

1991

Expressions 1991

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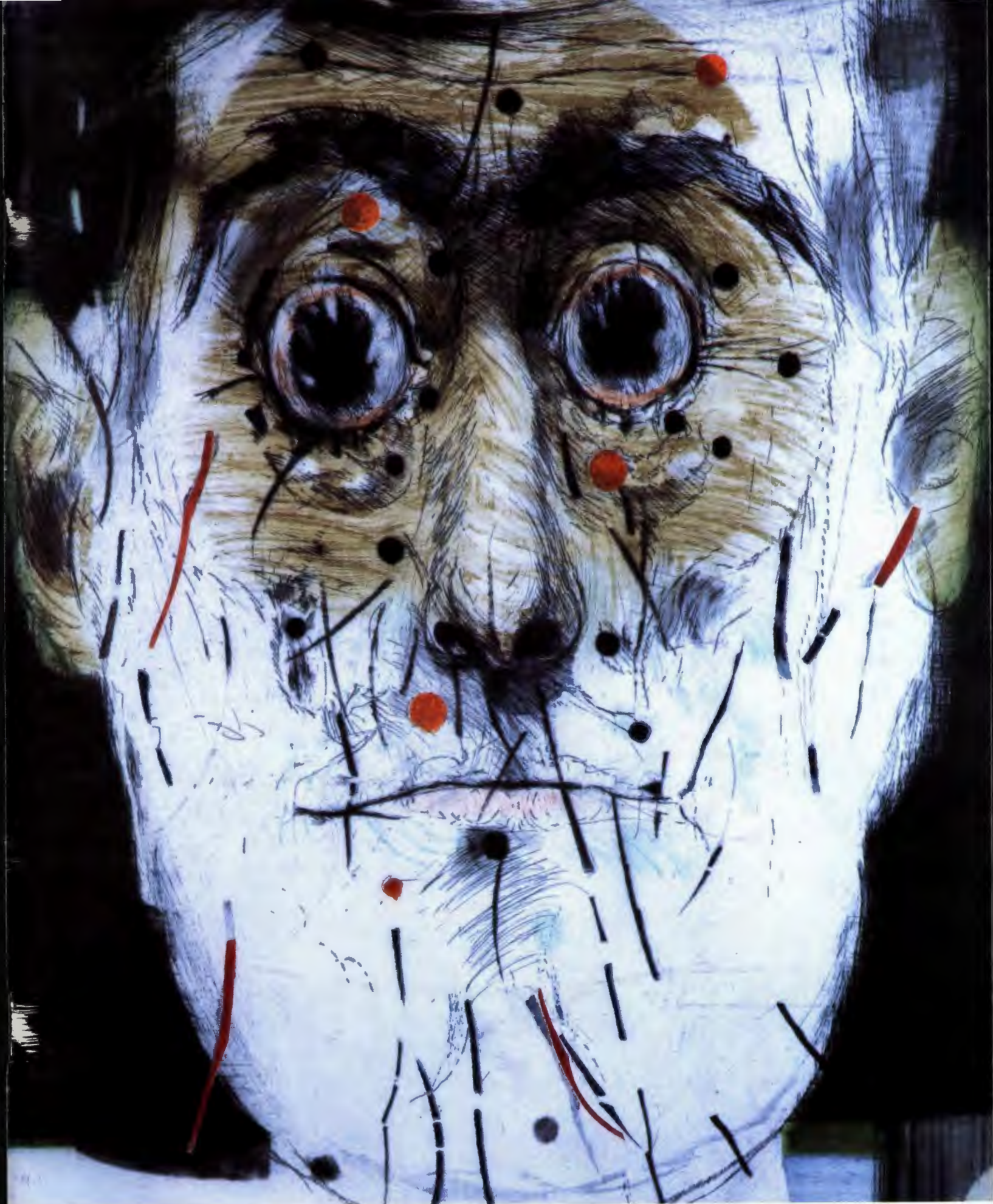
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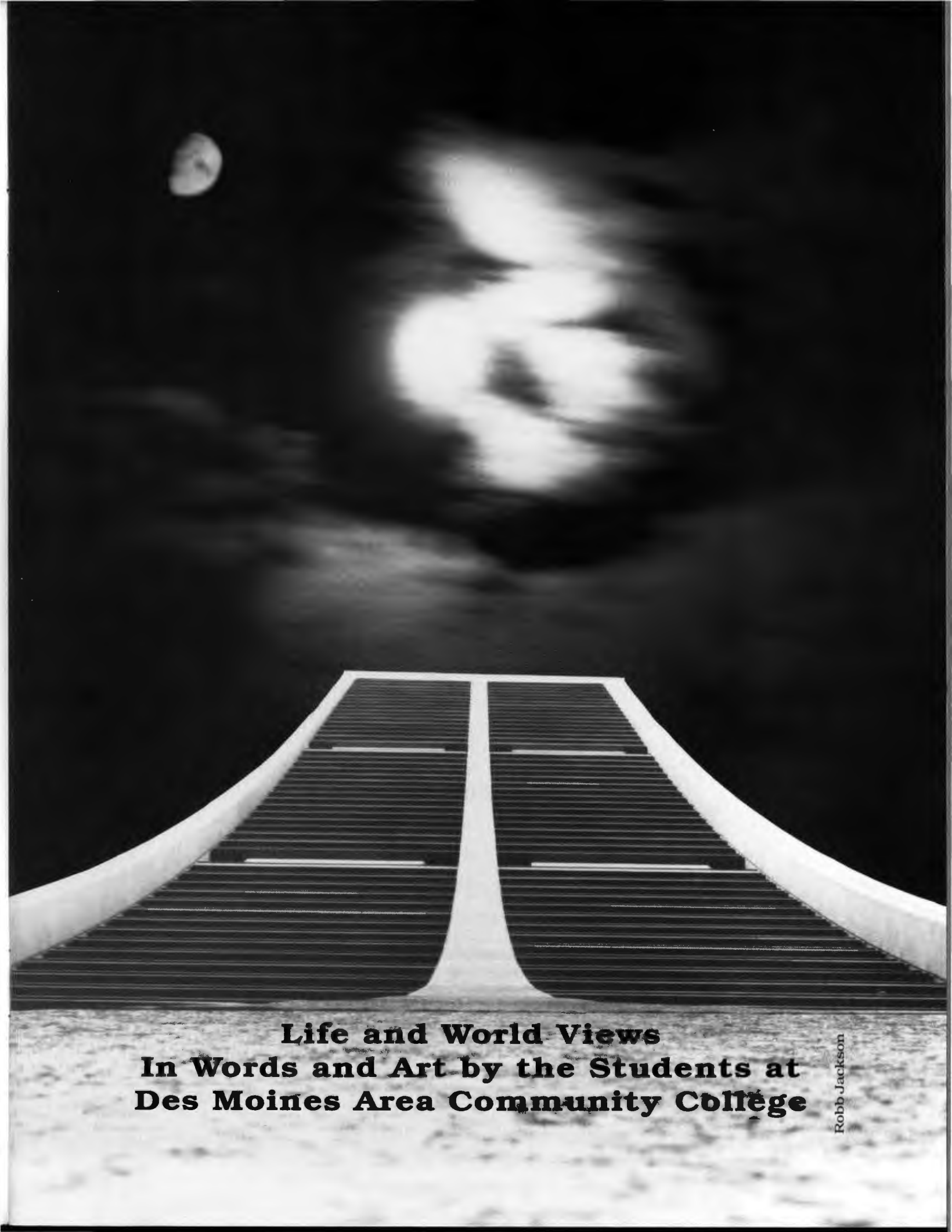
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E X P R E S S I O N S X I V



**Life and World Views
In Words and Art by the Students at
Des Moines Area Community College**

Robb Jackson

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Carol Young

Jordan's Place

by Virginia Ann McNichols



Illustration by Mark Hennick

In a city there are so many faces, Lena thinks, as she watches Abel Frantz make his way down the street. She does not know where he is going but she knows the time he will pass every day in his rumpled overcoat, knows his steps are slow as if weighted, although he is not heavy. He looks as if the wind could pick him up like dry leaves. Lena doesn't miss a thing — her sharp eyes fall on every movement on the street, as she shuffles around the newsstand selling papers. She makes change, her hands deftly automatic, like a typist on a keyboard, leaving her mind free to think of other things. She pulls her scarf tight for although the day is warm, she feels cold. Lena thinks of herself as inquisitive, but one thing

she prides herself on is minding her own business. People are nothing but trouble and she will not stick her nose where it doesn't belong. Bernie over at the cafe is another story. He gives coffee and day old donuts to bums and they come around like stray cats. Lena wouldn't give them the time of day if they asked, though one look at her glinting eyes and they pass on.

