

They wept tears in my mouth where I tasted salt,
thinking I fell asleep again, only in an estuary
where the river meets the sea.

I woke into a little doorstep of the day,
atrophied legs, learned to walk,
guided by footprints my mother once made,

the snow, so deep, sparkling, pristine,
the frame of my house under construction
where I kept you behind my ribs
always safe and close to the heart.

I dreamed I fell asleep in a bird sanctuary
between migrations.
The heron were just arriving.

Great horned owls built nests of grasses
and clay for their babies.
Inside their custard wombs, bones were churning.
Veins, like the feathery roots of crocus, multiplied.

Already, the kingfisher were headed into Mexico,
guided by the inner compass we have no answers for.

Stratus clouds formed a question mark in the sky
for possible weather.
The wind sailed into that season
between winter and summer.

Thousands of lilacs bloomed within radius
of the county, their scent, prophetic,
then you, beautiful son,
were born on this planet.

Cathy Lees

http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/stuart/StudentArt/ast_id/24788

"My paintings narrate my life through symbols involving food and clothing, as I focus on issues of identity and power dynamics in intimate relationships. By naturalistically rendering simulated scenes, I layer artifice and veracity, thereby dramatizing the uncanny nature of the reality of domestic experiences. I stage my paintings as if making a film, and I appeal to viewers' voyeuristic tendencies, creating a sensation similar to that experienced by audiences watching private affairs unfold on a movie screen."

Cathy Lees earned her M.F.A. in Painting from Boston University in 2007 and her B.F.A. in Painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2005. She attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2006 and the Yale/ Norfolk program in 2004.

She has a national exhibition record. In 2007, she was invited to participate in the New Talent Show at Alpha Gallery in Boston, MA. Her paintings have been selected for solo shows in venues including the Durham Art Guild in Durham, NC and the Maryland Art Place in Baltimore, MD. She was featured in the 76th edition of New American Paintings.

In addition, she has received several awards, including grants from the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation, the Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation, and the George Sugarman Foundation.

Q&A

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?

Although I admire a range of artists, most of my influences make narrative work involving or implying the presence of the human figure. I respond strongly to artists who remain with their subjects – building a relationship with their themes and their surfaces over time. Recently, I have been studying the works of Antonio Lopez Garcia. I was fortunate to see his retrospective at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Other influences include Andrew Wyeth, Vermeer, Vincent Desiderio, Paula Rego, Cindy Sherman, and Sally Mann. I also find inspiration in film and literature, so such figures as Ingmar Bergman and Virginia Woolf are influences as well.

Is there one recurring theme in your work?

Yes. My paintings metaphorically mediate the narrative of my life, so they are all related. I select symbols with personal and cultural significance, and I focus on issues of identity, sexuality, and control.

How do you feel about formal training?

I strongly advocate formal training. I believe that the technical and conceptual aspects of art making should be developed together, with varying degrees of emphasis, depending on the level and needs of the student. A strong foundation in formal skills ensures that art students have the necessary basic artistic tools at their disposal so that their own work is never hindered by lack of aptitude.

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

Yes. The first part of my process has strong ties to the performing arts: I write out possible narratives, select a scene, find a costume and props, and conduct a series of photo-shoots. Afterwards, I collage images together to create reference materials. Next, I determine the size of the painting, keeping in mind that the scale will create a specific subject-viewer relationship. I prepare my surface; then I carefully plan and sketch my image on it. Finally, I begin painting! I work on one piece at a time, and I spend several months creating each painting.

Are you a starving artist?

Fortunately, I'm not starving, but I lead a simple lifestyle, and I budget carefully.

Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?

I would choose my friend and fellow artist Peter Greaves.

Cathy Lees

Dumping Clothes oil on canvas 24" x 32"

Bedroom Laundry oil on canvas 26" x 34"

Fruit Of Temptation oil on canvas 38" x 64"

Broken Eggs oil on canvas 50" x 60"

Erica Maria Litz

Erica Maria Litz graduated with an MFA in Creative Writing from Arizona State University. A first collection of poetry by Ms. Litz, *Lightning Forest, Lava Root* will be published in the coming year by Plain View Press. Her poems have appeared in or are forthcoming in the journals *Moondance, Americanisado, The Superstition Review, The Caribbean Writer* and *quiet Shorts*. Of Colombian heritage, her poetry has been influenced by the culture and the musical roots of Latin America. She resides in Arizona and is an Adult Education Specialist for the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, poetry mentor with PEN Prison Writing Mentorship Program, and volunteer copywriter for VALUEusa.org.

Twelve Poems for Mama, Her Hands, and the Fire They Started

I.

Roped-soled sandals and ruanas are worn by children
south of the equator. They eat ants, weave hammocks,
hope for pan de queso and cocoa.

The Duck, Ñuñuma, the upturn of her tail,
her tail like a bromeliad leaf, a striped tongue,
a striped tongue that speaks,
sings the light and dark green of feet meeting water.

II.

Gregorio points out a cedar tree,
a sleeping mirla—a dark bird.
All dark birds unbraided from their flock,
flying in six directions, know there are seven.

III.

Weaving sombreros at Sandona, Nariño,
Estera makes a point about dyeing with nogal—
American walnut, as you may know it.

Browning the fibers of iraca palm,
adding a whistle to a beat,
a beat that won't be ignored—the atriums wheeze,
the chest rumbles.

IV.

Only the hummingbird flies backward,
a blurred word parallel to Earth,
the first word just beyond comprehension,
the letters in a dream, a message
turned to ash in the memory,
though it burns in the blood.

V.

Hearts at rest beat a thousand times per minute,
and the hats from Sampúes can't keep up with that breeze—
they lift, land in banana trees, freeing the hair to a distant cloud.

Tomorrow rests on cotton squares
arranged and spattered with prayers—stones,
leaves, a hummingbird wing,
river water…dream.

VI.

The center of the crown is woven into a cross.
Estera, is she fond of you,
is she fond of your arrow cane hat from Sampúes,
the place of gourds, rattles
where Mother speaks for the dead,
uncles whose names she can't remember?

VII.

Iwouya, the Bright Star, announces the arrival of rains,
the arrival of elliptical stains that dye the dry clay.

Gregorio's middle and ring fingers reach out to spread
the culture of burnt banana leaf,
the smoke blackening the senses, the lungs of memory,

as a drop is smeared on the burning cheek of Earth,
Pachamama, the Crude Silver Ore crafted to keep the finery
fair, to keep the salt beds
salinized and rising.

VIII.

Bochica carved the patterns for crafting into the side of the northern Andes,
into the Cordilleras. He carved them to remind the descendants of the Chibcha to keep
their hands in earth, to remind them of the freedom of a loose, woven shirt
lying on the floor, to remind them of a woman in a walnut chair,
her breasts for feeding, bare to nurse.

IX.

The locals warned, *Duida,*
Duida is occupied and dangerous.
Yet, they know there are places where Mother is still
rain and aching, where she carries on,
where she makes life in an earth-oven,
where she lets smoke bake black into the edges,
where she insists carbon fleece the walls of her bowls.

X.

Bochica, the gray-haired sage in a ruana,
taught us to mold mud into bowls,
taught us to work gold into nose-rings
and ceremonial hoes.

He sings the methods for making.
He sings them into our memory.
We call back in syllables
no longer owned by any language or name.

XI.

Cucarachero, the Eater of Roaches,
the little house wren country people so love,
the little house wren has a song like achiote seeds,
small and red, good dye for the bedspread,
a rough cover for a country bed—the history,
the history of a family born of Bochica's daughters
and grandfather pirate, Tatapirata
who raped our mothers, who called
his sons white, his daughters wise.

XII.

Anyán Tepui, a cloud forest halfway to Duida,
has eyes of a thousand varieties,
blinks its wings on the face of an ancient scene—quinoa
and corn in baskets.

Today, a place for children to play,
a place high away from the chase of armed men,
armed men taking eight and nine-year old recruits,
taking children to shoot or train—more
grain for the caskets.

Patricia Watwood

patriciawatwood.com

"I paint nudes, figures, portraits and still lifes in the classical tradition. I draw on allegorical, mythological, and narrative themes, and I want to continue the classical pursuits of representational painting, with my eye on the contemporary world, to share it with a modern audience."

Patricia Watwood studied painting at the Water Street Atelier, under Jacob Collins, and also under Ted Seth Jacobs at Ecole Albert Defois. She has her MFA from New York Academy of Art.

Her work is represented by John Pence Gallery in San Francisco, The Grenning Gallery in Sag Harbor, NY, and with Hirschl & Adler in NYC. Her figurative paintings have been included in several museum shows, including "Slow Painting," at the Oglethorpe Museum; "The Great American Nude;" at the Bruce Museum of Arts and Sciences; and in "Representing Representation VI," at the Arnot Museum.

Watwood and her husband and two daughters live in Brooklyn, New York.

Q&A

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?
My teachers, Jacob Collins, Ted Jacobs, and Anthony Ryder, have had the strongest influence on the formation of my artistic character. I am inspired by their exquisite draftsmanship and painting style, founded in a deep respect for understanding and observing nature, and the traditions of oil painting.

For the last several years, I have been studying the paintings of Frederick Lord Leighton, Caravaggio, George de la Tour, Ribera, and other figurative artists of the past with the human figure as a central subject. I have been examining their compositional ideas, and narrative structures in the presentation of the figure as a subject.

Is there one recurring theme in your work?
I would like to think that the recurring theme is the spiritual human presence of the subjects in the paintings. Whether it's a "Flora", or a "Bacchus", or a portrait subject, I want the viewer to connect with the spirit of the subject, the soul if you will. One of the central guiding principles of my work is that we are spiritual beings having a human experience. The connection of the spirit between painter and subject, and between the subject and the viewer, shows the resonance of all human interaction.

How do you feel about formal training?
For me, formal training is the indispensable underpinning of my practice. I seek to follow and build upon the artistic intelligence and traditions of the past, and bring them anew to my own generation. Other styles of painting and visual art do not follow this tradition, and I respect the plurality of our artistic heritage. But in my discipline, formal training is indivisible from the development of the artist.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?
My only rituals are the daily routine of setting up my palette or drawing materials. I have several processes, depending on the circumstances or the type of project. For larger figurative paintings, I usually do some color sketches, either from imagination or using a model. Then I often do drawing studies from a model. The larger paintings take many steps: setting up the drawing, which is often transferred from a smaller study; then blocking out the painting with an underpainting; then a "finishing" pass refining the oil painting of all the areas of the picture.

Are you a starving artist?
No, although our family has scraped the bottom of the barrel a few times. My husband has a good job, and does the heavy lifting supporting the family. His unfailing support of my work has been invaluable to me, and very important. I usually earn a basic income through commissions and some gallery sales. I've had good years and bad, but feel confident that I will be able to continue to make it as a working artist.

Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?
Only one? Anthony van Dyke, or Anthony Ryder.

Semele

oil on canvas
with gold leaf

36" x 24"

Patricia Watwood

Bacchus oil on canvas with gold leaf 42" x 38"

Plate Of Fruit oil on canvas 12" x 14"

Portrait Of My Mother

oil on canvas

34" x 24"

Stephanie Dickinson

Stephanie Dickinson has lived in Iowa, Texas, Louisiana and now New York City, a state unto itself. Her poetry and fiction appear in the *Santa Monica Review, Green Mountains Review, African-American Review, Subterrain, Gulf Coast* and the *Ontario Review,* among others. Her story "A Lynching in Stereoscope" was reprinted in BEST AMERICAN 2005 NONREQUIRED READING, edited by Dave Eggers. She won *Storyglossia's 2*007 Short Story Prize. "Lucky 7 & Dalloway" was included in NEW STORIES FROM THE SOUTH, THE YEAR'S BEST, 2008. Her first novel HALF GIRL, winner of the 2002 Hackney Award (Birmingham-Southern) for best unpublished novel of the year, is just out from Spuyten Duyvil. Along with Rob Cook, she edits *Skidrow Penthouse.*

Lust Series (2)

1. Leaves are sweating in her throat. She tries to pull the sun's shadow up to her neck and hide her awkward legs. The soldier speaks and trees become his mouth, his words, hairstreak butterflies. *Come out, little one.* No, she must stay here in the orchid forest of her body where it is damp and quavering. She pinches her nose to hide the sound of her breath scurrying in and out like wood ants. If the boy-man hears her he will jump, stuff it between her teeth, make her tongue curl into a hyacinth. *Sky Dad,* she whimpers in her mind, *you lied. Nothing about this earth place is what you said*. Not the huge gloom of palmetto shredding like lip skin, the jacuna birds giggling *chitchitchit* from the forest or the fat flirting jacu *splink splinking* in the river as they splash.

2. I'm driving the salvage truck with a septic tank in back. Daddy fixes his eye on the hitchhiking girls in the pink shirts, the skinny one not the fat. Of course with him you never know and that's why I keep my teenage wife beside me at all times, the stick shift between her legs, so old Daddy don't start messing where he's got no business. We pick up the girls and it's a tight fit with the skinny one getting the hot seat on Daddy's lap like I predicted. Even with the window cranked down it's sticky and close and grey-chested Daddy keep sucking on that girl's neck, putting hickeys all over the skin he can get to. The old man has the thirst of ten intellectuals and now he's got the vodka bottle, grabbing at the lip. His mouth must taste like burnt cardboard and the place a deer gets brought down and bled out. Maybe the truck is a kind place although there are knives and blood sausage in the

glovebox and Daddy likes to talk about his gut and maraud days. When and how he made his 19 children. I listen until my ears get a friction burn. That's right, there's 19 of us. I'm the only one honored to call him Daddy. There's Fort Worth ahead like a stockade of red dust and barbecued ribs, a dry river bed trying to hobble up. The heat is bursting sweat from everyone of us except the girl. Shoot, she's pale as string, all hair flying into his eyes.

3. Dirty moon. No sky, no Milky Way, all the stars have fallen into the buildings. This isn't the reunion supper with flickering candlelight at a Manhattan bistro, like she fantasized. Although she and her husband are the same age he accuses her of being too old. She unwraps the muffin and cuts it into two slabs. The floor under the table is littered with menus. She picks up *Six Happiness Noodle House*. Slices of white meat simmered in coconut cream and bamboo shoots. Sautéed snow peas with water chestnuts. Boneless duckling alongside sweet ginger root. Like young girls being served to aging gourmands.

4. Girls drift from buses like fumes while his boots tap the black and white checkerboard tiles between puddles of janitor-in-a drum. Love's here to fish the girls with red-light district fingernails and ghost town mouths, the women from one syllable Texas cities in purple bedroom slippers. This one drunk on tiredness, this one out of money. Daybreak fires the silver turnstiles of his smile. *Have a match?* Love asks the girl in dirty jeans and butterfly high heels. A scar cuts her cheek, hurts her prettiness. He escorts her across spooky Texas Street's watermelon-colored storefronts. *Where are we going?* she asks, getting inside his ride. Oil and glass towers shimmer--icicles of crushed disco in the unbelievable 102 degrees. *We're going to feel good*, he answers. Desolate subdivisions give up flowering pear and azaleas. Red trees lean like roper's jeans. Underpass girders

glitter into salt cedars. She lets Love ride her into the new unbroken day, mockingbirds in peaked hats screaming.