Jordan, who is seven years old, does not tell time yet. Where they lived before, he could hear old Mabel Johnson's chickens crowing in the morning. Now he hears radios through apartment walls, the hum and murmur of talk, the swishing noise of cars passing on the street. Today, none of these noises woke him and the alarm clock did not go off.

When he woke up, his mother was sleeping and he did not want to wake her. So he does not know if he is late for school. If he is late he will not see his mother at all, because she goes to work at four o'clock. He is proud of the fact he dresses himself and fixes his own breakfast, but he wishes he knew how to tell time. Now he watches the old woman who pulls the purple scarf around her and waits until the last customer has moved away. He will ask her the time and then decide whether to go to school or go back home.

"Excuse me.." he says, his voice as small as he is.

"Something you want?" Lena asks in a voice that suggests he should go someplace else.

"Could you tell me what time it is?"

"Time you were in school."

Jordan nods. He thought as much.

Lena has no patience with kids. If you don't watch them, they will steal you blind. She shoos him away, her hands fluttering like butterflies, "Well, run on then. Police will lock you up if you skip school. They might be looking for you now."

Jordan blinks, and a shiver runs across his shoulders. He can feel his stomach tightening like he is hungry. He'd never known the police locked up kids who don't go to school, but maybe he is breaking a law. He looks all around, but doesn't see a policeman.

He tightens his fingers around the straps of his school bag. The newsstand woman is still watching him so he edges away and then turns in the direction of the school, aware of the eyes on him. Mr. Frantz, who lives upstairs from Jordan, passes on the other side of the street, walking bent over, staring at the worn pavement. Jordan thinks he has a faraway look. At the stoplight he dawdles waiting for the light to turn green.

A woman in a silver car beside him, opens her door and calls him, "Joe, get in the car." He doesn't know why she is talking to him, unless she is from the school and wants to take him there. But she has his name wrong.

"My name's not Joe."

"Mr. Frantz has kept you late again," she says, looking at her wristwatch, "but I suppose I shouldn't complain."

Jordan turns his head — wondering what she means by Mr. Frantz making him late. Mr. Frantz is just a little way down the street, though he is walking the other way. Maybe the lady thinks he has been talking to Mr. Frantz. He wonders if she is from the school and how she knows Mr. Frantz. Well, everyone on this block knows Mr. Frantz, because he walks all the time, and will talk to you when he sees you, when he feels like it. Jordan thinks he is moody because sometimes he sees you and smiles and asks how you are, and other days he does not see you at all.

"Hurry child, the day will leave you standing and pass you right by," she calls in a voice Jordan thinks has the rising and falling quality of music, a voice which reminds him of home. He peers into the car at the lady who has silvery hair and while old enough to be a grandmother, doesn't look very much like anyone's grandmother he knows. She smiles at him like she has been waiting for him at this corner. The interior of the car looks like a spaceship instead of a car. The dashboard is made up of tiny dials and screens and Jordan thinks he would like to touch some of the dials and see how they work.

"The light's changing, come on," she keeps waiting even though the light is green and the cars behind her are honking.

"All right," Jordan climbs in. If she knows Mr. Frantz she must be a safe person to ride with. Maybe Mr. Frantz has told her about him, but she has got his name wrong.

"Don't forget your seatbelt." She reaches over and helps him slide the buckle and he catches a whiff of perfume that reminds him of summer and a time before they came to the city.

Jordan looks through the tinted window and the newsstand lady is watching him, and writing something down. He waves at her but she doesn't smile. Jordan has never seen her smile, all the times he has passed the newsstand. He thinks maybe she is too busy to smile, or maybe she is tired like his mother sometimes, when she has to go back to work.

Jordan's mother, Cindi breaks out of sleep like a diver

surfacing. The alarm didn't go off. Jordan will be late for school. She jumps off the mattress, which is pushed against the bare wall on the floor. She sees Jordan's quilt is folded unevenly and his cereal bowl is in the sink. Jordan has left for school without waking her. Damn, her internal alarm is as screwed up as the alarm clock they got at the Goodwill store. Jordan is independent for a seven-year-old, she thinks. She guesses he has no choice, that he has become self-reliant out of necessity. There are times he has to stay alone, when she works the night shift. She has got to find a day job. She is not going to that place one more night. She dresses and applies cosmetics, serious as one engaged in a ritual, one which if carried out precisely, will result in employment. She pulls on a pair of hose and hopes her skirt comes down over the runs. She can't afford to buy hose. She's paid the rent and bought groceries and she has nothing left. Boyd always told her she looked like a million dollars, and if so, that is as close as she is going to come, she thinks. She is dead broke, but she swings her purse across her shoulder as if she had a million dollars to burn.

She stops at the newsstand not looking directly at the old woman who runs the place. Cindi thinks it is possible the woman reads all the newspapers she sells. There might be an article about her, with Jordan's picture. Jordan has a memorable face, dark eyes — deep-set in a face too serious for his age. Boyd has plenty of money to spend advertising his missing son and wife.

Cindi pays for the paper, feeling the newsstand woman's eyes as if they are boring into her. She walks away as quickly as possible, unaware Lena has recognized her as the boy's

mother, the boy who climbed into the silver car and was spirited away. Lena hasn't survived life here by a misplaced optimism. The only thing she is optimistic about is dying. Death is bound to be an improvement. Even so she carries a gun in her bag wherever she goes. She believes in shooting first, like the people in old western movies she watches on

television. You can learn a lot from watching television she thinks.

When the woman drives past Jordan's school she slows the car to the speed designated for school zones, but she does not stop as Jordan expects her to.

"Excuse me," Jordan says, "That's my school."

The woman has her eyes on traffic and says, "Hmmm," as if she is not really listening, has forgotten he is in the car. Then she turns to him and says, "How was your music lesson?" Jordan doesn't know how to answer. He hasn't had a music lesson.

Maybe this lady was supposed to pick up some boy who looks like him who was taking a music lesson and she has picked up the wrong boy.

"I didn't have a music lesson. I'm on my way to school."

"You mean Mr. Frantz was late; I know he is absent minded but if he forgot your lesson again, I'll have to talk with him.

Jordan guesses she means Mr. Frantz who lives in the apartment upstairs from him; sometimes he hears music above his head, breaking through the ceiling and he likes to imagine an entire band is playing upstairs. He imagines a bunch of Mr. Frantz's friends come over to play their instruments, almost



Illustration by Joni Ayers

bursting the seams of the tiny apartment with their music. Sometimes Jordan falls asleep dreaming his fingers are forming the notes on the neck of a violin as he follows the music while it takes him along a path near the river, where leaves swirl around his feet and his mother and father are at the end of the path laughing together. He remembers such a time and only in sleep does he return to the end of the green summer.

One thing Jordan is certain of is this lady is not kidnapping him. For one thing, a fur cape is draped over her shoulders and diamond rings flash in the sun when she turns the steering wheel. If she needed a little boy, she could buy one. She doesn't act like a thief, the way she is humming and driving along like she is daydreaming, ignoring police cars when they whiz past. He is aware of police cars and policemen because of the way his mother tightens her hand around his whenever they pass on the street. When she gets where she is going, the lady will notice she has made a mistake and turn around and take him home. Except when he looks at her, the daydreaming look has left her face and she is muttering to herself. She is not talking to him, for she does not look at him but looks straight ahead, and her hands flutter over the wheel though the weight of the car holds steady on the road. The words come out as if from between her teeth, "Scoundrels, my own blood, going to a lawyer behind my back, the idea of telling him I am incompetent. They'd like to put me away and spend my money. Sit around all day calling the home shopping network using my money and never even move to do it. I never saw such a lazy bunch."

Jordan sees her left eye is twitching, which it wasn't before she became angry. He looks down at the papers on the seat beside her and though he can't read it all, he can make out some of what is written. He reads someone named Sarah has written because she feels her aunt is growing unable to care for herself. The facts are these: she goes downtown when everything is closed and bangs on the shop doors trying to get them open and the police have taken her home more than once. Another thing is she is sending those animal rights groups large sums of money and if it were a reasonable charity, she wouldn't say a word, but everyone knows those people are crazy. Worst of all she has fired her cleaning lady, and the house is a mess.

She has become a case for a psychiatrist. Jordan knows the word psychiatrist because that is the kind of doctor his mother saw before she went away.

Jordan watches carefully, thinking this lady is not sad like his mother when she went away, but as he watches her face, the anger ebbs away and the dreamy look returns. They have left the freeway now and are traveling slowly down a winding road which leads to a tall stone house. Jordan thinks it is as near to a castle in a fairy tale as he has ever seen, for the house has a turreted roof and its white walls are laced with ivy. Behind the house is a field of long grass and wildflowers which runs downhill into a forest where he sees a river, silver ripples flashing in the sun. Jordan forgets all about going home and there is nothing he wishes for more than to roam along the river. Maybe he could go fishing. He hasn't gone fishing in a long time. He decides to pretend to be Joe, at least for the afternoon. There will be time to tell her she made a mistake later in the day. He has already missed school so there's no hurry to go back. There is nothing he likes about school anyway. All the kids push and shove, even in the lunch line, though lunch is always awful and he can't see why anyone would push and shove to be the first to eat dried out macaroni.

"I'll fix lunch. If you'd like to stay outside and play for awhile, I'll call you when it's ready."

"Alright." Jordan sets his school bag on an iron bench in front of the house and heads around back to the riverbank. He picks up a willow branch from under the sweep of long branches and first swings it in an arc around his head, and then swishes it through the long grass.

All through lunch the lady calls him Joe and treats him as if he comes to lunch every day, as if he already knows where the silverware is when he drops his fork on the floor. She tells him to get a clean fork, though Jordan finds there are not any clean forks in the drawer where the silverware is kept, so he uses the same one. He plans to tell her the moment lunch is finished, except she goes in the living room leaving the dishes on the table. She slides down into the cushions on the couch and her eyes flutter closed. Jordan can tell she is sleeping from the rhythmic breathing which is almost like snoring except it



Illustration by Mark Hennick

is so quiet. Jordan is afraid to wake her. Instead he wanders around the room picking up knickknacks, little carved animals, pottery, and photographs. Scattered on the floor are dusty boxes which look like they were stored in the attic, and on the tables are scrapbooks and old newspapers. There is a grand piano in one corner of the room and next to it is a music stand with yellowing sheets of music. On a chair beside the piano there is a violin, the polished wood shining red-gold in the sunlight. Jordan touches the wood and runs his fingers over the strings imagining how it would be to play it. He wishes he knew how. He wanders over to the mantle above the fireplace and gazes at all the framed photographs. One picture shows a young man in an Air Force uniform, and inscribed at the base of the picture, "To Mom, love Joseph, 1969." Another picture shows a boy seated at a piano, his fingers hovered above the keys. The boy's hair falls over his brow. He wonders where the boy is now, but somehow he knows he is not on the corner waiting.

Cindi twists the key in the rusted lock, and jiggles the door until it opens, calling out, "Jordan, it's me. Good news, I got a new job — no more nights."

She pushes the door and is struck by the empty apartment, dark and cold, and a wrenching in her stomach. Like an attack she feels a force pushing her inward as if the air around her had become pressurized. If Boyd has trailed her — he could have taken Jordan and by now be miles away. She bites her bottom lip hard as she thinks how Jordan is not safe with his father. Boyd is a sleeping volcano. She will have to follow on the bus and she doesn't have bus fare. She thinks about selling blood but even if she went to all the places she knows, it still won't be enough. She frowns, wondering how much money that old woman has in her newsstand cash drawer.

She clasps her purse in her arms and paces the tiny room, trying to convince herself Jordan might just have strayed, gotten lost on a playground somewhere. Could Jordan have stayed late after school? She wishes it were so, but it is already too late. School would have closed. She looks around the apartment. They do not have a phone, and anyway there is no one to call. Where she came from, there was not one person who believed her side of the story. Boyd lies more plausibly

than she tells the truth.

She shoves her purse across her shoulder and slams the door behind her, not bothering with the lock. She walks to the lift, pushes the button and waits. The lift does not come and she does not know how long she has been waiting. She takes the stairs and at the bottom meets Mr. Frantz, pushing the door open, two sacks of groceries precariously balanced in his arms.

Cindi instinctively stops and says, "I can get one of those for you," and turns back to climb the stairs.

"It is alright, I can manage," but he allows her to take one of the sacks. Mr. Frantz stops to rest at the landing and Cindi turns to wait, trying to think of what she will do next. The old man's breath comes in gasps. These stairs are hard for him.

"You are kind to take trouble."

"It's no trouble," Cindi says, then asks, "Have you seen my little boy today?"

"No, I don't think so. Is he lost?"

"I don't know... Yes, I guess you could say that." The old man's voice has a concern she is not used to and she thinks she is going to cry, so she turns away to the final flight of stairs.

"If he is lost, ask Lena at the newsstand," Mr. Frantz says. "She sees everything."

Lena, the woman at the newsstand. "Now I know her name, I can never rob her," Cindi thinks. "I don't want to know --why is he telling me?" Then she thinks how the woman watches everything. Maybe she will have seen Jordan. She wonders whether she would have robbed the woman, but she can't be sure one way or another. She is only sure of loss which falls like blows, crushing her inch by inch, minute by minute.

The minutes are nothing to Lena. She closes when business dies down. She goes by her feel for the street rather than a time clock. "The day has been a good one," she thinks, "for business, though maybe not for the world at large." Bad news sells more papers than good. She has not thought of the boy who slipped into the silver car all day long, so when she opens a paper and sees his face, she thinks it is some kind of omen. She reads the caption which says the boy was abducted by his mother, who has escaped from a mental institution and

hasn't been seen since July. There is a quote from the father, saying for the good of the boy he must be found. Lena never believes anything she reads and she does not believe this. She remembers once when someone said something was for her own good and she believed them. She closes the paper and fingers the note where she wrote down the license number. There are ways to trace a car. Bernie at the cafe will know how. Besides feeding those bums, he gives free coffee to the cops, who content themselves with hanging around drinking cup after cup of coffee instead of solving crimes. There is clear evidence of this — no one she knows ever gets back what is stolen, but you can see the dirty coffee cups stacked up on the tables. She guesses tracing one license plate will be a small affair. It is not her affair but she guesses it will not hurt to ask Bernie. The reason is locked away inside her where even she will not find it.

Finding Jordan is all Cindi can think of. Her shoes clip the pavement as she runs toward the newsstand, but before she reaches it, she sees the window has been pulled down and the padlock holds the door in place. Lena has already gone home and it will be morning before she returns. Cindi decides to check the neighborhood, the park and the school ground. She does not think Jordan will be in any of these places, but she has to do something. She searches the dark places in doorways, as far as she can see down the long street. If a child moves through the dark she follows, her breath quickening, and when she comes close she thinks she feels what dying must be like. If she does not find him, her only choice will be to go to the police. They will lock her up, but at least they will learn if Jordan is safe. They will look for him. There is no consolation in her thoughts, but this is nothing new. Her thoughts have always been enemies, forming against her like an opposing army, bayonets drawn waiting for the order to charge. So far she has held them back using every method she has read about in books. She practices deep breathing looking for the still place within, except it does not exist as far as she can tell. She repeats verses she learned as a child which have not left her. She walks until she can walk no further before she turns back. When she reaches Bernie's cafe, she stops and gazes in the window. She

can see three policemen at a table. She may as well talk to them; she is too tired to walk all the way to the police station. She pushes against the door but it opens before her and the woman, Lena, blocks her path.

"Come with me," Lena says, motioning her to follow her to the newsstand.

Cindi follows as Lena unlocks the door. Cindi steps inside thinking this is the first time since she has moved to the city someone has invited her within their walls. Lena switches on a lamp which sheds a glow over the stacks of papers, over the bare wood walls, over the isolation Cindi has felt growing inside her since she discovered Jordan missing. She still doesn't know what Lena wants but she thinks Lena is trying to be helpful, that she may know something about where Jordan is.