5. *Dog, dog*. A small gray animal his neck indented by a collar foams at the mouth. Ditched here in the country, spittle from his muzzle hangs like a lasso the color of churned butter. His fur splinters, each hair a porcupine's spine, his eyes liquefy, ponds of blackstrap molasses. The oak shivers and sun whitens the shed roof, slicking the tin until it flows like a river. The rabid dreads water but lusts for it, must have it. His blood is a craving. Oh, want. His capillaries are dry fry pans roiling on cook stoves. Stay behind as he drives himself on toward the shed, forward and back across the pasture. His legs give out, the back two drag. He falls and gets up. It is the water made of tin he desires. *Dog, dog.*

6. Before we met I never liked paralyzed men. The waitress smokes, tries not to meet your eyes. You thump your mug. She stabs out her Ultra Light, scrapes powdered sugar like dandruff from her wrist. The coffee looks embittered the closer it gets. Everything's angry. Sugar shakers with saltine crackers stale and forsaken inside, the maple and strawberry glazed. Drink your coffee. Mine has an injured taste. Let's take a ride," you say, lifting and stretching your useless legs. To Galveston, to anything, the black leather girls on the seawall sell, their eyes twitchy with white caps and hard-headed catfish. Sling your wheelchair in back. Take your bat from under the driver's seat. Thrill me, hit the accelerator with it. Let's run out of gas in Texas City, coast into a Stop-N-Go. Pull off your teeshirt. Pass a hand through your hair. It shouldn't be so exciting. The sun is setting as we ride into seawall soaked in a golden glow. We get what we need. Behind us and our well-being, the Gulf of Mexico with shrimp boats floats and tar leaks like a snotty black seaweed. At the Sandpiper Motel quaaludes

come on like a thickening dusk. Your skin is impossibly soft and my fingers are lost. In the night you fall out of bed and I smile when I hear you cry.

7. You sit naked on the bank licking pebbles just as the river comes into you, introspective, hot, turning, bobbing you among the slatterns of brocaded weeds. Saw-teeth give way to broad moss plates. Waterlilies, hyacinth's sunken ships, pull you down in their twining, coil your ankles in their past. You glut, bloat into hairbrush stems. Your shoulders strung with bugs, a pork chop of old marrow and lovers. *J'ai gros couer.* The drowned moments take on kisses, cleft chins, high foreheads and cheekbones. A slur and wooziness, the nearness of sex sweet fruit the watersnakes plunder.

8. It is cold in this room, the food shivers, coffee growing a skin. I smell the smoked salmon of your shaving lather and ask to kiss your cheek. Lie back, you whisper, promising we'll make love after death. Pushing at my hair with the revolver, you're one long tease. I practice arranging my hands. Night is running out when you press the muzzle against my right temple. In the trees a black blue plumage caws, the unhappy crows want in. I will rise out of my princess gown, the white tulle loops dropping to my feet. I nod, then bite my tongue so I don't cry out. Your little finger's loose nerve twitches like a fishhook. Chastity's silk fan clatters.

9. *A cat was inhaling and exhaling, taking in such long deep breaths that the windows trembled. It must be lying at the foot of the bed. The cat had been in my sleep, a huge Persian Blue sitting in lemon slices and the bones of a mullet. I was breathing along with the monster. Now it kneaded, causing the bed to shift and the sheet to squeak. My stomach went queasy. I must be on a waterbed, trying to lift up on one elbow. I fell back on the rocking waves. My head throbbed, headache on both sides of my*

face, in my jaw. The cat's breathing made me cry out. Where was I? The last place I remembered being in was the red kitchen. Whose room, whose bed? Dirty light seeped in through white curtains Like lace tablecloths. The movement made me sick. A closet peered out from hurricane doors. Now on my left foot sat the Persian Blue squinting at me with yellow eyes. The cat's azure fur had grayness to it. The color of hangover. I put my hand over my eyes. My fingers burned. I could hardly stand to rest them on my forehead. I wiggled my toes and the cat reared up and ran off. Someone had left rashes on my skin, the red bumps felt like Braille. Who had written messages on my nakedness only fingers could read? I turned over onto my stomach and realized I wasn't alone in the bed. Next to me lay a stranger. My eyes closed not wanting to know who those shoulders belonged to. Pick up your clothes and tiptoe into the bathroom. Surely there's one where you can throw up, then find your way to the far away. When I rolled toward the edge of the mattress I felt a wet spot under me. I shifted but the dampness was still there. A knot formed in the center of my chest. I had wet the bed. I panicked and buried my face in the pillow. How could I have? I didn't even in childhood. A wave of shame went through me. I had to get out of here without waking the stranger. I stank. The taste of sour and sleep blurred in my mouth. A stickiness formed on my tongue like drying egg white. Champagne night sweets. I had been down on all fours eating and drinking from the floor. Boston scrod, lobster shells, deep dish apple crisp. And now I had wet the bed, not even my own bed. But how could I get up? I had to cover the wet spot with my body.

10. A few steps from their desire lies a graveyard. Their love doesn't mind the dry breath of a wasp or the scratchiness of a wheelbarrow's handle, the rabbit scuttling through cold brush. They have come here to caress

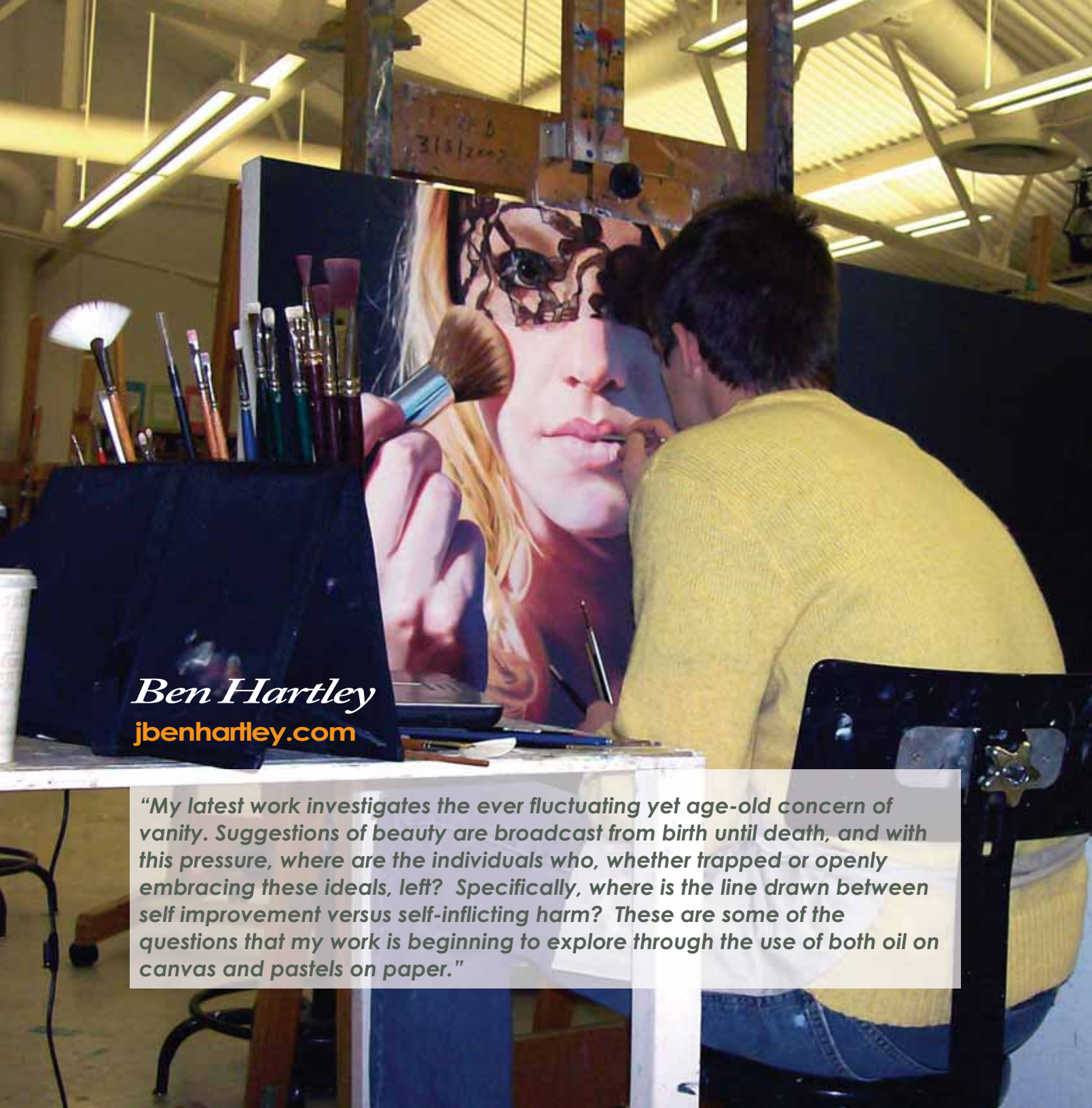
each other, so young neither know even a car to shelter them. The deer hide here with the human dead, away from the hunters who lure and trap, shooting point-blank at shadows. The boy sniffs the shivering buck, the girl knows the broken brown water of sight trembling in a doe's eyes. Dark blunts the pine needles, blots out the breasts of tawny robins. They lie down to look at each other with their fingers and tongues, to listen to the crackle of corn shocks, beetles purring on pelts of fungus. The deer listen as they sprint into each other. A greediness to them as they snort.

11. I'm school dumb. I went to Uncle Bo for hot lunch. Yes, Shrimp etofee and she-crab soufflé. Louisiana, we'll go there. Sssssh. Close your eyes. What do you like to eat? Call me Raven. I'm a good bird. I like rice and beans, taste that opens in your mouth. I want to savor you. So Uncle Bo was a flaming fag. He was a fag long before there even was a closet and he flew out of it. Smart fag. He read out big words to me. God is love. I was crazy about him. He wore red satan capes. 'BoBo!' all the kids on the block would scream. He had big muscle arms and little fag hands and would buy us all candy. He told me I was tops. The shango, the yaya chicken. I come from a big family. Nine kids. My mother kept having this and that man's babies. I was second oldest girl. I raised my sisters. I know their bodies about as well as I know my own. I did okay. I'm doing okay. Listen, nobody makes turtle soup out of me. I'm about love. If you ever taste my rice you'll never eat potatoes again. My yams, man. The skins just fall away from the deep sweet. Hear me. Got that. My au sherry, my Commander's Palace Crab.

12. County jail girls roll their fingers in ink, admire how their thumbs swirl like underground rivers, their mug shots to be strip searched first. They mount the stairs funneling up, his key fits, a bit rusty but it turns into the half stone

light, bleached sun steeped. Cellmates, a mole on her upper lip as if a bird had dropped it there. The other stretches on chains anchoring their bunks, red hair smoky like roasting sweet corn. Mornings, they chomp cornflakes and toast tap water. Lunch, a belch of bologna mustard sandwiches. Then afternoon drags. Snacks are old paperbacks from the 20th. Harold Robbins, the guy's prose sugary and edging on rot, cattle drives and cowboy lovers kneading knuckles to tailbones. The cells across the way hold blind dates, the stickup boys blowing kisses and tongued lemon drops to them.

13. Listen Gulfport Mississippi, a girl's no washout if she can still buy her liquor not strain three-in-one shoe polish through a powder puff. I've not yet hollered *gimme.* The sand flies buzz my flask after I take a greasy slurp. Even before I kick past the sign that reads Colored Beach, I whiff it. The stink. Trout, that hours ago swam in scoops of spilled cream, burn in the bright white sun. A killdeer pecks the hammerhead shark's eye. Second sight. I can see my future ending with this day's light. Outside the city limits I'm going to hemorrhage in a car wreck. Lover man, should I try to escape, try floating out into the tide? What lingerie these Portuguese men-of-war make, fringed moon jelly and sequined fish scale.

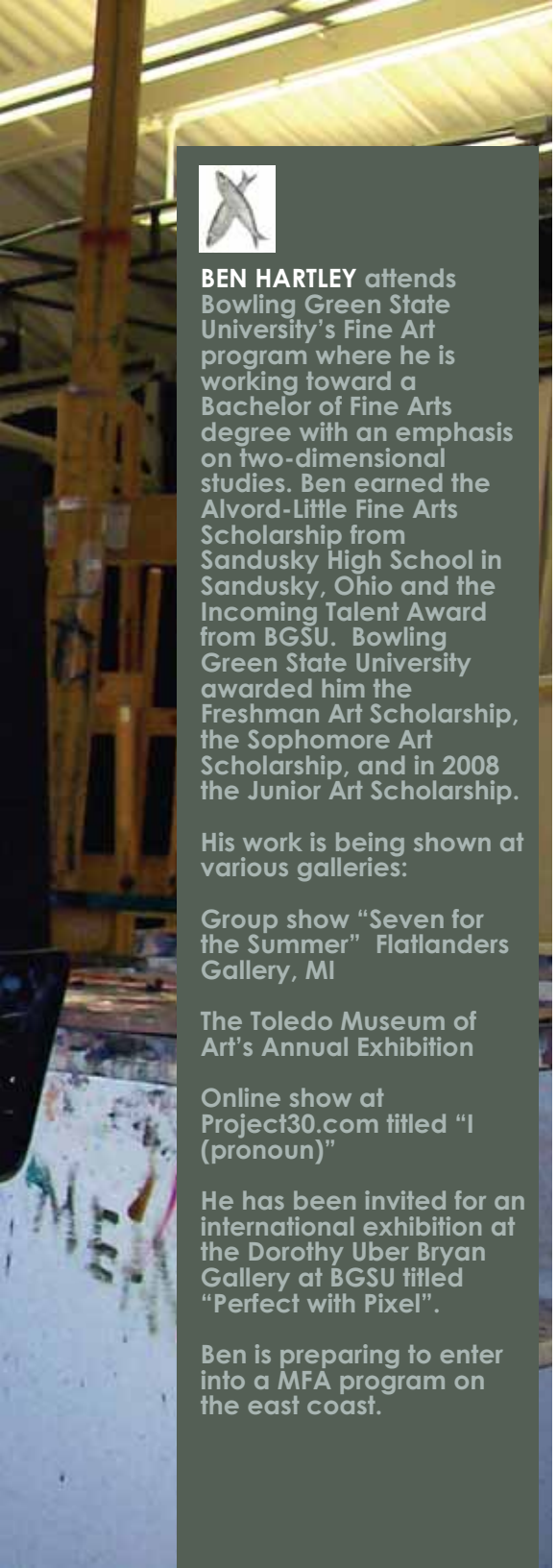


Ben Hartley

jbenhartley.com

"My latest work investigates the ever fluctuating yet age-old concern of vanity. Suggestions of beauty are broadcast from birth until death, and with this pressure, where are the individuals who, whether trapped or openly embracing these ideals, left? Specifically, where is the line drawn between self improvement versus self-inflicting harm? These are some of the questions that my work is beginning to explore through the use of both oil on canvas and pastels on paper."

Q&A



BEN HARTLEY attends Bowling Green State University's Fine Art program where he is working toward a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with an emphasis on two-dimensional studies. Ben earned the Alvord-Little Fine Arts Scholarship from Sandusky High School in Sandusky, Ohio and the Incoming Talent Award from BGSU. Bowling Green State University awarded him the Freshman Art Scholarship, the Sophomore Art Scholarship, and in 2008 the Junior Art Scholarship.

His work is being shown at various galleries:

Group show "Seven for the Summer" Flatlanders Gallery, MI

The Toledo Museum of Art's Annual Exhibition

Online show at Project30.com titled "I (pronoun)"

He has been invited for an international exhibition at the Dorothy Uber Bryan Gallery at BGSU titled "Perfect with Pixel".

Ben is preparing to enter into a MFA program on the east coast.

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?
This moment a contemporary artist comes to mind by the name Damian Loeb. He has achieved considerable success at a relatively young age, and has inspired not only the format of my oil paintings, but has reassured me that hyper realism is most certainly not a dead form of art.