Lena picks up the newspaper she saw earlier, the one with the picture of Jordan and shows it to Cindi, "Your son." It is not a question.

"Have you seen him?" Cindi bites the inside of her lip, tries to still the rapid beat of her heart. She senses it is better not to hurry Lena.

"Here." Lena hands her a paper with an address scribbled on it — 1523 Greenoak Drive, Valleydale.

"This is where Jordan is?"

"He got in a car this morning with a lady. I have seen her before, but not for a long time. I remember something.... but I can't think of it now. I got Bernie to get one of his friends to trace the plates." Lena points to the address.

Cindi grips the paper like it is all she has to hold and says, "Thank you. I don't know what to say." Cindi takes Lena's hand in an impulsive gesture and then when her glance falls upon the cash register, she lets her hand go. Cindi holds the paper in her hand and her breath is almost gasping as if she has been running. She feels as if she has narrowly escaped disaster, like someone who has come to the edge of the cliff, leaned out over the edge but has been pulled back. She thinks even now she can see the ridges and rocks, the dark crevices running across the bottom, but she holds the paper in her hand as if it

is a strong rock jutting out, as if it is salvation.

“There is a bus to Valleydale. It is maybe twenty miles south. I do not think your son is in danger,” Lena switches off the light and opens the door. Cindi waits while she slowly adjusts the padlock. Then she sets out for the station, hope carrying her like a blustery wind.

Cindi can't sit still in the bus station. She is pacing the room waiting for the bus which will take her to Jordan. She is not prepared to hear her name called, and turns, afraid someone is going to stop her, but relaxes when she sees it is only Abel Frantz.

“I hoped I could catch you. Lena told me. She remembered where she had seen the lady before, the one who has taken your son. The lady had a son — he was my best student. He would have gone to Juilliard. She is confused, her mind gets the years mixed up now. Not to worry, your son is safe. I have a cab outside — I would like to come with you if you don't mind.”

Cindi steps back a little, looking at Abel Frantz's watery blue eyes and worried expression. She does not make a point of trusting people, but she trusts Lena and Lena has sent him. She follows him outside to the waiting cab.

Jordan wants to go back home but he doesn't know the way. He goes inside where the lady is sitting beside a box of scrapbooks and going through them, turning the pages one by one. She calls him over, her voice light as if she has been waiting for him to return. She sits under the lamp looking only at the pictures on the pages, leaving the rest of the room in shadow. Jordan sits beside her, watching her turn the pages slowly.

“Don't you think you should practice?” she turns to him absently.

“Practice what?”

“Your music, it's waiting for you. Go on, and I'll listen.”

Jordan doesn't know how to play but he walks over to the violin and picks up the bow. He draws it across the strings and the sound is awful. He wonders what you have to do to make

music. The lady doesn't seem to notice the screeching sound he is making. He sits down and holds a finger against the fret moving it up and down and listening to the sounds, plucking the strings, absorbed when Abel Frantz and his mother walk into the room.

Abel speaks to the lady. “Hello, Mrs. Halloway, I hope you are well. It has been a long time.”

“Mr. Frantz, I remember seeing you today when I picked up Joe...” she looks around at Jordan, then falters, “...when I drove by to the corner I used to pick Joe up...”

She closes her eyes as if to remember, then opens her eyes, “I don't know what I was thinking of.” She straightens her shoulders and pulls down her sweater in a quick gesture, “You are right. It has been a long time.”

She looks around the room as if she has come upon the scene fresh, as if she has not been here lately and gestures not apologetically but as if to say this is how it is, “I have been going through some old things lately. There is so much I have stored.”

Cindi crosses swiftly to Jordan, slipping an arm around his shoulders. Jordan carefully places the violin on the chair and slips a hand into his mother's, even though it occurs to him he is a big boy and doesn't need to hold his mother's hand.

Abel is talking softly to the lady and then she gives Jordan, a long look as if she is now seeing him clearly. She says, “You are very much like my son Joe when he was your age. I enjoyed your stay with me today.”

“Thank you,” Jordan says, not sure how he should reply. He thinks he will always remember the day he was a boy named Joseph. The grip of his mother's hands on his shoulders reminds him he is real and he has his own name and place. On the long drive home, he dreams he will someday play a violin, and imagines he knows all the notes he saw on the yellow paper on the music stand and how to turn them into music. He'll draw the bow across the strings and instead of a screech he'll hear music, like the sad wind sighing in the trees, and then light like water rippling past a sunlit riverbank and then late in the evening, like a voice calling him home.

Jumping Jennie Juniper

by Barbara Schwemler

Jumping Jennie Juniper
Crosses to school at the light.
But before she looks, she'll leap.
Causing many a wheel
to smoke and squeal,
Many a brake to lock and slam.
Turning my knees to jelly
and Traffic to jam.