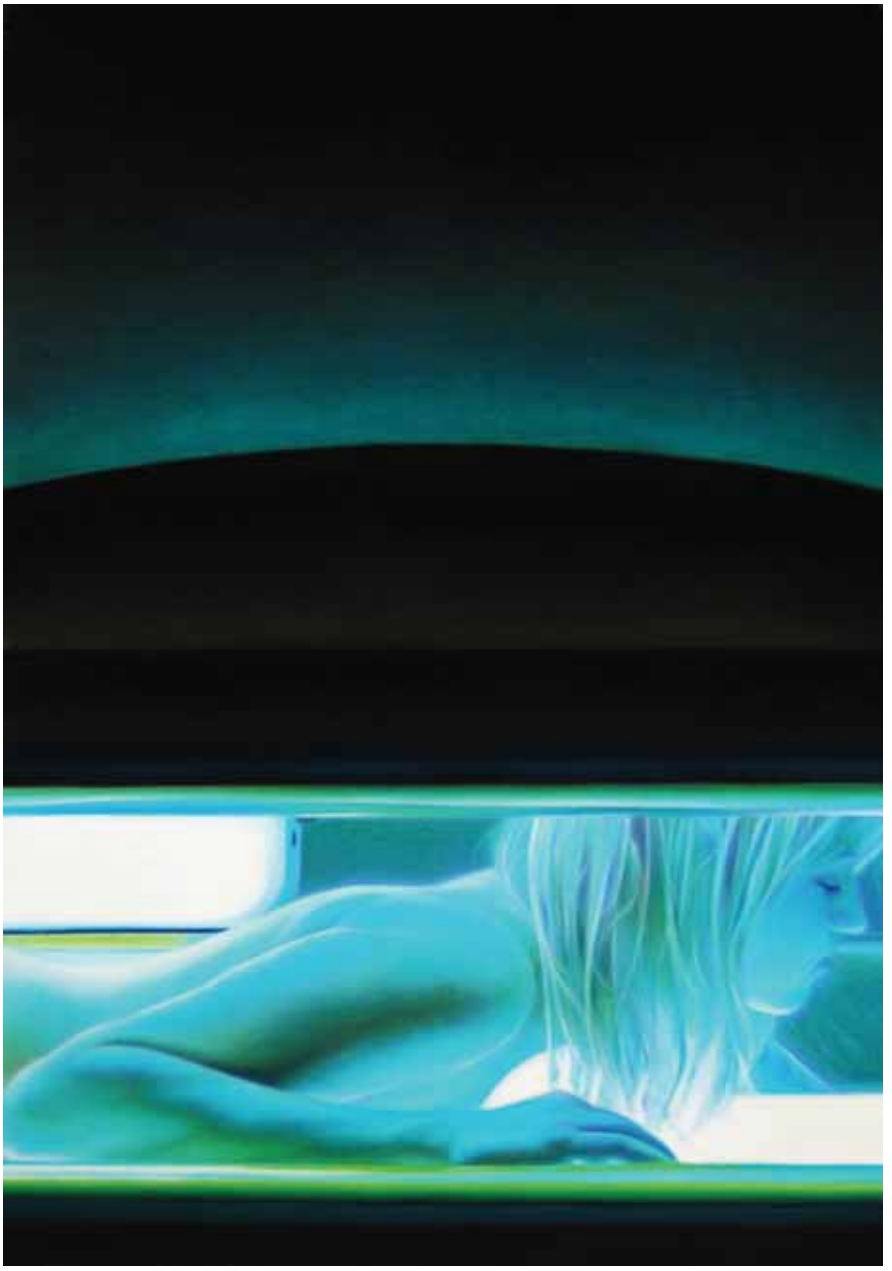
Is there one recurring theme in your work?
Well, I was really fixed on this whole concept of vanity, however now it is expanding to a much larger subject matter looking into the overall dehumanization of people.

How do you feel about formal training?
I value it greatly. No matter what the technique or concept being taught is, it provides a necessary foundation and understanding for artists which gives them the ability to intentionally pursue and express their ideas and thought processes.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?
Yes, I guess I do. I always stand during my under painting and tend to be a lot more exaggerated regarding my color and form. After that things tighten up a bit; however, I never feel like I'm ever very "graceful" at what I do. Even in the most delicate of times I'm painting, I still tend to "scrub" the paint into the canvas rather than gently lay it over the surface like some might guess.

Are you a starving artist?
This is one of the questions that makes me want to go off on a tangent. However I will contain myself and simply answer by saying "No, I am not a starving artist." I think that we as artists have given ourselves this name by not recognizing that there is, in fact, a business aspect to art that needs to be addressed.

Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?
Rembrandt. I marvel at his portraits, specifically his lighting.



Self-Inflicting Improvement II pastel on paper 33" x 21.5"

Ben Hartley

Beauty Of Vanity I oil on canvas 26" x 60"

Beauty Of Vanity II pastel on paper 17" x 36"

Beauty Unveiled I oil on canvas 36" x 72"

Beauty Unveiled II mixed media 36" x 72"

Ben Hartley

Boy In A Barn (1935)

SHORT STORY BY **KIRK CURNUTT**

Even before the accident obituaries fascinated him. He reads them every chance he gets, which isn't often because his mother refuses the paper. *News ain't but talk,* he has heard her lecture the slick subscription salesmen who hazard a visit to their farm (some of the rare folk ever to visit). *Talkin' usually don't amount to more than gossip, and I done had my earful of that for a while now, so no thank you no.* That means for Clinton there are but stolen peeks on the errands she lets him wagon into town to run on his own. Only fourteen, he knows the source of the intrigue that distracts him to Wilhoit's Newsstand on the Shelbyville square or the community heap kept at the end of the lunch counter at the Dew Drop Inn down Smithland Pike. In his bedroom is a clipping stored among the pages of an unread family Bible. It is his father's obituary, and he's read it so many times these past eight years he can recite it by heart with the same cadence and intonation of the minister who pinched its central Scripture for the refrain of Mercer Brandywine's eulogy: *And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house.*

The word that catches him is that eighth one—*nail*—because that is what gave his father the lockjaw. Clinton was six when it killed him, and for a long time afterward he would think what an amazing coincidence it was that an obituary would include reference to the very instrument that occasioned the need for a death notice in the first place. Then, somewhere around turning twelve, he made the mistake of admitting his amazement out loud and was promptly disabused of it. Clinton had Horace to thank for that. "I swear to God, Ethel, you're wasting labor sending this one to school all day," Horace told the boy's mother between chuckles. "They make whole books so folks can find the right line for an occasion, boy! They're called concordances. You think a preacher flops open a Bible and lets the fortuitous lead the way? You know what 'fortuitous' even means? That would be another word for 'lucky.' If there is such a thing as luck, it'd be a fair waste of it to result in nothing but a phrase or so of consolation.... Like I said, Ethel, you best keep him home to help bring him in the beans. School's not doing

him no ounce of good."

Which is why Clinton hates Horace with all his heart.

It's also one more reason obituaries intrigue him. He likes to imagine those concordances failing the preacher when it comes time to look up a fortuitous phrase for the man who has taken his father's place.

Only it's not Horace who dies. It's the boy in the barn, Hollis Spurling. In the hours after Clinton sees Hollis spill from the hay window he is aware of a sharp curiosity—an eagerness even—to know what the obituary will say. He has a few ideas, but he's unlearned beyond the Bible's most basic sayings, and, moreover, he's hesitant to guess for fear of being disappointed at the moment he will finally get to open the paper and pore over the actual words. Clinton knows that opportunity will be a long while coming. Time has been a bulging bubble since he first peered over the window ledge—trembling, uncertain what he witnessed had really happened, on all fours for fear of falling himself. The sight of Hollis sprawled in the pasture mud below, his arms and legs crooked as if caught in his sleep mid-curl, is Clinton's only here and now. He keeps reliving the image, forcing it to expand and absorb subsequent events until minutes don't so much move forward as much as thicken and assume duration. He keeps waiting for the bubble to pop from the weight of questions and suspicions, but it's too durable. Not even the sound of his screaming can burst it. First he screamed until his mother and Horace raced from the house and pulled him from the hayloft. Then he did it when the sheriff's car tore to a stop in front of the barn. And now he continues to do it each time he is asked to account for how this boy came to die on this farm.

And still the distance from here to Hollis's obituary seems no nearer.

"How many times you figure you two snuck up there?" the sheriff asks during a long talking to in a conference room at the county jail. (He won't use the word "interrogation," even if Clinton knows that's what it is. Even if they're in a conference room and not a cell).

"Maybe a dozen and some. I can't say for certain. He'd cross the creek and come over the back way when he could. Hollis was my friend. We played. Not a lot, just some."

"His folks say they didn't even

know he was friends with you."

"It doesn't do most my age much good to be my friend. You know why."

The sheriff does indeed. Clinton sees pity swell the man's face—a pity he's seen plenty of even before today. It's merely one more part of it all that he hates.

"So Hollis came over to play, huh? What kind of playing?"

"Nothing bad, I swear. Sometimes he'd bring a deck of cards. Sometimes I'd carry along my pellet gun, and we'd shoot pigeons."

"And today you were playing Tarzan."

"We'd done it before. All I had to do was shimmy up to a crossbeam and tie the rope, and we could swing over a stack of bales to the haystack."

"You didn't think one of you Lindberghs might swing straight out that window?"

"We were diagonal to it; the haystack was in the far corner. I don't know how Hollis got twisted sideways, but he went smack into the window frame, and it knocked the wind out of him. If he'd held tight, he'd'a just spiraled straight back to me, but he let go of the rope and lost his balance. I heard him hit the ground before I made it to the ledge."

The sheriff has Clinton retell the story three times before he dampens a handkerchief with the condensation from a sweaty tin pitcher and wipes his forehead.

"I need you to tell me something truthful," he says when he sits back down. "I need you to tell me if it was really only ever you two up there."

"One time Hollis said he might have to bring his little sister, because his ma was making him watch her, but she was too little to not get scared hiking the back cornfield, so he took her home—"

"I'm not talking Hollis's family. I'm talking yours."

"You know it's not but me and my ma. And she'd never have let Hollis come over even if she'd known he was 'clined to. She doesn't like people coming to the farm. You know that why as well as the other one."

"Maybe I misspoke. What I'm trying to say is that if it *wasn't* just you and Hollis up in that loft, maybe it was somebody who likes *to consider* himself part of your family. Somebody who's not, but who thinks he's got a right to be squatting on your ma's farm."

At first Clinton doesn't understand what the sheriff means.

It's him and his ma—that's how he thinks of his family. He has to. To admit otherwise is to insult his father's memory, and Clinton wants nothing more than to believe he is for that glorious throne in Mercer Brandywine's house.

"You've got nothing to be scared of, son. Whatever was going on up there, it wasn't your fault. You're not but a child. Neither was Hollis. Folks been worried about this Horace Hinckle as long as he's been around. There's been help extended to your ma, but—well, I don't suppose I have to tell you how hard-headed she is. Sometimes being hard-headed can make it hard to see what's going on right in front of your eyes. So tell me, son. Get it off your chest. You'll feel better in the long run."

As the implications dawn on him Clinton can feel the future opening up, relieving the pressure of the present. The pressure has been going on so much longer than just this afternoon. It's been suffocating him for eight years—ever since that nail. Only now the accident of Hollis has armed Clinton with his own nail. All he has to do is pop the bubble, and he will be free of Horace.

"You're not the only one with a ma." The sheriff toughens as his patience runs out. "Hollis's ma is hurting real bad. So is his pa. They won't get past it 'less the truth comes out. Now you keep saying 'accident', but I've been in this business long enough to know that's usually just the lead ball at the end of a long chain of complications."

Clinton wants to tell the man what he wants to hear, but he's only fourteen and doesn't know how to say it in a way that won't sound made-up. So instead he stares at the beads of condensation rolling down the sheriff's tin pitcher. He stares so long the sheriff gives up.

"Have it your way," the man sighs, yanking open the door to the conference room. "Don't ever say I didn't try to lend you a hand."

He motions Clinton into a hallway and then to the main office where his mother and Horace wait. The sheriff gives the widow's man a hard stare that sets his imagination racing. Being a fair ways past fourteen, Horace has no trouble conjuring the sort of details it takes to make a story convincing.

"What did you tell them? What the hell did you say to them?"

The widow's man lunges for the boy to shake the truth out of him, but the sheriff catches him by his shirt scruff and shoves him back in his

chair. Deputies shoulder up. As his mother guards him, Clinton sees the fear in Horace's expression harden into mockery.

"You boys want to rough me up? Me? You're aiming your indignation in the wrong direction.... You ought to give *her* that pop in the jaw! Don't you get it? *She* won't marry *me!* I've asked, I've tried, I've begged, and she's the one who won't have none of it!"

It's left to the widow herself to settle the tension.

"Today was an accident," she tells the sheriff sternly. "A boy in a barn fell and died. I'm sorry for it, I'm saddened by it, but it's got nothing to do with anything else under my sky. If my family was welcome at the funeral, we'd pay our respects, but my guess is we aren't, so I'm relying on you to express our condolences. I reckon that'd be a better use of your time than fanning flames."

As much as Clinton would like to love his mother for saying this, he can't quite get past that word: *accident*. He knows what those are now—a lead ball at the end of a long chain of complications.

That night headlights creep across his eyelids, waking Clinton. The sound of pickups turning into their dirt drive is such a rarity he knows instinctively what it means. By the time he scrambles out of his bedroom his mother is already at the front door. It's not until he slips in front of her, fully expecting to confront his enemies, that he realizes that once again he's been supplanted. Horace is already at the bottom of the porch, shivering in the glare, so hastily dressed his suspenders dangle at his hips.

"We only aim to talk," a voice is calling out. "Come ride with us and we can do it peacefully."

"I can talk standing up as well as I can folded into a rumble seat," Horace replies. "Whatever you care to say, I'll hear you out. But I'm not so dumb as to let myself get rode out of town on a rail."

"Hollis's family wants to know what happened in that barn. We're only asking on their behalf, friend. We think it's better we hear your answer out of the widow's earshot. It's a conversation best had among men."

Not everybody accompanying the speaker puts it so politely. "Goddamn, Hinckle!" a different voice yells. "Get your idiot ass out here so we don't have to come get you!"

At that, Horace heaves with inevitability. He throws a beat-dog look over his shoulder toward Ethel.

Clinton can tell he's surprised to find him on the porch. It's as if Horace suddenly remembers who put him in this situation. *Only it ain't my fault,* Clinton thinks. *Nobody asked you to be here.*

Horace dissolves into a silhouette as he turns back toward the truck lights. "Let me get a damn shirt and coat on. No need for me to catch a cold while you're squiring me 'round."

For the next two hours, the boy and his mother sit at a drop-leaf table in the kitchen. The only thing the widow says the entire time? *No use wasting a waking hour.* She places a pail of peas between her and her son, and, together, they work under the flicker of an oil lamp shelling.

When the headlights return, they don't pull into the drive. They sidle up instead alongside the drainage ditch that curbs their land. Clinton hops to his feet, still eager for his own confrontation. His mother says more to him than she has since the boy in the barn fell.

"Even if he hadn't gone willingly with them, they wouldn't have wanted to take you in his stead. You ain't but a boy, so you might as well sit back down."

He does what she says because he loves her almost as much as he hates her man. Together the widow and her boy listen for a sound they expect to spell the worst: a gunshot, a scream, the thump of a body on hard ground. Only none of those things happen. Instead, the door swings open, and Horace, his gums bloody and face purple, staggers inside, stooped. It takes Clinton a second to realize he is bare-chested, the rags of his shirt wadded in his fist.

"I'll get the rubbing alcohol," the widow says without emotion.

"Best make it lard. That's the only thing that'll get it off."

He twists his torso, showing them his back, which looks more like a billboard than a swatch of human skin.

"Damn tar," Horace grunts. "I thought they'd go for feathers, too, but, hell, no—they wanted *this* stuck to me as bad as the stink of their suspicion is, no matter if the tar burned through the paper or not."

Only when Clinton hazards a creep closer can he tell what *this* refers to. He needs a moment to place the smattering of words from the clipping that aren't charred: *nail, throne, father's house.*

It's Mercer Brandywine's obituary.

Because of that, Clinton never does get to learn what Scripture eulogized Hollis Spurling. The widow no longer lets him wagon to town on his own, and the slick subscription salesmen can't even make it out of their cars before she will rush outside to shoo them away. The lard takes the tar off Horace's back but a fair share of epidermis goes with it; for nearly two weeks the widow's man lies on the davenport in the parlor with salve slathered across his shoulder blades, complaining he's dying of heatstroke because his skin can't breathe. Clinton stays out of the hayloft for fear of ghosts.

Then it's months later when nobody much speaks of the boy in the barn anymore. Clinton comes into his bedroom after a long Saturday of gathering wheat shucks on the bundling rack to discover a new picture hanging on his wall. The photograph is of Hollis Spurling in his casket, surrounded by flowers and dressed in white knickerbockers, looking so much younger than he ever did swinging from the rope Clinton tied to that crossbeam.

"I spotted it in town," Horace says, chewing on a match as he watches Clinton from the threshold. Thanks to the scars on his back, he walks with a hunch, as if he's got a scratch he can't quite reach back to relieve. "Thought you might appreciate it."

"And I bet you been waiting all day long for me to wander in to admire your taste."

The widow's man smiles and shrugs. "The photographer opened a fancy new shop, prime for all occasions: weddings, baptisms, graduations, and, yes, sir, even funerals. Now, about those others I don't have complaint one, but I'm not a fan of memento mori. I only mention it in case you ever do get your way and it's me stretched out in my Sunday best like that child. Don't let them snap one of me all vulnerable like that. It's not how I care to be remembered—not at all. I reckon you can wave me off to the afterlife sparing me that one favor, can't you? Lord knows you been hoarding them while I'm upright."

Horace begins to back away so Clinton can contemplate the picture in that all alonesome he seems so fond of.

"Oh, one more thing. You know what 'memento mori' means? Likely not considering how schooling's not doing you no ounce of good. It's Latin for 'Remember that you will die.' It applies even to you, Clinton Brandywine—even you."

Ignat Ignatov

www.IgnatovArt.com

Q&A

Ignatov was born in Veliko Tarnovo and grew up in Sevlievo, Bulgaria. At age thirteen, his promising talent in drawing, painting and sculpting gained him one of only thirty positions to the renowned School of Arts in Triavna, Bulgaria. In the 5 years there, he established the foundation of his academic Art training. Following graduation in 1996, Ignatov was accepted into the University of Arts in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria where he studied under the demanding atelier approach to fine art. In 1997, using proceeds from the sale of his art, Ignatov financed his move to the United States and is now a U.S. citizen living in southern California. He then studied at the prestigious California Art Institute in Westlake Village, Associates in Art in Sherman Oaks and the American Animation Institute in North Hollywood. In 2005 Ignatov began teaching Painting at the Los Angeles Academy of Figurative Art.

Ignatov is Represented by:

Greenhouse Gallery of Fine Art, San Antonio, Texas.

Total Arts Gallery, Taos, New Mexico.

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?
Well, it's a group of three artists that influenced me the most: John Singer Sargent, Nikolai Fechin and Anders Zorn.

Is there one recurring theme in your work?
Figurative paintings are my favorite to paint.

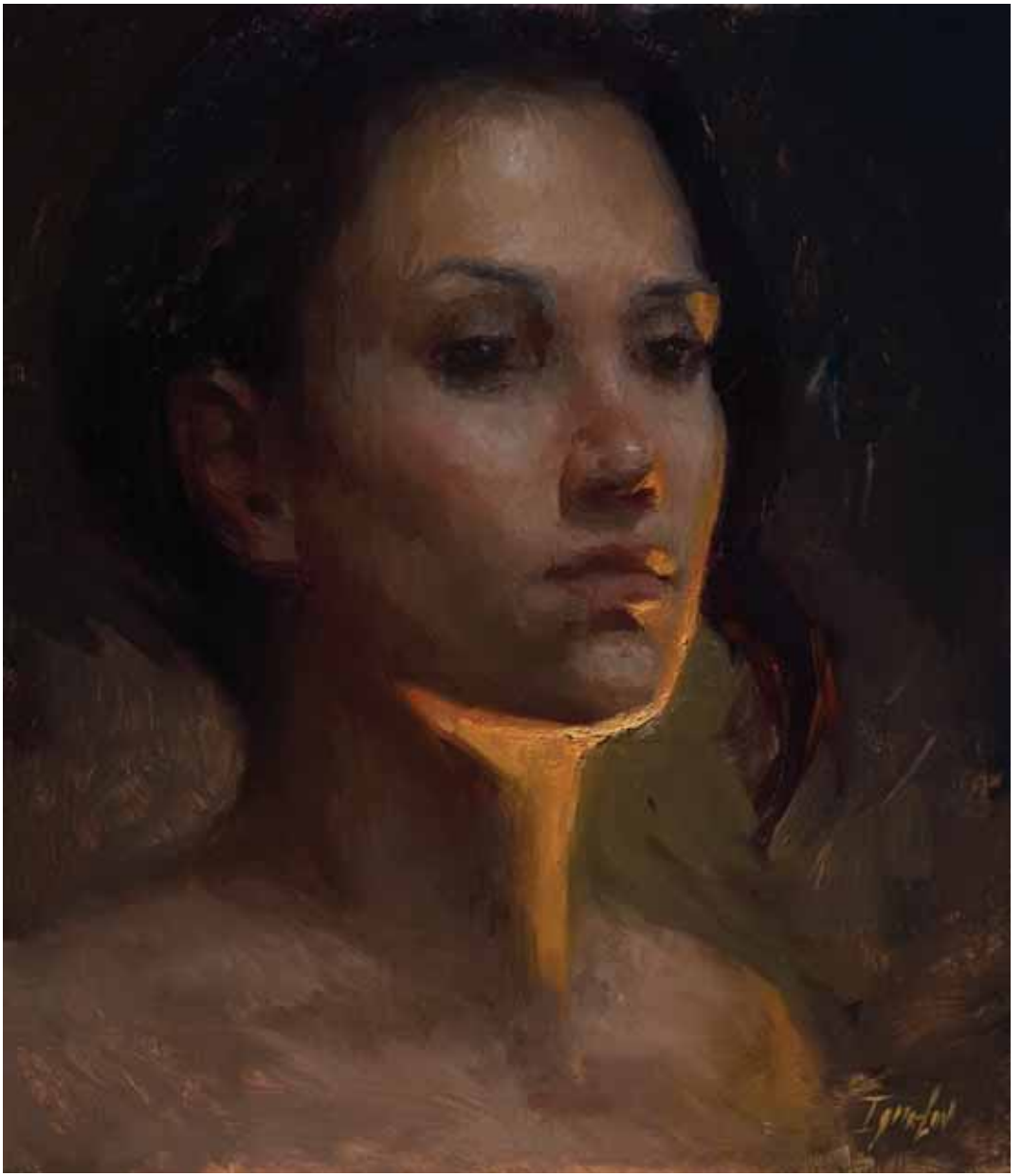
How do you feel about formal training?
I think Academic training is very important as it is the foundation to painting. That's where we learn our tools.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?
I try to keep my options open to new approaches and experimentation, that way I stay true to myself as an artist, allowing the idea to dictate the method of the painting.

Are you a starving artist?
No, I think I'm making it work, teaching painting classes on the side helps too.

Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?
John Singer Sargent would be my first choice.

"I want to bring to the viewer the mood captured by light and subject that evoked my initial impression and emotion. Figurative and landscapes are my favorite subjects and I both paint from life and photos. In my travels I always bring a camera to shoot interesting objects that catch my eye whether it's the light and shadow creating a unique graphic pattern or simply a facial expression that would make a portrait painting alive."



Ignat Ignatov

Rim Light oil on panel 13" x 11"

Seated Figure oil on linen 32" x 30"

Ignat Ignatov

Ignat Ignatov

Chinese Horse oil on panel 10" x 8"

Ignat Ignatov

Man From Balabanza Village oil on linen 28" x 22"

Rolf Samuels

Rolf Samuels is an English professor at Viterbo University, raised in Ohio and educated in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Indiana, brother of real poets and scholars, a lover of baseball, hard country music, beany coffee, order, Nabokov, Borges, Barth, good used clothes, narrative theory, Cold War memorabilia, hefty bread, readers, the humble, and a sturdy buffer in his checking account.

Lingo Recess

Words won't stop us
on their own. We rush
too much for that.

True, some words will moor us for a spell
some murmur from below the roar
where letters scrabble into sense and climb us off the purpose path

but mostly not. Mostly, conscripted
words advance resigned to set
the goods or gauge
a rate of growth or judge
the worth of rules. In sum, most work.

Still, in places, words cavort, super bounce around our mouths, labial pops and velar kicks so
wild and high, and in our ears the vowels totter wobble rise imperial
sense drops mad away a fob to touch and rub, then toss again what climbs the string this time—

No, I cannot stay here long
there's too much task left yet to let
such words run loose
and romp about like wind-up toys:
I too charge words to trudge the page,
Walking, straight, ahead, mushed.

On task words toil.
But stop them sometimes in their bent
and tap them softly: when they turn,
ask them what they do for fun
and if you might just tag along.

Nolan Haan

www.nolanhaan.com

Q&A

Nolan Haan, a former Peace Corps volunteer in Western Samoa, has exhibited in several museum shows and is represented by Meyerhoefer Gallery, Lake Worth, FL.

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?
Andy Warhol is my idol. Early in his career, Andy had to tell gallery directors, "I do paintings of Campbell's Soup cans." His courage inspires me to tell directors, "I do paintings of cinderblock walls." Now, if only….

Is there one recurring theme in your work?
Cinderblock (to my mother's dismay!) I love to experiment with the subtleties of surface texture, of mortar and stucco. The variations seem endless. Whether I adorn them with portraiture, prehistoric cave images, or simply abstract fields of color, what draws people in is the cinderblock itself.

How do you feel about formal training?
I taught myself to paint on a remote island in the middle of the south Pacific, so hopefully I am proof that formal art training is not necessary. I have never been restricted by the knowledge of accepted practices and therefore evolved in a unique direction.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?
First 10%: Love it! Next 80%: Just let me get through it. Last 10%: Love it!

Are you a starving artist?
I would probably starve as an artist, so I do historic restoration to pay for bolts of silk, acrylic paint, and stretcher bars. I believe my job positively influences my art, so I don't resent the time outside the studio.

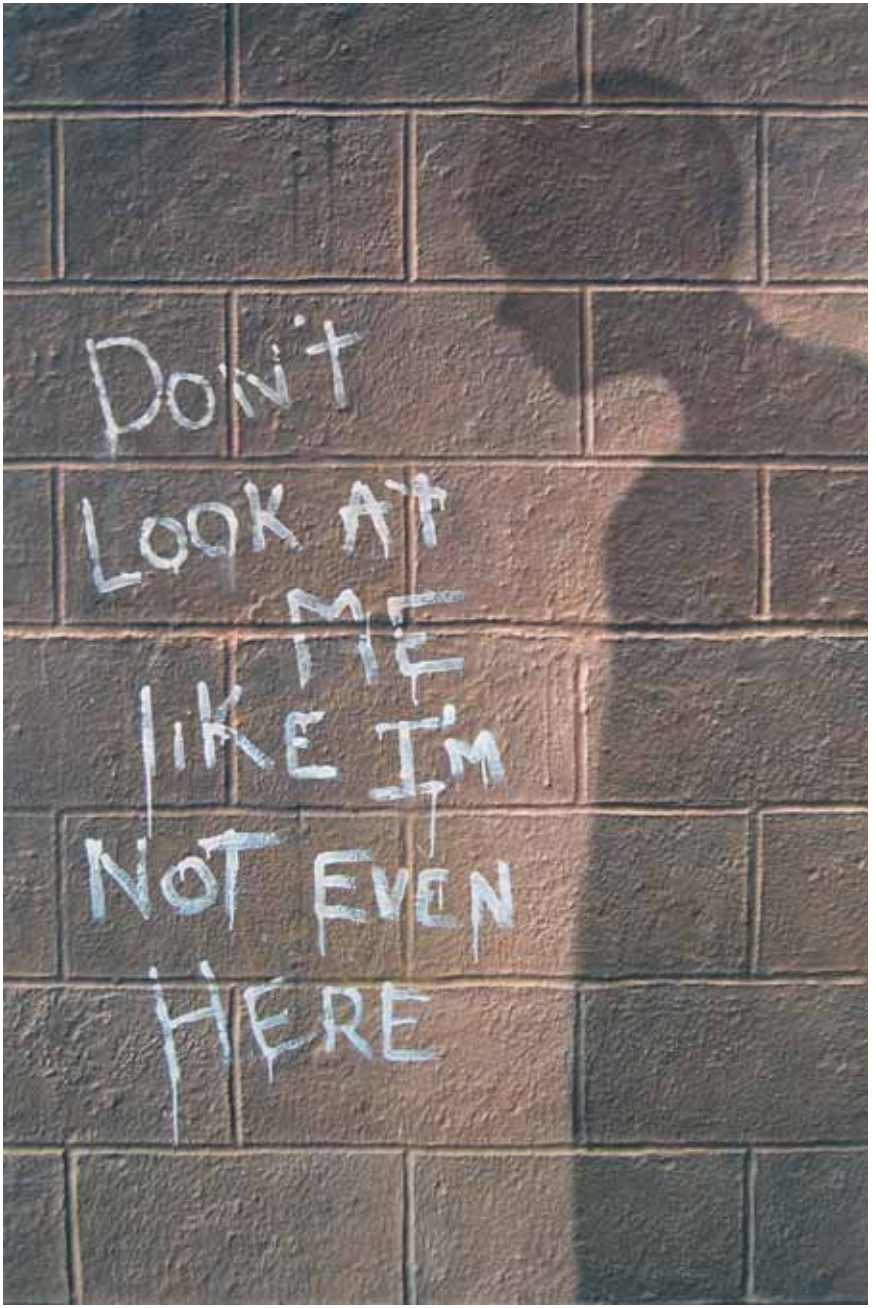
Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?
Andy Warhol. Colorful. Edgy. No wrinkles!

"I paint portraits of cinderblock walls. Plain and raw, heavily shadowed, or with objects floating in front. Rhythmically patterned blocks of cement, textured with pits and cracks and ill-applied mortar, are painted in acrylic on silk. Walls without makeup, naked and gray; walls with a sense of humor; walls of sadness. Each has a personality; each tells a story."

Nolan Haan

Eat Your Heart Out, Marcel acrylic/Krylon/chalk on silk 40" x 60"

Ginger acrylic on silk 50" x 72"



Invisible

acrylic on silk

60" x 40"

Nolan Haan

John Korn

John Korn began writing poetry around 2002. He grew up and still lives in Pittsburgh PA. He has an Associates Degree from Community College of Allegheny County, and would like to further his education some day.
He worked in a second hand store for three years and is currently a social worker. John draws and paints on occasion, is interested in digital filmmaking, and would like to attempt different forms of story telling, audio, visual and written word.
His new book of poetry, *Television Farm*, is available at amazon.com

the mushroom filled abyss with Mr. Sea, the voices and me

1.

when I met Mr. Sea
he would overflow his
bath tub at least once
a week
to the point where
it would soak his living room
carpet with inches of water
and the moisture
would begin to grow
mold and mushrooms
on the wall and in the corners

he told me later
that he ate the mushrooms
I said no you didn't
he said
I did it for my country,
I'm a hero

he'd ask me constantly
to bring his dead mother
back to life
he'd leave messages at the office
telling various workers
that they were going to jail
and vague violent messages
threatening death

he'd rack up thousand dollar
phone bills
get himself into debt
with shady people
before I met him heroin addicts
were taking advantage
and shooting up
on his floor
he has a long history
of being crazy
and nice

he's 50 and hears voices
all the time
telling him to kill himself
other times songs play in his head
"Maxwell's silver hammer"

everyday was a dilemma
a new accident
incident
breakdown
he sucked up all my office time
paper work began to
pile up

while conversing with him
he'd try to get me
in a maze of abstract

2

this is what I do
I talk to him
I let him know
I have empathy
and that I realize his life
is fucked and that he
has been victimized

I listen

I learn who he is
everyone he's loved
is gone. family
and friend's abandon
you when you're crazy
other people find it entertaining.
even Mr. Sea finds it
entertaining at times

he's got no one

I let him know
I'm sitting right here
I start being critical

I be direct
-you really shouldn't do this
-this is not really good for you
- what did you expect would happen?
-well, what do you want?
-what would make you feel better?
-but you can't have your dead mother resurrected from
the grave, so now what?