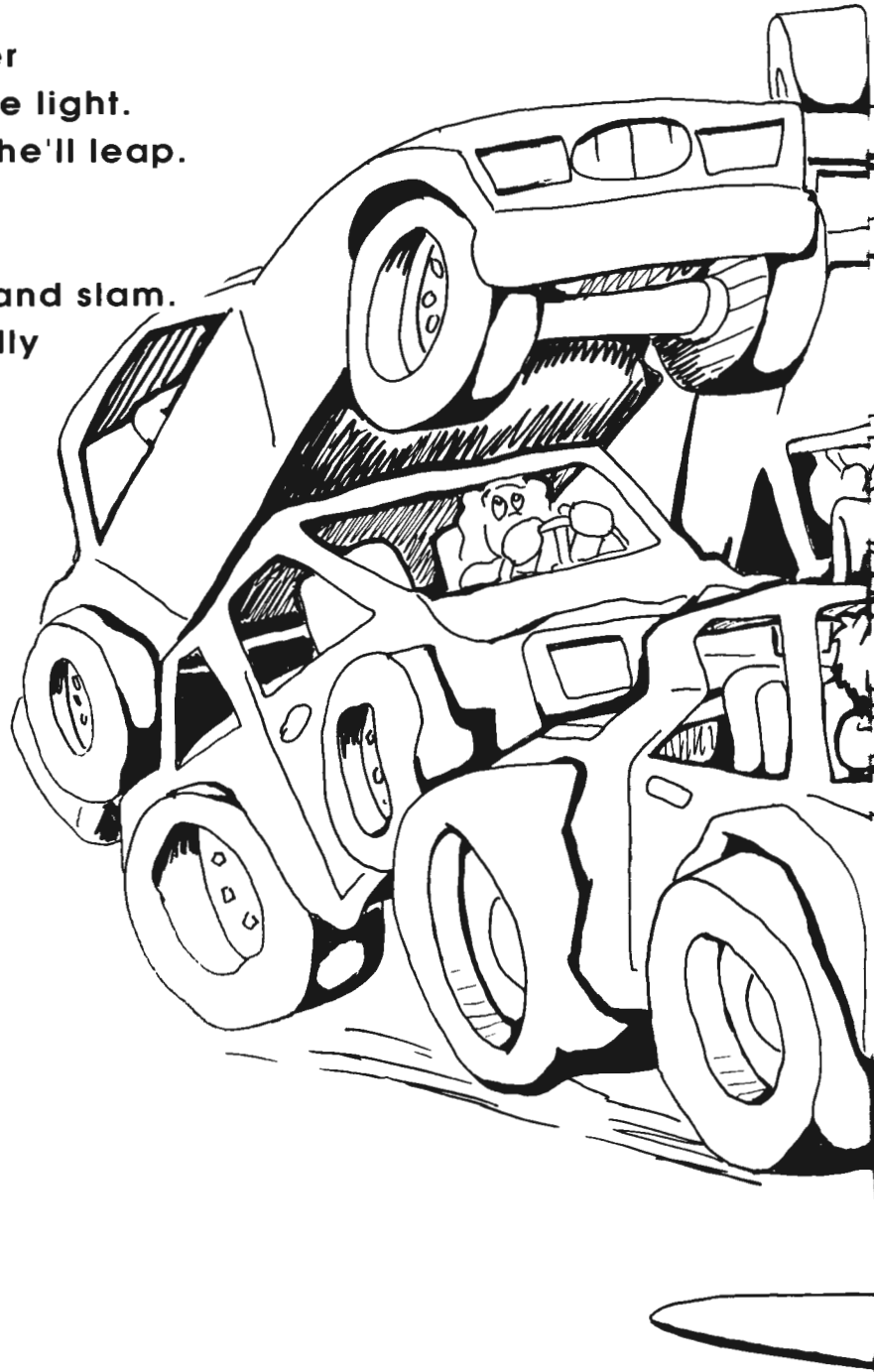




Illustration by Jeff Hanson

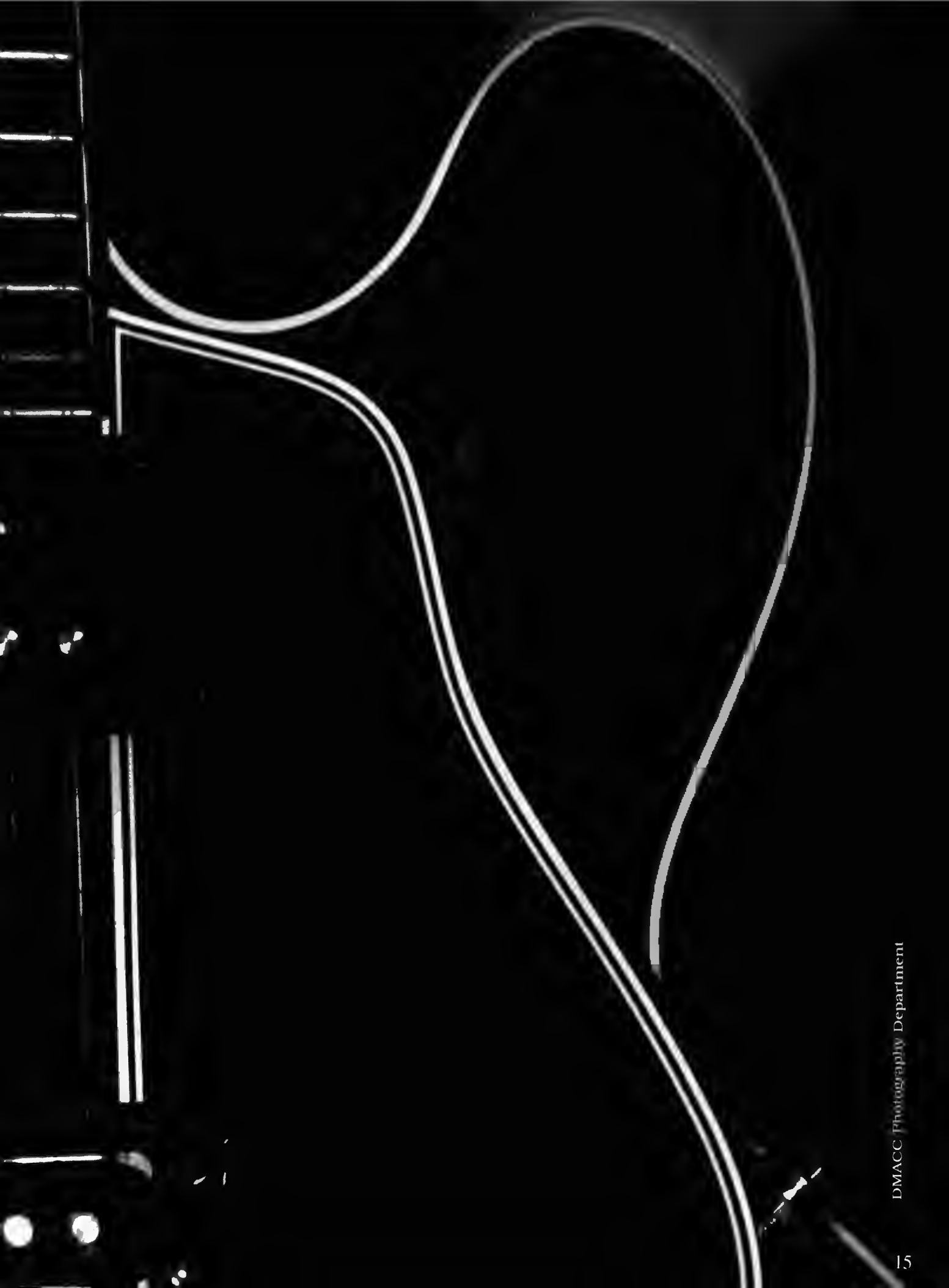
BLUE DREAM # 3.

It happens
while I sleep,
the faraway voices
of mandolins and saxophones
cry out from moonless
temporary landscapes.

Spirit changes
echo off the walls
with the tempo
of wounds inflicted upon words

Syllables trapped
heartbeats of language
arrhythmically simple visionary words
of sinew and bone
seeking a redemption
of the body in an
illumination of indigo light.

by Ron Jones



Monarch

*It was a Thursday I think when
the leaves had turned gold
ready for autumn's blue vault
I was sitting outside on the
grass next to the flower bed
when you planed in, like one
of those paper airplanes we
used to make when we were
little, and lit on the
sweet alyssum*

*. . . so fragile, like an egg-
shell, light as breath, you were
only there for a moment, when you lifted off,
glittering yellow in the sun
(with a confidence we all could
use) and banked toward
Mexico.*

Kathy Tyler



Michelle Smith

Mauricio Lasansky

Born: Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1914

Attended Superior School Fine Arts, Argentina

Director of the Free Fine Arts, Argentina

Director of the Free Fine Arts School, Villa Maria, Cordoba, Argentina, 1936; Director of the Taller Manualidades, Cordoba, Argentina, 1939

Asked to establish a print department in the School of Art and Art History at the University of Iowa in 1945. Named Virgil M. Hancher Distinguished professor of Art, 1967

One-person Exhibitions:

Since his arrival in the U.S., has received over 175 awards and many honors. He has had over 200 one-man shows in the U.S. and 35 other countries. His works can be seen in over 140 museums and public collections in the U.S., Argentina, Spain, Australia, West Germany, Poland, Mexico, England, Italy, and other countries.

Selected Awards and Honors:

Guggenheim Fellowship, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1953, 1963

Eyre Medal, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, 1957, 1959

Posado Award, Primera exposicion Bienal Interamericana de Pintura y Grabado, Mexico City 1959

The Lasansky Room, an 1800 square foot space dedicated to the permanent display of his prints and drawings, the University of Iowa Museum of Art, 1976

Honored Artist Award, Fourth Latin American Bienal of Graphic Arts, Exposicion Retrospectiva Homenaje IV Bienal de Puerto Rico, 1979

Distinguished Teaching of Art Award, the College Art Association of America, New Orleans, LA, 1980

Invited and installed as an Associate member of the National Academy of Arts and Design, New York City, 1981

Awarded the Honor of Printmaker Professor Emeritus, the Southern Graphics Council, 1982

Named Virgil M. Hancher Professor Emeritus, the University of Iowa, 1984

Dedication of the Lasansky Wing, a 5,000 square foot space for the permanent display of his prints and drawings, the new Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, 1989

Honorary Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts, from the Iowa Arts Council, by decree of the Governor of the State of Iowa and Iowa Arts Council Board, 1990

Awarded the Certificate of Recognition by the Governor of the State of Iowa, for Distinguished Service to the State of Iowa, 1991



Sue Bjork and Mary Ohland

A photograph of a printmaking studio. In the foreground, there are several tubes of ink in red and yellow, some wrapped in plastic. A wooden block is visible, and a metal tray contains a greenish liquid. The background is filled with various tools and materials, including a large metal tray and a wooden block. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures and colors of the materials.