Mr. Sea tries
to ooze around bluntness
like frothy tide around the rocks
just like everyone
crazy people
are just like everyone

it leads to debate
it leads to him resenting me
it's leads to us laughing
it leads to him liking me.

3

I pushed for med changes
I work with his case manager.

Mr. Sea would refuse
refuse
this goes on awhile

we team up on him

finally he gives in

he's still crazy
but happier

cleans up around his
place some. he lives
on cheap lunch meat
and microwave dinners
which is an improvement
from days of not eating
or only eating gas station
snack cakes.

he doesn't call as much

occasionally he asks
me to bring back his mother
but the conviction is gone
he drops it easily

once I talked to him about
working on the railroad.

he explained train engines
to me. and for an hour and a half
he was just another guy
talking about an old job he had.

I realize he can go back
to his old state any moment

Mr. Sea inspecting train engines
walking around cylinders of steam
checking off boxes on his clip
board
he had a wife and three dogs.

a mushroom grew
the mold
the over flow

the front of the train split
open a mother's dead mouth
a long tongue
a sliver hammer
suicidal stars form
a halo on his strange
head

"I wiped off that table
and straightened up a bit,
I think I'll go for a walk
later."

that's good Mr. Sea
you're doing better
just take it step by step

4

Ms. Honey
took to wearing
three sweaters
a scarf
and two knit caps
in 90 degree weather

she'd pass out
on the concrete

I work with her nurse
and together
we just keep reminding
her directly what the
consequences of wearing this
in heat will be

directly. you can't be manipulative.
or cutesy clever
it just increases the symptoms

direct

Ms. Honey walking around
in a Hawaiian shirt
saying thank you baby
everyone is baby or honey
or hon or sweetie

she carries
bottled water with her
more often now.

5

my boss
warned me
she said,
you will get burned out
in this job
everyone
get's burned out.

this job…
will burn you out.

burn
you

this job
burn out

6

yes, she was right
and she illustrated it perfectly
when for two weeks
she was crazy as shit.

like an atomic toxic
period bomb exploded
within her womanhood

yes she was right
as I stare at paper work
past due feeling like
a half brained lizard
with cloudscape eyes
fog and haze
in mushroom sea

my sister tells
me in health care
paper work is always
past due

past due paper burn out

I find distractions
the window
the internet

then I push this aside
even when staring directly at the paper
the lines blur
the letters clump

the numbers smudge

the forms are crap

you check off little boxes
with numbers

you rate people like Mr. Sea
into nice little categories

they have dumb questions
that you have to ask.
and dumb statements you have
to construct.

“What stresses you out Mr. Sea?’

“when we have to do this paper work.”

I agree Mr. Sea I agree.

you have to keep writing and rating
the same information
over and over
on forms that get checked then sit for
a year in a file where it is rare
people will look at it unless they
are doing more paperwork.

I don't believe in most of the paper work
but I have to do it
and it should be simple
I can do it
I can do it

7

it's like picking up a salt shaker
and finding it weighs 500 pounds

I tell myself this is simple

why can't I pick it up

I'm not being lazy
I am sitting here

I'm of perfect health

I reach out
put my fist around it
and it takes me an hour
to move it three inches

dammit it's not the salt shaker
it's me
something chemical
in my brain

the pea that weighs a ton

the popsicle stick that is an anchor

but I move the paper work
inch by tedious inch

my boss says
just keep chipping away at it

yes thank you

hon baby

you have to imagine
that the salt shaker

is a feather sort of thing
then it will
give itself to you

this has always been
hard for me it takes
me much longer than
what would be considered
average

but to feel that lightness
like now

with my bare feet
on the rug

with my cock
resting cozy in
my boxers telling me
that he likes that short woman
we talked to at the second hand store
last week
fuck that I say
I'm in no mood to dial her number
and get to know a new female
with the house clean
and doom paperwork tomorrow
that I will again chip at
and hope it turns loose
like clumps of warm clay
pulling away from
a mountain.
a mountain that was never there.

& Grace Notes:

GRACE CAVALIERI INTERVIEWS EAVAN BOLAND

Eavan Boland **photo credit: The Irish Times**

Eavan Boland **is the Director of the Creative Writing Department at Stanford. The daughter of an Irish diplomat, Boland spent much of her youth living in London and New York City. One of Ireland's few recognized women poets, Boland addresses broad issues of Irish national identity as well as the specific issues confronting women and mothers in a culture that has traditionally ignored their experiences. Her collections of poems include *In Her Own Image* (1980), *Night Feed (1982), Outside History* (1990), *In a Time of Violence* (1994). She has also written a prose memoir, *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time* (1995), *Collected Poems,* (2008) plus articles and essays. She is one of Ireland's best recognized poets. Her father was a diplomat, her mother was a painter. She was raised in Dublin, New York, and London, and since the eighties, she's been teaching in colleges in Ireland, and in America.**

GC: I want to talk about a book that came out in 2007, *Domestic Violence*. Eavan, part of this book has a section which honors your mother in poems, and there is so much which tells about your own writing philosophy. I asked a student who had taken a workshop with you, I said, "what was the *one* thing that you brought away from Eavan Boland?" She said, "That the image drives the narrative."

EB: That's an interesting way of putting it. I mean, I probably think that Irish poets are often a sort of mixed breed; that narrative is mixed with image. I mean, there's a very strong narrative side to Irish poetry. But of course image is probably important to me because my mother was also a painter, and I grew up,in a way, looking at images with no explanation on them on canvas. And when you're six or seven, and you come up – my mother would be painting, a portrait or something – then, the sight of an eyebrow or an eye on a piece of canvas, was just an image without any kind of narrative.

GC: If I were to ask you then, just in the first blush of thought about your mother, what is it she left you?

EB: Well, in many ways, and not maybe unusually in Ireland, she really was a hero of mine. I think it would be hard to put it into words, except she had, like a lot of Irish people who had come to their lives without a lot of institutions or structures – especially in her case – without advantages. She was an orphan and a ward of court when she was very young. She had a great belief in the imaginative world; a great belief that it was an honorable and important thing to pursue. And that made me very free when I was young, in a society which was very utilitarian, like all societies are. She believed in somebody being a poet, and that had that great effect on me.

GC: Motherhood, your own motherhood, your mother, Mother Ireland; these themes are prevalent in your work, and I would love if you would talk about *my* favorite poem of yours, and it's about the discipline of painting. I believe that's in your collected poems, your new book, just out 2008, *New Collected Poems.*

EB: It's indeed about my mother painting.

GC: What do you take from that perspective, of her looking at her work – looking over her shoulder with a mirror? What does that mean to you, as far as poetry goes?

EB: I suppose that unswerving attempt to look critically at what you've done. To see what it is you've made outside the world of instinct. It's a process of taking care, and often a kind of painful process for a writer or painter. And it is that last discipline of being willing to reverse it if it's wrong.

GC: In your own writing, your form has changed greatly from *An Origin of Waters, '67,* sixties. I think that book is your first book, right?

EB: I think when you're young – I published my first book when I was 22, I think – and you know, every young poet goes through a phase, though they really don't like to admit it, of writing somebody else's poem, and I lived in a very literary city, where there was a sort of well-made poem. It was a technically formalist poem, and I learned how to write it. But, you know, fundamentally, if you learn to write someone else's poem, it will end up suppressing your own voice. And the thing I think I found was just the simplest thing, of finding enough of my own voice to be able to hear it, and to change the way I wrote, so that I could sort of change the acoustic around my own voice, and be able to say what I wanted.

GC: And more brilliantly. The intuitive part of your poetry is what is so astonishing, I think. Moving back and forth across time; I don't know how you teach people that. I'm going to read a very dry statement, but then we're going to comment on it. "Boland addresses broad issues of Irish national identity, as well as the specific issues confronting women and mothers in a culture that has traditionally ignored their experience." Now, you've talked about how difficult it was introducing the washing machine or the baby into the poem. But I believe your real domestic image that you've contributed to poetry, is that hand on the windowsill. You might be talking about a sweeping philosophical moment, and then you say, 'I put my arm on the

windowsill. Do you consider that a feminine gesture that has influenced Irish poetry?

EB: Well, I don't know that I consider it that. But I certainly consider it something I did, and a lot of people did. And I think there was a difficulty, when I was younger, in thinking of the Irish poem as a flexible poem, into which you could put these small gestures. I felt that it was in danger of becoming a very, sort of, sacred space, in which the small gesture – the small moment of life – wasn't considered important enough to go. And so, some of those gestures were just the gestures I did, or I lived, or this is how I did them. And putting them into the poem was some kind of act of faith for me. Not just in that life, but that the poem could go there and tell that story.

GC: And it lives. The poem lives because of those gestures. We've learned so much from that.

EB: My poem "Quarantine" … it's exactly about this, but on that broader scale. This is a couple who appear in a book very briefly published at the turn of the century, which looks back – turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – a man looking back to the villages in which people were so affected by the famine in 1847. Young couple, leave the workhouse, go back to the cabin where they lived, and are found dead in the morning. But the man has tried to warm her feet as she died. And the poem was partly a reproach to poetry in general, for not including these livesincluding the more glamorous things, but not this.

GC: That is one of your favorite poems?

EB: Yes. I mean it's certainly one of the poems that said something I wanted to say.

GC: And you have said that, "The past is not history, and history is not the past." Will you comment on that?

EB: Yes. I think it might be. Maybe it's obvious in a small country, maybe it was more obvious to me because I was a young woman writing poetry, but, there is a rift between the past and history. I mean, history is the official version, and the past is this place of much less clear, much

less structured, much less apparently sanctioned or important things. But it's really the past where most peoples' lives take place, and where they remember them, and remember family members and small incidents. It's the past really, that attracted me, not history.

GC: But do you think that Ireland more than any other country, because of its Bardic tradition, overlooked the little people? Even though, isn't it so in every country, that we go for the decorum first? Or do you think America is quite different that way?

EB: I think America is a very different country. Ireland was a nation before it was a state. And the United States immerged with both together. Irish literature is the literature of a defeated people, and United States literature is not. Those things, I think, really do change things. And in a country like Ireland, Irish history became a very heroic narrative. And I was, certainly when I was younger, very suspicious of that.

GC: You say in *An Origin Like Water*… "came to know history as a woman, as a poet, when you left the sight of it. You knew the tradition when you were exiled from it. But the life beckoned to the language, and the language followed." And that is the story of your life, right? Have you written your memoirs?

EB: Well, I'm not sure they were memoirs. I've certainly written some essays, yes. And going over these things, and certainly going over them in a sort of circular way, I think that's how you try to find your path.

GC: When you look – you've been in America; now you're teaching at Stanford; you're director of the creative writing department; you teach Irish literature and poetry professor. And so you have been doing that for a number of years, and you really have a sense of America, and what we're doing; what we think we're doing. The democratization of the arts in America, that must have been really a cultural shock for you. To find out that anybody could do anything, and they said expressing your opinion was art. But don't you think it is a healthy thing, actually?

EB: Yes, I do think it's healthy. I think we all – everybody in the arts pays lip service all the time to the idea that self expression is not art. At the same time, exactly who do we want to make the decision about which is which? I don't have any difficulty with the democratization of the arts. In some ways, I think it's been the great story. In the Unites States, it's a great story in the twentieth century. I think time looks after the difference between self expression and art. But there is never a strong art without a very rich access, and a very rich pool of self expression.

GC: I love that. Time looks after it.

EB: Oh, indeed.

GC: Many of your themes are about marriage and your own children; however, you never intrude upon their privacy. I'm with you on that.

EB: Yes. Oh, absolutely. I mean I think that's a great letter that Elizabeth Bishop writes to Robert Lowell at one point when, I think I'm paraphrasing her but, when he has written somewhat intrusive poems about the lives of his wife and his children, she writes to him reproaching him and says, "Art just isn't worth that." And I think that's right.

GC: Oh, I do agree. Art isn't worth one single person's feelings. What was the inspiration for your much anthologized poem "The Emigrant Irish."

EB: It really began sort of unusually in one single remark made to me by my husband's mother, who came from the west of Ireland when the electrification schemes came, and people got electric light. She told me that everybody took the beautiful oil lamps they had and threw them out. And at a certain point it seemed to me that in Ireland, when we were becoming a new, burley, modern state, we ran a risk of forgetting our past, and of those people who left us and went to other shores, and really are a powerful part of the ghosts of our Irishness.

GC: Does Ireland appreciate you?

EB: Well, I would certainly not think of those terms.

GC: As a diplomat; as an ambassador?

EB: I'm not sure that Ireland gets itself into that mode. I mean it's not noted for it. But I appreciate being Irish, I really do. Really, it has been the honor really of my life, to be an Irish poet. So, I think that way 'round works.

GC: Well, in *Domestic Violence,* there is a wonderful remark – the first poem – on marriage itself. And it seems you peg your marriage in the geographic sites, and times, and places, and you use those frames to hark back to your own marriage. How do you feel that place shaped relationship?

EB: Well, I think you see both through the other. Kevin and I met and married and lived as young people in a modest and different Ireland. But we were both readers and writers, and we loved that Ireland. That Ireland, now, is much harder to find than when we were young. There's a different country there, and, in many ways, I think it's exactly – the past is another country. And I think you do eventually get exiled from all of it, and I think your own archive of relationship is a way back to it, and in some ways it's also irretrievable.

GC: How do you use objects to make a poem?

EB: Well, there's one poem here, which was really the poem for my mother that I wanted to write, called "Amber", and it really was about a small piece of amber she gave me, and I remembered it, and in some ways really wanted to record the feeling of loss. And amber, of course, that wonder thing that holds a kind of globe inside itself that goes very far back in time.

GC: In re-reading your work this week, I thought, you know she gets more going on between a noun and a verb than anyone I know. You are able to set up a poem, and then just digress and just float around, and then all of a sudden you get to that verb and it is remarkable. I don't even know if you're conscious of how remarkable that is. I was wondering if you would just take "Amber" and unravel it for us. Can you remember the moment that you decided to write that poem about amber?

EB: Yes. I think most of the moments in which I decide that a poem is

in the works would always begin with some kind of opening lines, or some kind of way of writing it down. But for a very long time, it wasn't in that shape. It was more descriptive of amber, or trying to remember amber, or what sort. It was only gradually that it got any kind of movement towards the middle of it, where I say, "reason says this," and when you take an object, and put it next to a reasonable argument and then make the object deny the argument – then you get some kind of structure for the poem.

GC: Oh, say that again. That is wonderful, that's a wonderful follow-up.

EB: Well, I think in the object that you take, like amber, and you will eventually make a proposition in the middle of that poem, the dead cannot see the living. But you will have the amber on both sides of that to contradict that rhetoric. And in some ways, that is how you set the poem up, as that inner dialogue between the rhetoric and the image. Not always, but sometimes.

GC: So there's a dramatic action, almost.

EB: I would think that a lyric poet like myself, in some ways a straightforward European lyric poet, has a great interest in drama in the poem. Maybe more so than some narrative poets I know.

GC: Because when I talk about "between the noun and the verb," I'm talking about a spiral. You spiral, which is the psychological action going on in the poem. And, how many drafts do you think you had to achieve for "Amber", or don't you know?

EB: It certainly took me seven or eight months. But it wasn't drafted all the time in that. It was put aside, and taken out again. William Trevor, the Irish writer, once said that he put away his short stories as a writer, 'til he could take them out as a reader, however long that took. And for me it was a matter of putting it away when I got stuck, and taking it out and trying to get it unstuck. And eventually it got unstuck.

GC: You've written some wonderful poems to your mother in *Domestic Violence*. I think everyone would want to read them. When do you return to Ireland?

EB: I go back every ten weeks.

GC: So, is it a year-long tenure at Stanford.

EB: I'm at Stanford for three quarters of the year. But it's a quarter system, not a semester system. So after ten works, I get, I suppose it's about thirty weeks at Stanford, and about twenty two in Ireland.

GC: Where do you do your writing?

EB: Well, almost always whenever I have a morning somewhere, which is going to happen every twenty four hours. I have never found it too difficult.

GC: No. If you've ever had a child, you can do anything standing on one foot. That's the prerequisite for being a writer. And it was probably easier now than when they were little; when your daughters were little.

EB: Yes, when I had two children under the age of four.

GC: But you did it!

EB: I did it, but in a pretty haphazard way.

GC: Well who didn't, I know. The hopes that we have are that we can rarify our work, as I've seen you do over the years, and get clearer, and more precise, and more pristine, and more sure, and more certain of your voice. What is it you want next from your poetry?

EB: Well, I think, despite the myth, poets don't improve. They're not bottles of wine or something. That's an old romantic myth. I think you write poems when you're younger that you can never write when you're older, and you write poems when you're older that you couldn't have written when you were young. The point is to find which those are.

GC: Those are good.

EB: And, you know, which way to go.

GC: And Maya Angelou says, every time you sit down at a paper, you don't know how to do it.

EB: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

GC: So I think that that is well said. But I don't know if it's age, but the poems that are in the newest books have so much space and light around them, and in your new collected poems as well. Thank you for your generous answers.

EB: Thank you for having me.

"Through stylized use of perspective, color, form, pattern, repetition, light and shadow, icons from personal experiences and fragments of imagination emerge in a pseudo-realistic environment. I am interested in intuitively arranging pictorial/mental images of people, animals, transportation, and other everyday objects. These paintings are about formulating, scribbling and preserving stories where anything we can visualize is able to be included in an open-ended script that welcomes the unexpected."

Angelou Guingon

Q&A

Angelou Guingon

www.guingon.com

Angelou Guingon was born in the Philippines and moved to United States along with his family at the age of 15. Upon arrival, he quickly pursued his interest in painting by attending the Governor's Advanced School for the Arts, a program that gives high school students a chance to attend college level art courses. In 1995, he was awarded full scholarship by Maryland Institute, College of Art where he received a Bachelor's Degree of Fine Arts in Painting in 1999. He was also awarded a grant from the VIrginia Museum of Fine in the same year and in 1997.

Upon graduating, he made a living as a graphic artist for a private government contractor. His career naturally influenced his paintings which is evident by the strong graphical qualities in the works consisting of cows and elephants in militaristic formations.

In 2007, he quit his job as a graphic artist to become a full time artist. Since then, he has sold many paintings and establish great clients. Recently, he was featured in New American Paintings publication, Mid-Atlantic Edition.

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?

I have tremendous admiration for M.C. Esher. His intricate use of color, pattern and repetition to create surreal illusion is simply appealing.

Is there one recurring theme in your work?

Animals in surreal urban settings.

How do you feel about formal training?

Eye opening experience!

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

Being a former graphic artist lets me experiment with the composition and color in computer before I paint anything on canvas.

Are you a starving artist?

I make enough to survive as full time artist.

Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?

Lucien Freud

Target acrylic on canvas 24" x 30"

Whirlpool acrylic on canvas 24" x 30"

Whirlpool acrylic on canvas 18" x 24"

Mennonite/Manhattanite: *Sleeping Preacher* by Julia Kasdorf

REVIEW BY **MELISSA McEWEN**

Julia Kasdorf, Sleeping Preacher
University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992
62 pages

In *Sleeping Preacher,* Julia Kasdorf, born into a Mennonite and Amish community in Pennsylvania, writes about her life growing up with Mennonite farmers and Mennonite women and about her life as a Manhattanite. *Sleeping Preacher* explores both worlds and Kasdorf does not pit one world against the other, instead she gives the reader an equal look at the two. We get to observe her as she moves through life as a Mennonite and a Manhattanite.

Early on in the book, the poems show what life was like in this Mennonite community:

> ***"…The Sleeping Preacher came***
> ***to the Valley…to preach against jewelry,***
> ***fancy dresses, and photographs…***
> ***[and our great-grandma] threw all the old daguerreotypes,***
> ***all the prints of her parents on their wedding day,…***
> ***and [of] herself in high button shoes***
> ***into the cookstove."*** – from "Sleeping Preacher"

> ***"…in that Valley of silos***
> ***and Holsteins."*** – from "I Carry Dead Vesta"

> ***"August takes the mothers***
> ***in this family unexpectedly, while tomatoes burst***
> ***their skins…***
> ***and under this hot sun, what woman can resist***
> ***how easy it becomes to just lie back***
> ***and let your womb swell, like all the rest."*** – from "August"

These poems capture the daily lives of the people in this community. We witness them going to church, canning, farming, burying the dead. We witness the children acting as children do:

In "Sleeping Preacher":

> ***"The Fox sisters…confessed***
> ***[that] the rappings were not messages***
> ***from the dead to comfort their friends,***
> ***but only [their] toe knuckles cracking."***

In "Grossdaadi's Sale," while uncles "nod their bids," girl cousins:

"…sneak upstairs…[where]
[a] plaque warns, 'Do nothing
you would not like to be doing when Jesus comes.'

…below, Ernest, the idiot son of cousins
who married too close, picks his nose…
We hiss his name until he balks and grunts and swings
with a rage that would smash the panes
of the cupboards…
We jump to the bed and squeal
in the quilts, gripped by the secret
we'll share until we grow
too embarrassed to remember
this or that barn cat
we dropped from the hayloft."

The adults in *Sleeping Preacher* are shown as stoic. Sometimesthe author wants someone to speak up — when faced with the death of a child, "lose it," to break ranks from "all those identical days of your life."

In "Older Brother":

"But I wonder if there is ever a father,
a mill worker with large, blackened fists
who grabs the narrow lapels of [the doctor's] lab coat
and pounds on [his] chest,
demanding that he take it back."

And the author is the one to break ranks. She finds herself wondering, "What can I do to change my fate/but take a strange lover…?" And to change her fate, she moves to New York, rents an apartment, and her life as a Manhattanite begins.

In "How To Think of Danger," *(for David),* and the poems that follow, we get a glimpse into her life as a New Yorker:

"While you're in the kitchen doing dishes,
I'm in bed on the edge of sleep, listening
to the clink of plates and…the surge
of rinse water. Was it ever this good
for my mother? Did she and Dad collapse
laughing under their bright ring of kitchen light?
Did they forget to lock doors or pull blinds?"

In "How To Think of Danger," Kasdorf is living her new life, but still thinking about the life of her familyback home. In some ways she is still a Mennonite woman in Manhattan, worried about what her mother will think of her new life.

In "Mother":

> ***"I do not write to you***
> ***that a boy [was] knifed in the groin…***
>
> ***Down below, the men curse***
> ***in the street, breaking bottles,***
> ***and tomorrow I'll find stains on the walk.***
> ***I spare you these details***
> ***as sweetly as you spared me…***
> ***all those August days…***
> ***you picked corn***
> ***until your arms welted red…***
> ***all those identical days of your life,***
> ***culminating in the sparkling arch***
> ***of the sprinkling hose,***
> ***caught in the porch light."***

The book ends with the poem "Morning Glories," *(for Bertha)*. *Sleeping Preacher* is "In memory of Bertha Peachey Spicher Sharpe, 1910-1990." In this poem, Kasdorf merges the two worlds she knows. She is planting morning glories outside her small space in New York City:

> ***"Would you approve of my wearing your gloves***
> ***to do garden work…? How well they grasp whatever***
> ***is left of my life that you would accept:***
> ***the worn handle of this rake, the work***
> ***that must get done under a gray sky***
> ***in cold wind…***
>
> ***You used to say***
> ***you'd never visit until I moved from this city,***
> ***but now you feel as close as the flesh. Listen:***
> ***a sweet, little Puerto Rican girl is knocking***
> ***on her apartment window. How strange I must seem…***
> ***scattering seeds and straw on my head,***
> ***up my sleeves."***

I think this is the perfect way to end the book. I like how the poem joins the two worlds – Kasdorf doing garden work in New York City. It shows that while you can take the girl out of the Mennonite community, you can't take *all* of the Mennonite out of the girl. No matter where Kasdorf is in the world, that small town in Pennsylvania will always be home.

Jamie Buehner

Jamie Buehner studied writing and literature at Winona State University before moving to the Twin Cities to pursue an MFA at Hamline. Her poems have appeared in *The Talking Stick*—Vol. 16, *SNReview*, and other places.

Miss America

Miss America
the pageant on TV
is in every single poem I write
and so are cans of grape pop
and popcorn in a Tupperware bowl
with popcorn salt and real butter.
My grandma's in her corner chair
with the cat Roxy, whom she called
a Russian Blue. I'm beside her
under an afghan I once wrapped
my brother in and called him *bambino*.
She labeled her Europe photos "YERP,"
said the words *funner and funnest*.
We were best friends
who loved each other completely.
She never cared for contestants from Texas.
She didn't think ventriloquism was a real talent.

"My art is about exposing, I intrude and invite the viewer to intrude as well. I peek behind closed doors, into the hidden lives, and private moments of my subjects. Delving into the psyche and physical appearance of the subject represented, I examine and then expose for all to see."

Scott G. Brooks

Q&A

Scott G. Brooks

www.scottgbrooks.com

Scott G. Brooks lives and works in the U Street neighborhood of Washington, DC. Originally from Flint, Michigan, he earned his undergraduate degree in Fine Arts at the University of Michigan in 1983 before moving to the DC area in 1990. In addition to his career as a fine artist, he has illustrated several children's books, including *The Three Armadillies Tuff, The Ring Bear, Ned Loses His Head,* and *The Flour Girl.* Most recently Scott's work has been exhibited at Mondo Bizzarro Gallery in Rome, Italy, Long View Gallery in Washington, DC, Last Rites Gallery in NYC, Distinction Gallery in Escondido, CA.

Scott's paintings and drawings are described as twisted and offbeat, sentimental and disturbing. Subject matter ranges from simple portraiture to intricate narratives. He takes social, psychological, and political issues and coats them with a wry sense of humor.

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?
This is tough, since I look at so many artists. If I had to narrow it down, I would say Caravaggio. His dramatic lighting and theatrical approach has always intrigued me. I was in Italy this past spring and had the opportunity to see many up close and personal. They're stunning.

Is there one recurring theme in your work?
I'm not sure if this qualifies as a theme, but I like to portray a heightened sense of tension in my work. Something dramatic is either about to happen -- or just happened. Narrative is an important part of my work.

How do you feel about formal training?
I think formal training is important for several reasons. Besides teaching some of the basic skills, it instills a sense of discipline early on. It also allows artists to work together and share ideas. On the flip side, it can take years to let go of what some instructors drill into your head. I think most of what I do now is self taught, but I received a solid foundation while I was in school. It was really one of the most important periods in my life.

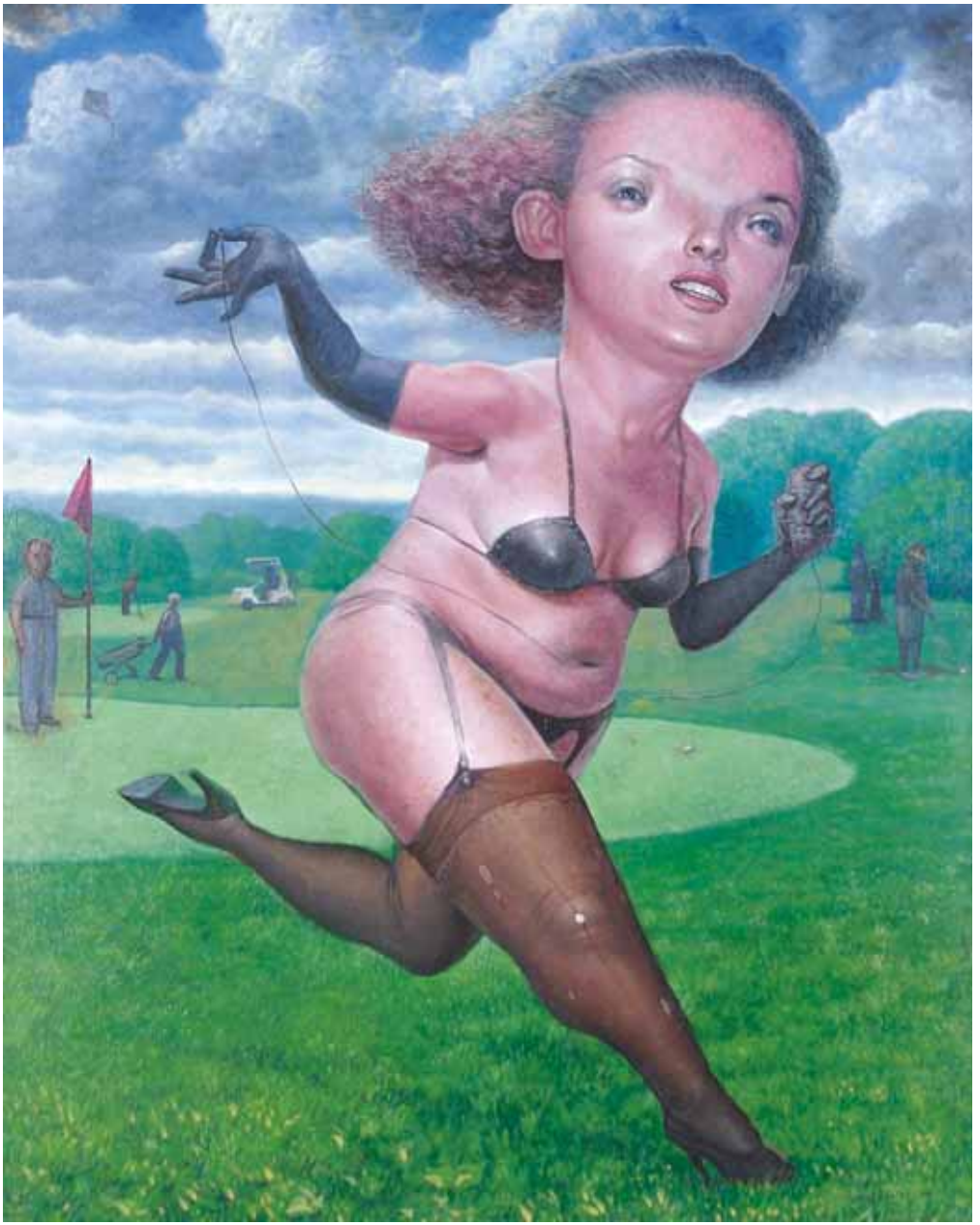
Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?
Lately I've been working in waves. I'll finish up work for a show, take a little time off, and then slowly start working towards the next wave. I'll start slowly and just focus on sketching, trying to decide on a direction to go. Eventually I'll begin painting. I typically get into the studio after lunch. Mornings are spent doing other work, answering email, and catching up on the news. I'll usually work through the evening until about 1 or 2 a.m., and longer hours as I get closer to a show.

Are you a starving artist?
I'm not a starving artist at all, metaphorically or otherwise. In addition to exhibiting my paintings and drawings, I also do a variety of commercial work. I've illustrated several children's books and provide art to a pretty diverse range of clients.

Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?
Lucian Freud.