Mauricio Lasansky and the Art of Printmaking

Charles Moore & Centerbrook Architects: Glenn Arbonies and Richard King, Principals



Mary Ohland

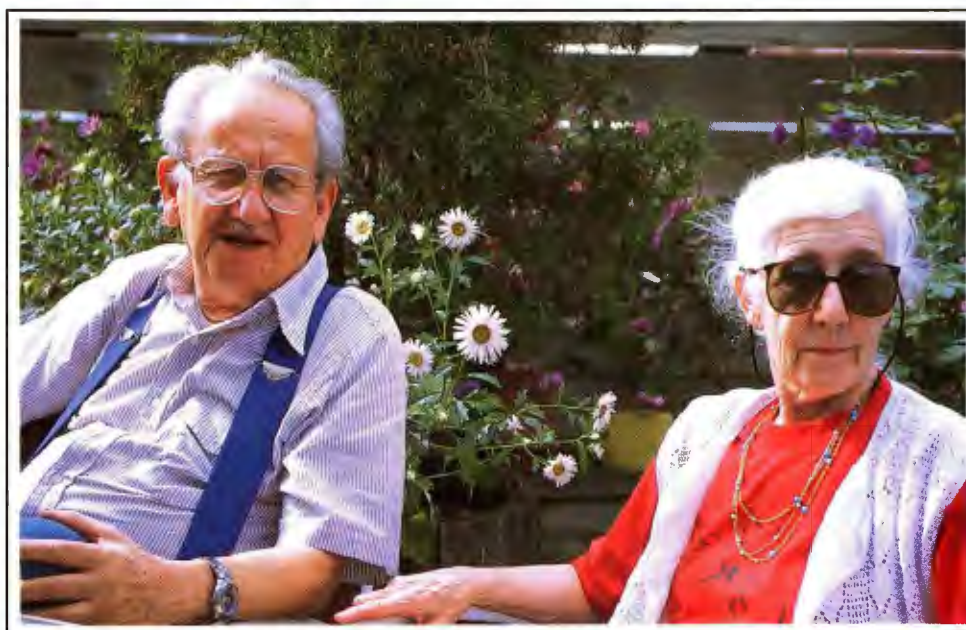


Cal North

An Artistic Life

by Joseph Czestochowski
Director, Cedar Rapids Museum of Art

A great deal has been written about Mauricio Lasansky over the last fifty years. But this coverage does not, necessarily, adequately do justice to his singular achievements as an individual, artist, and teacher. To do so, we must spend time with Lasansky's powerful images, and embrace them not only as icons of the times, but also as poignant expressions of an individual's search for truth. Similarly, we must acknowledge our debt to Emilia Barragan Lasansky, for her contributions are an integral part of his work.



Sue Bjork

Mauricio and Emilia Lasansky at home

Today, Mauricio Lasansky's art is internationally recognized for its technical virtuosity and humanism. He has created over 260 prints and since the mid 1940s, has taught hundreds of students at the University of Iowa. So vigorous was Lasansky in this mission, that by September 1962, *Time* magazine called him "the nation's most influential printmaker," and his university studio "the printmaking capital of the United States." This workshop and its many students are a critical part of Lasansky's legacy. At the same time he has received five Guggenheim Fellowships, more than ever granted one individual; is represented in more than 140 public collections; has been the subject of more than 200 one-person exhibitions; and is the recipient of six honorary degrees. Finally, his role in the revitalization of intaglio printmaking after the second World War provides the historical context for his work.

Lasansky's affiliation for several years with Stanley William Hayter's (1901-1988) Atelier 17 was a critical influence. The tremendous vitality of this environment was reflected in the new sense of energy and movement in his work. The effect was not unlike the way in which the remarkable Joseph Hecht (1891-1951) ignited Hayter's interest in non-representational line engraving and its technical and expressive potential. Hayter's workshop emphasized the "automatic" and experimental use of line and engraving to express space, movement, and form in a new way. Today Hecht remains little known; however he was an important intermediary who carried the traditional work of Martin Schongauer (c. 1430-91) and Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506) to the avant garde orientation so readily embraced by Hayter's Atelier 17 artists. However, Hayter's constant emphasis on the purity of an expressive line stands in sharp contrast to the social and emotional quality of his work.



DMACC Photo Department

Mauricio Lasansky's Studio Workspace in Iowa City

The respect for human dignity shown by Goya and Velasquez was a poignant precedent for Lasansky. In a 1970s interview, Lasansky commented, "I love Velasquez for what Goya is not... He never got involved with the observer. He always was involved with the model. He had such respect for human dignity that all his skills as an artist were on the surface. He glorified man. He made the little dwarf the most moving thing, it tears your heart out." However, in 1961 the artist commented, "But my great teacher was the Depression. There were lots of ugly things then." The artist's subsequent imagery never abandoned the human form as the basis of his drama. The characters in his major works are presented as players on the stage.

One of Lasansky's crowning achievements was *The Nazi Drawings* completed between 1961 and 1966 and first exhibited in 1967 at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Alan Fern, director of the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., commented:

For Lasansky, this was both an artistic watershed and an emotional catharsis, during which he turned his major creative energies away from the print to give physical embodiment to his seething reaction against the Nazi holocaust. He saw the unleashing of bestiality in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s as a brutal attack on man's dignity, and felt it carried the potential seeds of man's destruction. Elements of his earlier prints reappear in *The Nazi Drawings*, but transformed into powerful visual equivalents for the perpetrators and victims of the tragedy as well as the paralyzed bystanders.



Mary Ohland

Lasansky at the University of Iowa Museum of Art

The emotional intensity of these drawings was similarly expressed in the artist's series of eight prints from 1975-79 entitled *Kaddish*, providing the cover of this publication. At about the same time, Lasansky created *Quetzalcoatl*, consisting of 54 plates, a tremendous technical accomplishment. However, as the artist himself stated, "Technique is no more than a good vocabulary, not an end in itself." Instead, what really matters is the human element of his work. The artist has further commented: "I think the universe is concentrated in a human being... A picture is like people - an accumulation of different moments at one time."



Sue Bjork

Detail From the Kaddish #4



Sue Bjork

Detail from Kaddish #5

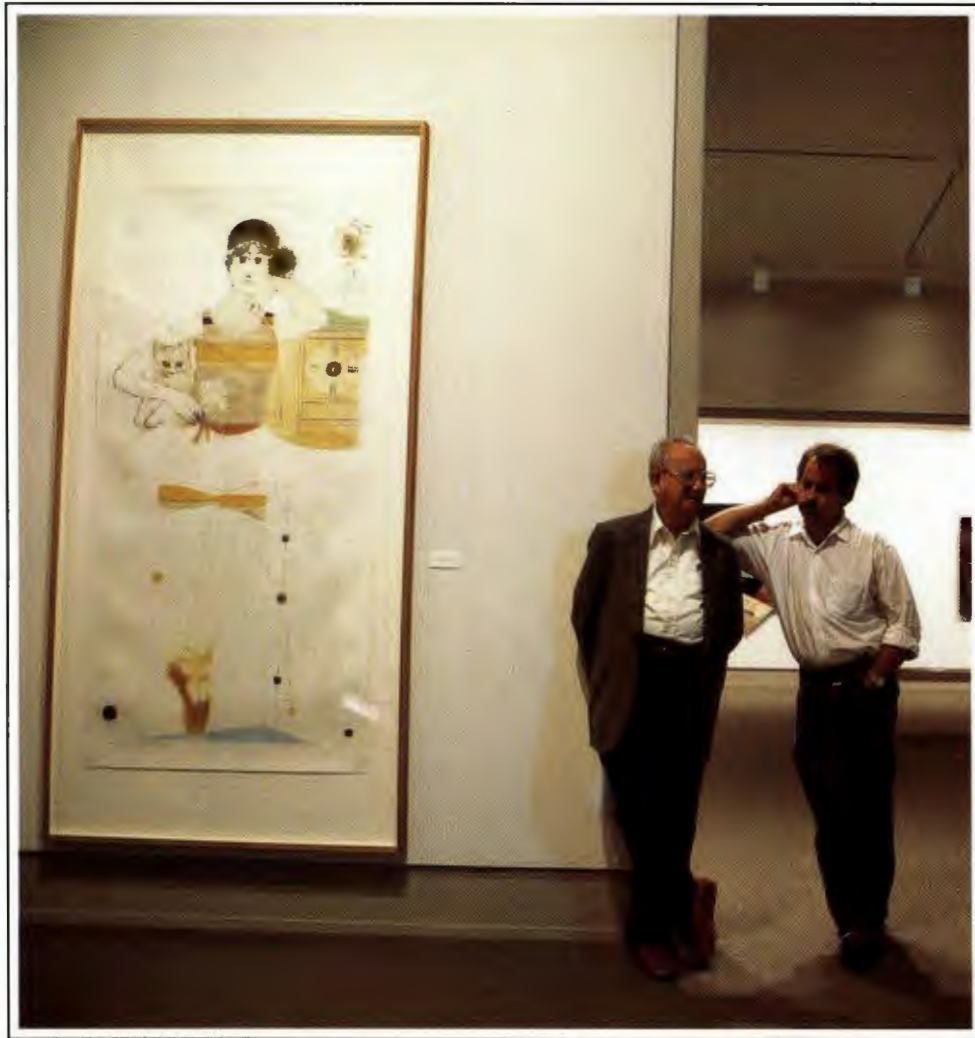
Lasansky is also well known for his self-portraits and the tender, intimate works depicting his wife and six children. Throughout, Lasansky's work represents the artist self-described as an individual who firmly believes in people, and who depicts them suffering life's horrors and exalting its joys. In his own words, "But what is more sacred than life?"



Sue Bjork

Detail of Oriental Figure

The Lasansky legacy will continue to enrich the lives of many individuals. In 1989, he, Emilia, and their family, with J. Carter Brown, Director of the National Gallery, dedicated a series of permanent Lasansky galleries in the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art. In so doing, the artist has shared his vision in perpetuity with the citizens of Iowa and ensured through his work "History will know the truth of today."



DMACC Photo Department

**Mauricio and his Son Phillip
(Daughter Maria Jimena in Print)**

New Contexts

**by I. Michael Danoff
Director, Des Moines Art Center**

Nearly 20 years ago I wrote an essay about Mauricio Lasansky in which I argued that his pathway as an artist was characteristic of the one followed by most developing Abstract Expressionist painters. The Abstract Expressionists, who emerged as such in the late 1940s and early 1950s, made art which was both abstract and visibly expressionistic through personalized paint handling or evocative colors. These artists, by and large, put the United States on the international art map for the first time.

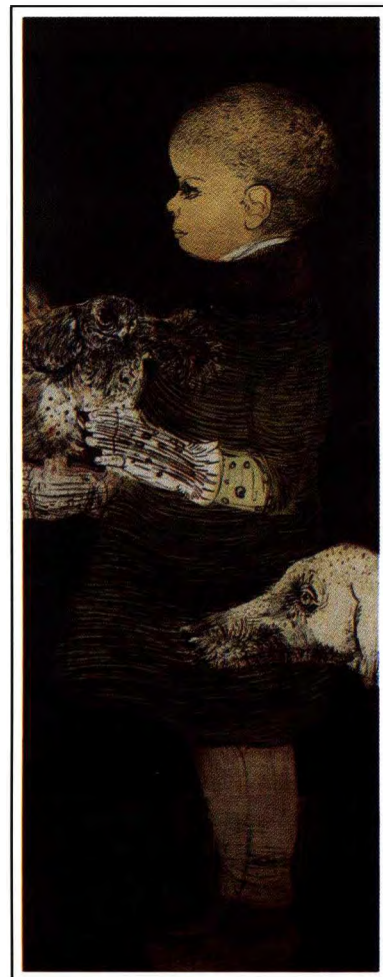


Mary Ohland

I. Michael Danoff

Typically, the Abstract Expressionist was impacted by being an immigrant (or child of immigrants), the Great Depression, Hitler's rise to power, the Spanish civil War, World War II and the Holocaust. Understandably, the art which grew out of such difficult circumstances was characterized by the utmost seriousness and solemnity. Aesthetically, most such artists first came under the influence of Cubism and then Surrealism before emerging with a mature abstract style.

While Lasansky's experiences and development were quite similar to those of the Abstract Expressionists, he never did fully abandon the recognizable image at that time but rather reaffirmed and used it as one of the most powerful instruments to express his vision. I argued that the reason he did not abandon the image was because the extreme spontaneity and the huge fields of color characteristic of Abstract Expressionism were at odds with the fundamental properties of printmaking.



Mary Ohland

Luis Felipe (1963)



Cal North

Plate for Cain (1945)

At the time Lasansky decided to stay with figuration--in the late 1940s--he seemed the odd man out. The momentum was with abstraction, and even into the late 1970s, abstraction was considered by most to be the only route to art world adulation.

But around 1970 figurative art began a slow, inexorable return to acceptability. In 1970, the then Abstract Expressionist, Philip Guston, stunned the art world by re-introducing recognizable images into his paintings, images that bespoke the overt expression of sensibility. By the end of that decade, many artists were making paintings which were figurative and expressive. Thus, in the broader historical context which



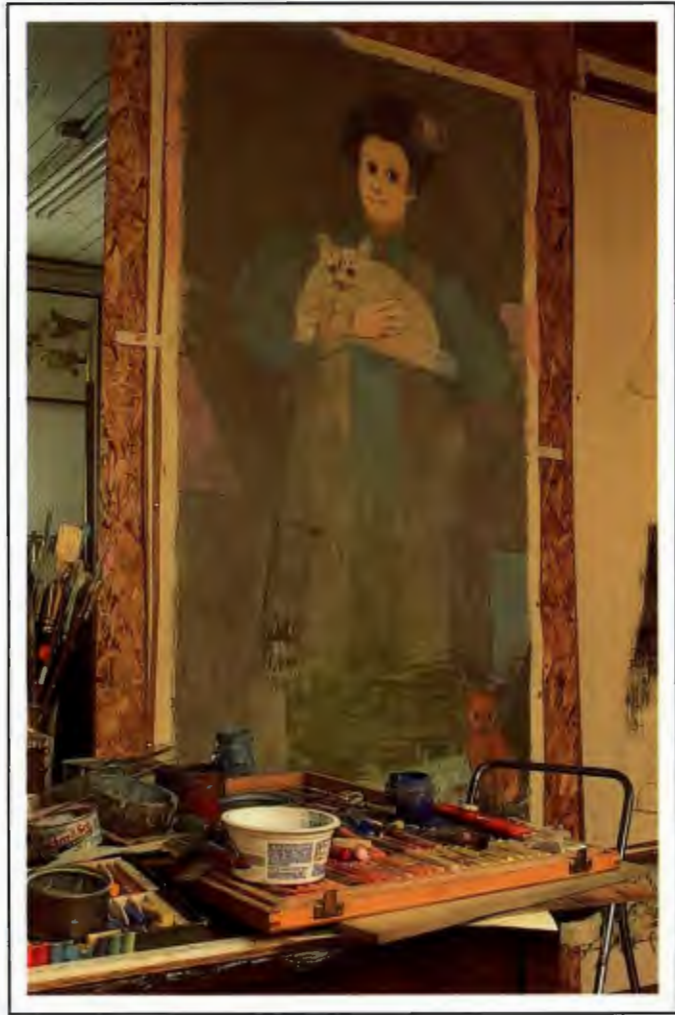
Mary Ohland

Kaddish #4

now has come into existence, and in which figuration has regained a significant amount of interest, Lasansky's work should be reconsidered. (Lasansky has explored abstraction occasionally in recent years, but the preponderance of his work remains figurative.)

There is another way in which changes in the art world make it appropriate to reconsider Lasansky's work. In recent years, social and political subject matter has become a driving force in a great deal of the most challenging art. This is as shocking a reversal as was the return to acceptability of figurative art. The accepted dogma, especially since the ascendancy of Abstract Expressionism, was that art and politics do not mix.

Lasansky always has maintained an interest in political art. One finds it in his prints as far back as the 1930s, again in a work from the mid-1950s such as *Espana*, in the *Nazi Drawings* from 1961-66, and again in drawings from the past ten years or so.



Mary Ohland

An artist who makes work which human beings will continue to find enriching for many decades, and more, is an artist who has remained true to his or her own vision, whether or not that vision is part of art world momentum. It is because Lasansky stuck to his vision that so many of his works continue to enrich.

Mauricio Lasansky on His Art

What people need to understand for a democracy to work is that simple principle. We're not the same, but we have the same rights. That way we're glorifying the diversity, that's the strength of our system.