The Chosen One oil on canvas 30" x 40"

Scott G. Brooks



Hanging By A Thread oil on canvas 16" x 20"

Scott G. Brooks

Nativity On Demand oil on canvas 30" x 40"

Scott G. Brooks

Royally Ducked oil on canvas 36" x 48"

Carmen Giménez Smith

Carmen Giménez Smith is the author of *Odalisque in Pieces* (University of Arizona Press, 2009), *Casanova Variations* (Dos Press, 2009) and *Glitch* (Dusie Kollectiv, 2008). Her writing has recently appeared or will soon appear in *Poetry, American Letters & Commentary, Ploughshares, Boston Review, Chicago Review, Colorado Review, Ocho, Mandorla, sleepingfish* and many other magazines and journals. Formerly a Teaching-Writing Fellow at the Iowa Writer's Workshop, she is now an assistant professor of creative writing at New Mexico State University, the publisher of Noemi Press, and the editor-in-chief of *Puerto del Sol.* She lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico, with her husband and their two children.

ANODYNE

Today I slip away for an excursion into the landscape on the wall.
It's called
Nothing good ever happens here.

A deer stares from the woods after being chased from the garden,
eyes tiny and piercing.
The only window is a wavering box
of gray paint in all the red and below all of it, a signature in a 1930s
cursive—trembly and sincere.

I write at a desk in the corner of the barn where I can practically not exist.

My fingerbones creak because of *the thing* that eludes.
I thought I would be open, but language has shut me out. The painting's silence is defeating.

What I'm working on (rough draft): A potion to lick off. Autumn was a place.
Crumb & crumb. I made a swear word.
When winter comes, you see the end of days.

My favorite part is the space between the crumb and the I. I'd like what I write to reach into the center of the pastoral and throttle it but the painting resists. To really pummel the barn, to make a pulp of 19th century agriculture, but the painting wants to be just itself and won't let me elevate us. I would like us to slip into the unknowing, the abyss.
Such a benign force to bear against. On some days I can't leave it
even though the hum of censure overpowers like skunk. But when I sit outside it, no bees seem alive.

INDICTMENT

In this one we wander through our blight
with waders on, up to our hips.
We squander minutes at each other's peripheries.
Overhead you chant your scorn until sense-like,

but I don't blink for hours, don't go
to my happy place, don't write it down because
there's a doorframe around me,
and you're a lightning bolt with a cunning mole.

I call this Making Time For The Mercenary
and all you bring is "I'm only tulle and you,
shantung." Uncouth antagonist.
Once we jittered like electrons, such orchestrated
straining. Once tenderness was your instrument.

EYELASH

I wish the preoccupation with diamonds wasn't such a hinge,
or that I lived like a starlet's eyeball.
I wish I could spout blasphemy quick as motorcycles.
I wish for my bloody caul back.

Wanted: a big fat organism to eat me alive.

I wish that everyone in my stomach would stop scratching.
I would like to be raised over the crowd in a palanquin,
pretty please.

Will someone write me a proper response?

I dream Manhattan gets cheaper.
That these things are cheaper:
Drugs, daintiness, the little mock dress.

I wish for a bit back, five or ten cents worth,
a favor, a door, a crumb from the one that got away.

I wish I could find what I need like you find a twenty
in an old coat. I wish I could unravel it all and start
it again with new wool flecked silver. To redo each first day.

I want to choose right. I want the look
and the feel of authenticity. I'm thirsty, hungry,
piqued with lust. A cavern of aching yen.
I want, I want, I want. It's got a ring to it. I want the ring.

THE GOD SPEAKS

no one is friendly even though my mouth's a king's ransom. I: the center of light.
how were you feeling in december when all of the world's face was poised north?
I thought it was a joke but now I see it wasn't.

of all of the awful things I have ever said the worst was yesterday. I know
you'd like to hear it, but what would that make me except more awful?
that's what everyone waits for.

did you see the ferry drifting around for hours? the occupants offering last
regards on their phones to their lovers' voicemail. a mistake in navigation
and phones rang and rang because of an imperfect course. at least,
that's what the paper said. two bodies of water in the ferry's anxious circle.

Ignore me. I shouldn't drink before the PM but I feel beautiful when I do. I get
so—sentimental.

TRAINS THAT HURTLE

The boy wearing headphones and leaning
against the brick wall is the visual perch
I cling to until the train comes.
According to my horoscope, he'll rescue me
from scrutiny. Gravity's stitched me good into Earth's skirt
and I don't know if I'll ever get into the galaxy.
In the year of Questions, No Answers
I get the raver kid from Bakersfield
to muzzle me from crying, drunk dialing,
and falling in love with despots.
Thank God for public transportation
and all its resistant bodies. For this random collusion
which makes everything
bright and sharp. I'm reinvented here.
A second chance and the train comes timely
to give the whole thing ballast. The kid shoots me a smile
like I'm some stranger, like we don't have history.
Maybe it really is Mercury in retrograde
like my astrologer said. The planet floating backwards
whirling some of us older than the stars, some of us nascent and bare.

William Rose

www.williamroseart.com

"Since I began drawing and painting, most of my work has been figurative, with an immersion in the seemingly impossible expressiveness of the female face – which I find to be endlessly mystifying and incredibly captivating. My choices for subject matter are usually intuitive, not planned, and my primary media of choice has been charcoal. Only recently, as I've begun to work in oil, have I found myself consciously planning out a series of work, but ultimately with either charcoal or oil it's those moments of perfect light that lock me in for the work. "

Q&A

WILLIAM ROSE'S studio is located in Prairie Village, Kansas, where he has been actively creating artwork for about six years.

William Rose's figurative work has been accepted into many juried shows including:

Winner (2008) - American Artist Magazine's prestigious Cover Competition

Artist's Magazine 23rd Annual Competition (2006) – 2 pieces chosen as finalists in Portrait & Figurative category

American Artist Magazine's 70th Anniversary Competition (2007) - 2nd Place in Drawing Category

Art at the Center Annual Juried Show – 2007 and 2008

Kansas State Governor's Inaugural Juried Show – 2007

Johnson County Art Festival Juried Shows – 2006 & 2007

Until recently, most his pieces have been commissioned portraits and in many private collections. In 2007, a large charcoal figurative drawing was purchased by H&R Block for the corporate collection in their Kansas City headquarters. Currently, his work can be seen at the Park Place Gallery and ARTichokes Gallery, both in the Kansas City area.

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?
If I had to pick two, Sargent and Rembrandt have probably been the most inspiring over the years. I never tire of studying their paintings. Of current artists out there now, there are a handful that I greatly admire - Jeremy Lipking, Zhoaming Wu (especially his charcoal work), Gregory Calibey, Malcolm Liepke and Alex Kanevsky. Many others, but these come to mind.

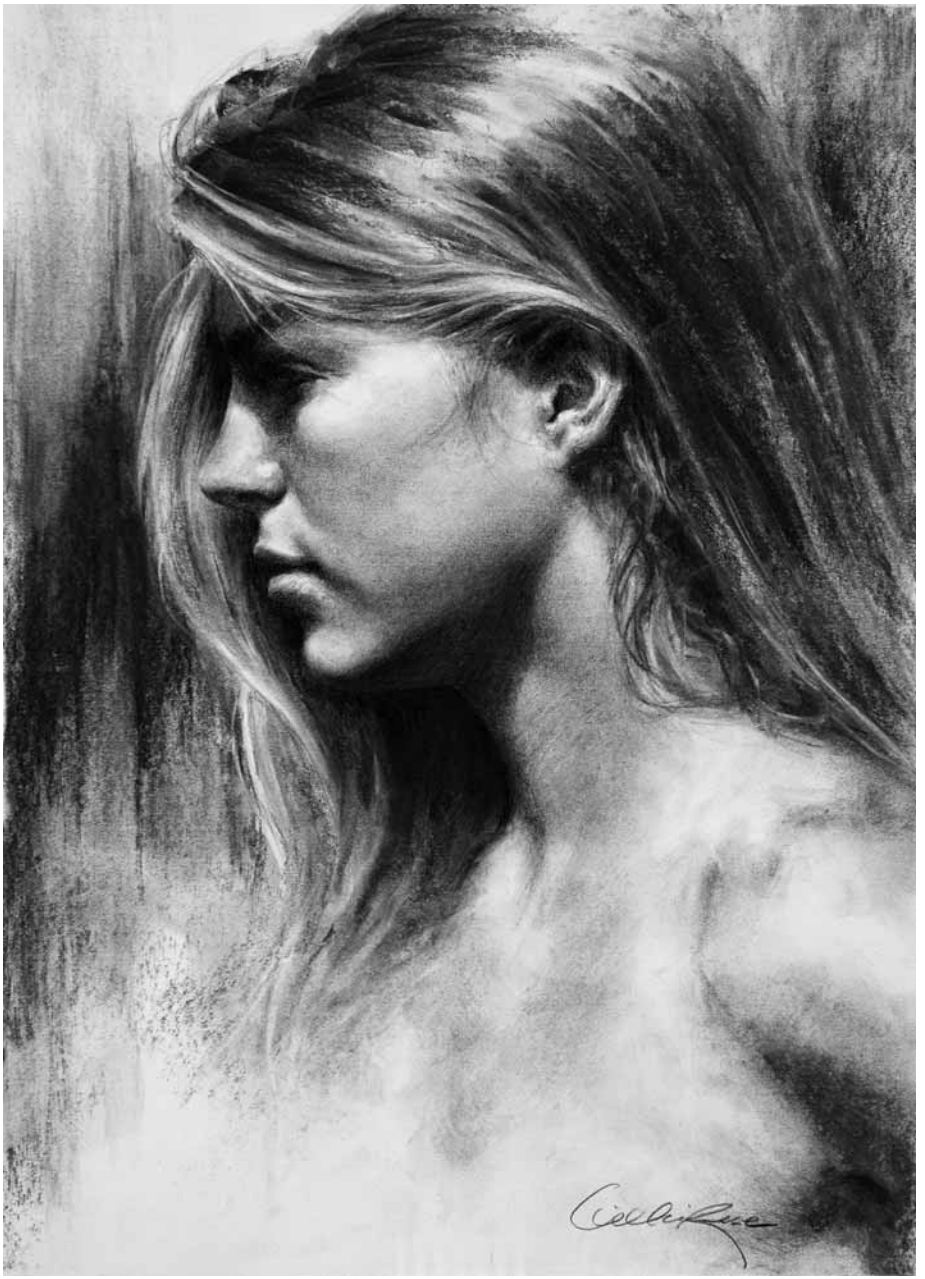
Is there one recurring theme in your work?
Yes - most of my work is portrait and figurative in subject with a recurring focus on women, and more specifically their impossibly expressive faces usually captured in dramatic light. It's often the eyes that grab hold of me. When I can't explain in words what I'm trying to accomplish on the easel, I know I've got something.

How do you feel about formal training?
I'm pretty ambivalent about it, having very little formal training myself. But I believe the right artist in the right program can gain immeasurable benefit from formal study. Others, like myself, simply find their way on their own. Personally, I've benefitted tremendously from studying the work of other artists, reading everything I can, and also from a handful of live and DVD artist demonstrations.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?
Sure - my process is no specific process at all. I use it very consistently. Seriously, I really have no formal process for either my charcoal drawings or paintings. Each one comes from new inspiration and even the process I use to create the work is evolving daily.

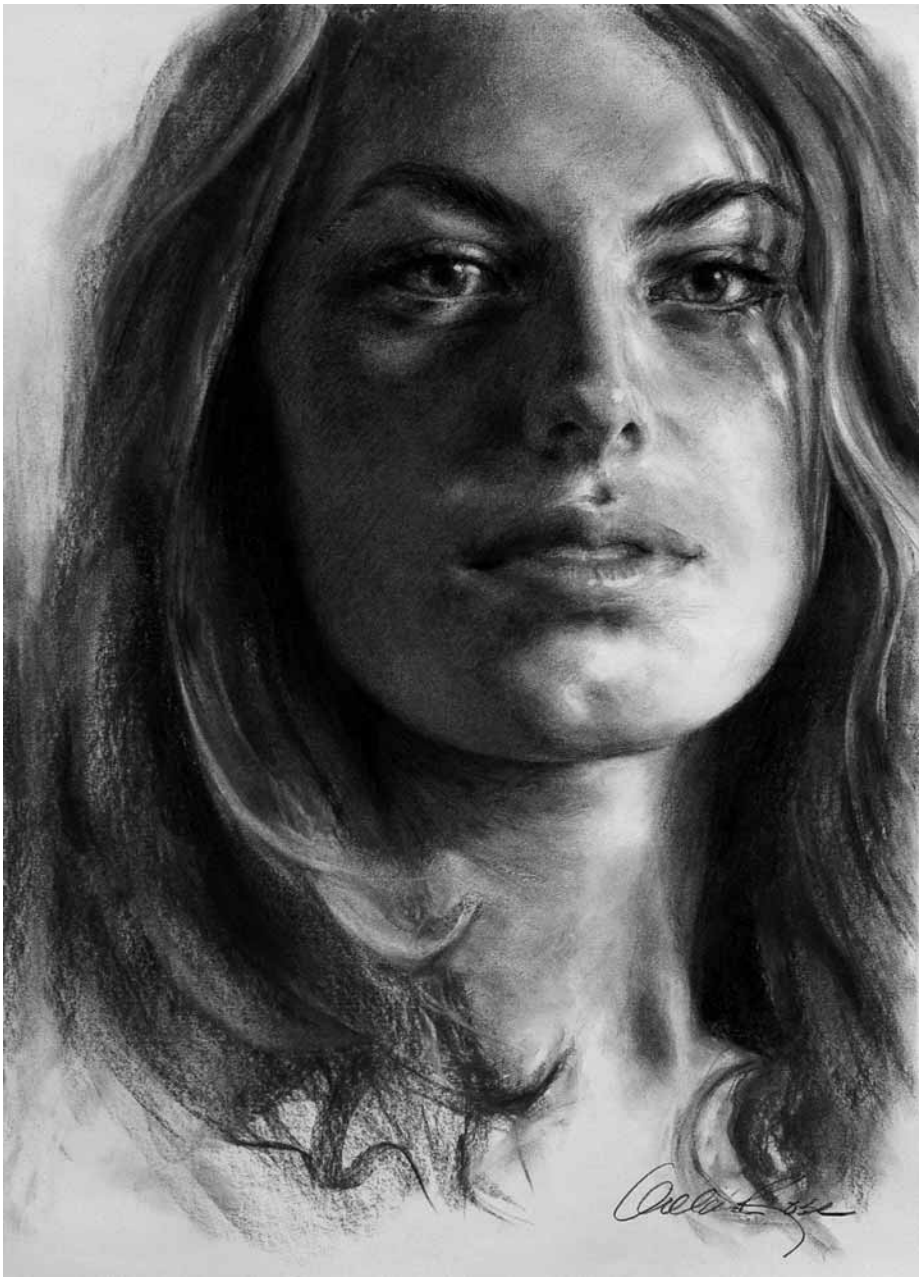
Are you a starving artist?
Currently, no - (knocking on wood)

Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?
No question - John Singer Sargent



A Day in the Life charcoal 21" x 15"

William Rose



Tiger Eye charcoal 21" x 17"

Undeniably Cool charcoal 24" x 26"

William Rose

The Burden charcoal 36" x 28"

James Iredell

James Iredell was born on the Central Coast of California, and lives in Atlanta with his wife and cats. He is the author of *When I Moved to Nevada* (The Greying Ghost Press 2008). His work has appeared in many magazines, including *The Chattahoochee Review, Zone 3, The Literary Review, SUB-LIT, Lamination Colony,* and *The Pedestal Magazine*. He is a founding editor of *New South,* and is design editor for C&R Press. He likes snakes when they appear on television.

In This Western

California cameras eyeball a Western landscape. The mesas are enormous tables in the distance. A gangly actor—and by this I mean that in real life he is fat, short, and pimple-faced under the make-up—steps into the saloon, swinging his dusty be-pistoled leg, the bar backgrounded, miles away. The patrons hush—even the piano sitter, who adorns an unplaying piano, for the Stephen Foster will later be dubbed in. Cut. I'll smoke this cigar. Give me a damsel. Someone guzzle a beer. This should be Atlanta, ca. 2006. Towers tower for a skyline. Now this is a Western. The script begins: A whiskered man at a notepad. Tumbleweeds. Crickets.

Shooting Bunnies

Bob and Chris Henning and me, we drove into the desert to spotlight coyotes and jackbunnies. I sat in the truck's extra cab drinking Budweiser like I'd just come in from a desert haul, but it was the other way around. When the rabbits crossed into the path of our spotlight—this thing like a million candles, a miniature sun—some would stop, their little mouths nibbling something, their eyes glowing red. We popped them off with the twelve-gauge, the 9 MM, and Bob's .357 Maximum, a bazooka. When it fired, a tiny Hiroshima cauliflowered in the air and its target disintegrated. Bob laughed and said, "I love killing shit." We picked up a pair of distant glowing eyes, a coyote. Bob and Chris fired away, but before we reached the spot we had bowled the tires over a billion sagebrush clumps. When we stopped, the hiss was like a snake's with enormous lungs. This was funny because a hippie at Burning Man once told Chris Henning, a Nevada native, not to park his truck on top of the sagebrush. Chris said, "Fuck you, hippie." He'd lived in this desert his whole goddamn life and he knew that he wouldn't goddamn hurt the goddamn sagebrush. I said, "Gun it." We lost Bob when we bumped into a wash. He seemed to jump out of the bed without legs, a beachball that had sprouted a head and arms. We fell to walking two miles from the highway. Before leaving, under the truck seats, we found a flask half-full of year-old tequila that made me puke up some of my Budweiser. The Milky Way made a beach in the middle of the sea of the sky. The chorus of coyotes yipped around us. It was so dark we could've been walking in nothing, back in the womb. When the cop said, "You boys been drinking?"Bob and Chris both said no. But me, I was slow and said, "A little."

New Year

I worked with this kid named Zach who swore he never tweeked, but his teeth were being ground to nubs. This was too bad. He had a movie star's mouth, and an underwear model's hair. He lived in the basement apartment of an old brick building on Second Street. The apartment was flood damaged that New Year when the Truckee splashed over its banks. Only studs held up the ceiling. No drywall. Zach and his roommates lined blankets to mark off rooms. Everyone in that apartment worked at a bar or restaurant, so no one used the kitchen, except as a trash ground. A mound of decaying fast food and its wrapping—a tiny landfill—covered the linoleum. Flies buzzed in through the kitchen's open window and maggots squirmed in the sink.

Ten years later Mike and Jasmine took up a place in this same building, but on the top floor. Their apartment—although complete with drywall—wasn't in much better shape. I never again saw that basement and haven't a clue what happened to Zach. But when we found the apartment adjacent to Mike's unlocked and vacant, it became the site for the New Year party. At the Dollar Store we found decorations—streamers and crepe, balloons, a tiny fold-up poker table with plastic chips. We took turns in Mike's apartment snorting stuff. By the end Dustin had pissed in the bedroom closet and the toilet had overfilled with cigarettes and tissue. The fireworks had burnt holes into the kitchen cupboards and melted the floor. A bottle rocket flew right through Bean's skirt. Dustin broke out the window with the empty keg. I woke on Chris Bennett's couch and the snow that had melted on New Year's Eve had frozen to ice. Everything in the past feels like that: slippery and cold.

& Grace Notes:

GRACE CAVALIERI INTERVIEWS GALWAY KINNELL

Photo by Bobbie Kinnell

Galway Kinnell **has been called America's "preeminent visionary." Galway Kinnell has received the Pulitzer Prize, a National Book Award, the Frost Medal, and a MacArthur Fellowship; and a nomination for the 2003 National Book Award. In the 1960s, he was an activist in the American civil rights movement and is still a strong voice for social action. Kinnell's volumes of poetry include *Strong Is Your Hold; Imperfect Thirst; When One Has Lived a Long Time Alone, Selected Poems; The Past; Mortal Acts, Mortal Words; The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World: Poems 1946-64; The Book of Nightmares; Body Rags; Flower Herding on Mount Monadnock; What a Kingdom It Was;* and many others. He has also published translations of works by Yves Bonnefoy, Yvan Goll, François Villon, and Rainer Maria Rilke.**

GC: Galway Kinnell is taught in every English Department that teaches contemporary poetry. Why do you think that is?

GK: It may be because my poems were in the assigned anthology, and students were required to sample all authors.

GC: Tell us any one of the happy surprises you experienced during your poetry career.

GK: That people come in large numbers to poetry readings.

GC: What was the biggest illusion you had about life as a "poet?"

GK: I had no illusions about life as a poet because I never thought I could live such a life.

GC: Your work, especially early on, abounds with hyphenated words packing a line. Did you get the effect you wanted from that technique?

GK: The poet writes it; the reader tells if it succeeds.

GC: Your enormous success has garnered you tons of fans. How do you moderate your life as a public figure? How do you know what invitations to accept, which will give you the best energy?

GK: When I go somewhere to read, it is part of my job to bring the energy with me.

GC: Much has been said about your poem "The Bear." In addition to the metaphysical interpretations, can you agree that the action in the poem depicts the creative process?

GK: It's a poem that is open to several interpretations, which are all valid, as far as I'm concerned, for the readers who make them.

GC: In approaching a poem to translate, what is the first thing you do, and then, what is the second?

GK: 1) Write out the prose meaning; 2) Attempt to shape it into something resembling a poem.

GC: What is there to be afraid of when you translate a poet from another language? Is there anything in poetry that cannot be translated?

GK: In translating one should be afraid of mistranslations. Poems that make no sense are difficult to translate.

GC: You are known for your hands-on life as a social activist. What encourages you at this time in history? What is dismaying?

GK: I am encouraged by seeing that so many others are also dismayed.

GC: What book are you reading now?

GK: *White Heat* by Brenda Wineapple

GC: You taught in foreign countries. How were students different from Americans in their approaches to poetry?

GK: I didn't teach creative writing. At the time I was teaching abroad, other countries didn't think creative writing, especially poetry, was teachable. Maybe it isn't.

GC: When you hear yourself called "the most passionate and powerful voice in American poetry," what is your feeling?

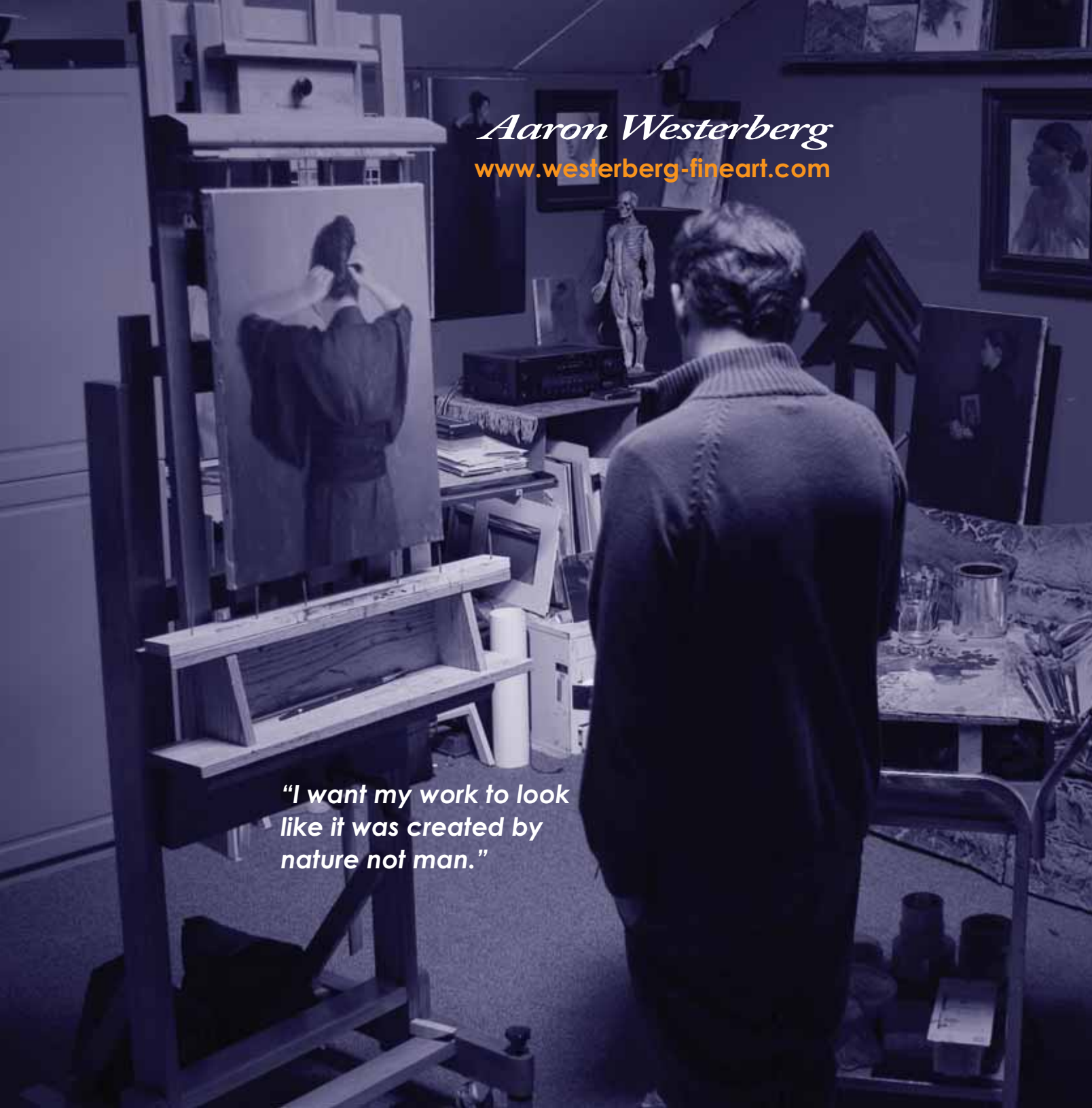
GK: Have that man's head examined.

GC: What makes emotional intensity in a poem?

GK: Emotional intensity in the poet.

GC: As a husband and father, please describe the comfort of these relationships.

GK: Love; and love.


Aaron Westerberg
www.westerberg-fineart.com
"I want my work to look like it was created by nature not man."

Q&A

Contemporary Realist Aaron Westerberg was born in San Diego, California on June 27, 1974. Westerberg started his artistic path by enrolling at a small community college in the nearby town of San Marcos, where he studied life drawing and illustration. He further developed his skills by taking classes in traditional life-drawing at the California Art Institute in Westlake Village where he was encouraged to study the works of nineteenth century American and European artists.

Westerberg's drive for advancing his painting skills ultimately led him to teach. From 2000 to 2005 he taught at the California Art Institute, and since 2005 he has become a popular faculty member at the Los Angeles Academy of Figurative Art where he continues to instruct courses in drawing and painting. Furthermore, his work has been the subject of several publications, including the cover of *Strokes of Genius: The Best of* Drawing, and he was recently featured in *American Art Collector* magazine. In 2007, he was named one of the best 24 artists under 40 by *Artist Magazine,* and in 2002 Westerberg was listed in *Southwest Art*'s annual roster of "Twenty-One under Thirty-One."

Coming Show:
October 11-November 22
The American Legacy Gallery in Pasadena California.
Opening reception
October 11th 5-8pm

Which artist do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?
John Singer Sargent

Is there one recurring theme in your work?
I do paint women quite a bit. I think women are the most beautiful and elegant creatures and I want to immortalize them in paint.

How do you feel about formal training?
I feel formal training is very important it is how I learned to communicate without words. It is similar to a writer not understanding how to form a sentence. If you cannot form a sentence how can you write a story? Above all formal training has given me more tools to express myself.

Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?
Well kind of ,besides drinking way too much caffeine, I have to really like and respond to my subject before starting and I usually do a thumbnail sketch before I paint, but I have done neither before a been able to produce a decent painting.

Are you a starving artist?
Yes, please buy my paintings.

Which artist of all-time would you choose to paint your portrait?
Maybe John Singer Sargent just because he is my hero.

Introspect
oil on linen
20" x 12"

Cork Screw
oil on linen
14" x 9"

Anna With Smirk
charcoal on rice paper
15" x 8"

Opera Coat
oil on linen
42" x 22"

Joey D's "Mooks" Show At Rotofugi

REVIEW BY **APRIL CARTER GRANT**

"Lowbrow" is a term coined by underground painter Robert Williams in the late '70s. Having difficulties finding gallery representation, he decided his "cartoon-tainted abstract surrealism" was the complete opposite of "highbrow" art and said so in a printed interview. The term has stuck.

Today, *Juxtapoz* magazine (whose covers used to say "Lowbrow Art d'Fuck You") claims to have the largest circulation of any art rag, and Los Angeles supports an actual, thriving lowbrow art industry. As its influence creeps East and beyond our borders, brick-and-mortar oases of canvas (and wood and skate decks, oh my) counter-culture pass on the signal. There's Roq La Rue in Seattle, Lowbrow Emporium in Austin, Earl McGrath in New York. In Chicago, Rotofugi's where it's at.

After its absorption of DVA Gallery, Rotofugi stands the lone beacon for Chicago's collectors and fans of West Coast-style lowbrow art. There exist other galleries in the City who represent such work, but Rotofugi is the most authentic example of what's happening on a daily basis in LA—the combination of a toy/oddity store and serious art space in one location.

Most recently featured was local artist Joey D, with a one-man show titled "Mooks." According to his artist statement, Joey D is a "corporate whore," though on closer examination, we find that he is an illustrator and designer—not exactly being an accountant for a mega-firm or CEO of a tobacco company, but if it helps him create more art, he can go on believing that he's oppressed by The Man.

The work, which ranges from skewed portraits in fancy frames to characters on jigsaw-cut boards to paintings on traffic signs and thrown-away furniture, is always vibrant; even the two-tone miniature namesake Mooks portraits are not lacking in contrast. (One wall featured about twenty.)

The content is, like most lowbrow art, quizzical. I personally think most artists in this genre do not really provide narrative; instead, they compile interesting elements to create an interesting image as eye-candy... or attempt to fool the viewer into thinking a story exists where there is none. For instance, *Ert & Bernie* shows garbage-pail versions of the Sesame Street duo of questionable persuasion posing by a street sign that says "QRST." It's nothing complicated; I think Joey D is

just saying they live on Queer Street. Of course, I'm not very deep.

Notable themes include cancerous noses that seem stuck-on Mr. Potato Head-style, and red cheek circles one can see used more successfully in Josh Clay's work. There also are lots of Band-Aids and blemishes, as well as puny arms and stubby, almost-useless hands. The characters could never be described as pretty, although the work can be.

Color is Joey D's strongest suit: He has learned to mix paints masterfully to create tints full of life and to prevent shades from being muddy. Since he's only in his mid-twenties, the artist will probably evolve to different styles throughout his career, but his mastery of color-mixing is a strong foundation that should remain.

Most lowbrow artists today seem content to show an oddball character and not worry about the most basic of design elements, composition. In a technical sense, painting a made-up character who is centered on a board (especially if just a head) is a relatively simple task. It's not realism, so there's no way to judge whether the work is accurate. In a lot of cases, there is no other scenery, so the viewer cannot decide whether the artist has used the space well. Joey D falls into this trap with most of his pieces.

The upside: As more and more artists join the gallery ranks, and consequently, more and more weakly composed pieces are thrown into the scene, Joey D will have moved on to more thoughtfully produced pieces, which will be backed by his impressive painting skill.

Rotofugi Designer Toy Store & Gallery is located at 1953-55 West Chicago Avenue in Chicago. Visit www.rotofugi.com.

Joey D's work can be viewed at www.angrybrownboy.com.

& April Carter Grant *Joey D's "Mooks" Show At Rotofugi*