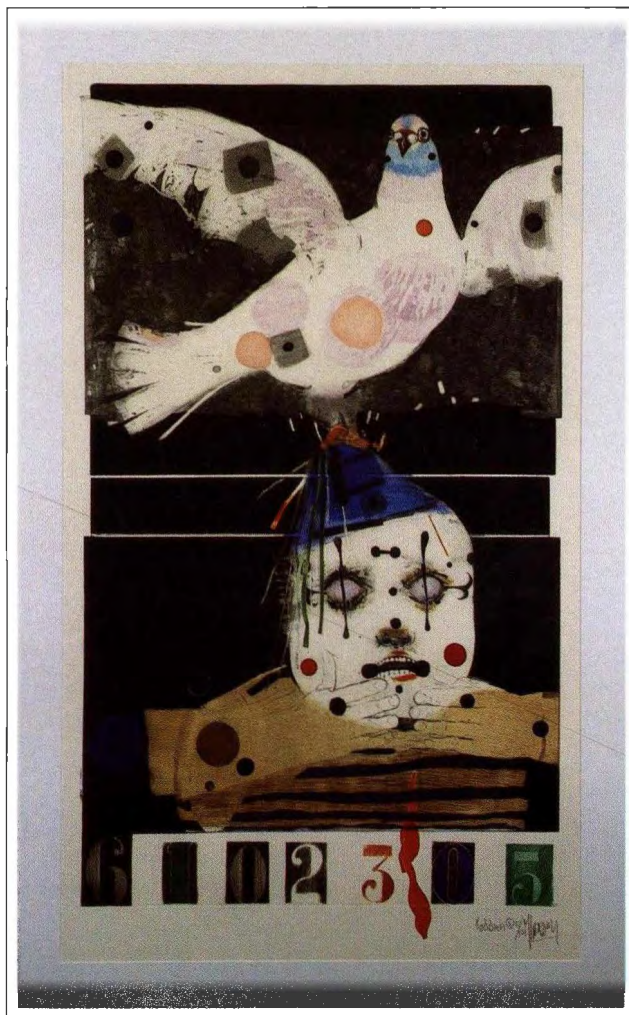
Mary Ohland

Mauricio Lasansky at Home

Modern civilization took away a hell of a lot of the survival instincts. That's where we got the Nazis, you know. The (German) society was castrated. They did not have the ability to think anymore.

I mean, how can you explain a civilization like the (Nazi) Germans'? Let's not say prehistoric, but let's consider the past thousand years; sophisticated, educated, great musicians, great philosophers. How in hell can you explain how a country can get that low? I don't mean everyone; just the Nazis. If you are a sympathizer, or if you don't say a word, you are still a Nazi.

The industrial era is giving us many things. It's giving us some things, but taking away some things that made human beings survive the last twenty thousand years. If you look at cave drawings, if you look at how they were made, what kind of life they have, you won't believe it. I was in Spain with my son, many years ago. I was taking him to these caves (at Alta Mira). I wanted him to see it. We ran across an engineer. We got friendly. He said, "I'm an engineer."



Mary Ohland

Kaddish #5

I said, "I'm an artist."

"Maybe you would like to see what I found; oh, maybe six months ago."

He took me to a cave that he discovered making a road. I never saw drawings so beautiful. It's unbelievable. I wish I could draw one tenth as well as these "primitive" people; and these so-called primitive men had a lot of time. At night they were scared to death, so they went into the caves, and somehow, they had torchlight with animal grease or

something, and they drew and they engraved. Oh, the experience of that day. How to teach the other guy hand-to-hand. These guys were very little guys, you know, and they did pictures of these great bison. Unbelievable, these primitive people, twenty thousand years ago.

The process is not the important thing. That is just technique, mechanics. Anyone can understand the process in ten minutes. I spent many years teaching at the university; not training printers, but teaching artists. I could teach a guy to



Mary Ohland

Kaddish #6

scratch a plate in fifteen minutes. To train an artist, that takes many years. The print shop is just where I taught because that was where I worked. The important thing is the seeing and the making of the image.

The sketching is the first thing, but not of a specific idea. You need to start drawing before you have an image set in your mind; just start drawing whatever comes to mind to see what happens. Draw constantly, you must always be sketching, because it makes your ideas flow and your mind work. Then you look at the images you have and see if you want to work with any of them.

I must always have many things going on. I might set one aside and not work on it for months, then I'll come back and see something, and work on it again. I always have many unfinished pieces in the studio. I don't beat them you know, they (the works) beat me. But you know, Napoleon was a great general, and not even Napoleon could win them all. We battle every day in the studio. You fight, and you fight, and you fight, and one day you say the hell with it: (chuckle) No. But I work on many things at one time, not only on one print, and that way I keep alive and keep from going nuts.

Dignity is not a symbol bestowed on man, nor does the word itself possess force. Man's dignity is a force and the only modus vivendi by which man and his history survive. When mid-twentieth century Germany did not let man live and die with this right, man became an animal. No matter how technologically advanced or sophisticated, when a man negates this divine right he not only becomes self-destructive, but castrates his history and poisons our future. This is what the Nazi Drawings are about.

**The Introduction to the Catalogue
of the Nazi Drawings**

The working process for me, is momentary. That's the search. You don't know what you look for, but you know what you don't like, but it's not easy to find what you really like. There's nothing to lose, you see. You keep searching and searching. You try anything that might feel right, and then see if it is. I play with the images constantly. In fact, when I have decided on a final image and run the prints, I always cover them with plexiglass immediately. All of the prints in the studio must be covered, or I'll keep trying things with them.

You see, the scraper (used to remove images from copper plates) is like history. We live today, but we would not live today if we did not have a history. That's the approach I have with the plate. All (the image from a plate) was black (before incising). What it was, it is; always there even if you can't see it.



Sue Bjork

Detail of Quetzalcoatl

You can print in yellow, red, whatever you want. Well, I like red, or black and white when I start to see the whole image. It's a little bit like perfume, good or bad. Black and white is right or it's wrong. Like the written word, it's much more sober. But people don't want to have anything to do with black and white now. With television, they like to make life light. They don't mind working eight hours a day in front of a desk, all their lives if they have a chance to go and watch a movie on television in color. It needs to be color.

That's impossible, and the meaning is different, see; the perception of color is not only the light, but color is a very moody thing. You know, the way you dress, I can tell pretty much what kind of personality you have, what kind of mood; pretty darn close. Women have much better taste in color than men.

You know, an artist is very sensitive to the environment, and you hope you get influenced. The sensitivity of an artist is like a thermostat is to heat and cold. You better have a brain to refine this heat and this cold, and that is what is very difficult to teach the young kids. That's why I told them, You work like hell, you walk in the studio and you don't think. Work

Color is a funny dimension. No two people see the same color.



Sue Bjork

The Materials used in refining an image

with your gut. When you stop working that day, sit down and have a Coca-Cola, a beer, whatever you want. Watch what you did, cool it off, don't work; and take it apart.

Your brains or your judgement will be logical. Not a common logic, your logic. Everyone has a sense of logic, you see, of proportion; but don't wait for your brain to get in front of your fingernails. The tips of your fingers, and your gut,

is your instinct. You need to always listen to that. You need a balance of creative and intellectual processes. And you put it here, in your eye. But don't put it in front of your fingertips. That's the (critical) process; it's a highly intellectual process, very refined. The creative process is a knowing, is more of an instinctive one.



Sue Bjork

Little Menonite Girl (in Progress)

How do I choose? I can't even tell you. The day I did the printing, it was totally arbitrary. It may have as much to do with what I had for breakfast that day as with anything, but I look, and I say I like this one, and we print. You do it when you're still tied up. You can go this way or that way, but your decision is part of the entire process. Stop working, enjoy yourself, criticize your work; and don't trust anyone, not even yourself. You question. That's what I always told my graduate students. Doubt; the creative doubt is one of the most positive things humanity has. The ability to question, not just anyone,



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Art Editor's Note: The four views on these two pages show how the image of Einstein develops through successive printing steps.

but yourself, your own work, your own life. That's our destiny, to keep moving.

You see our eyes have a brain. The scientists didn't think so. Well, now they are starting to discover that the eye is like an executive secretary of the brain. It makes decisions too. The catch is, if you cross the street, the eye or the sound (of something coming) will tell you before it even gets to the brain. You'll jump, immediately. For you see when you can



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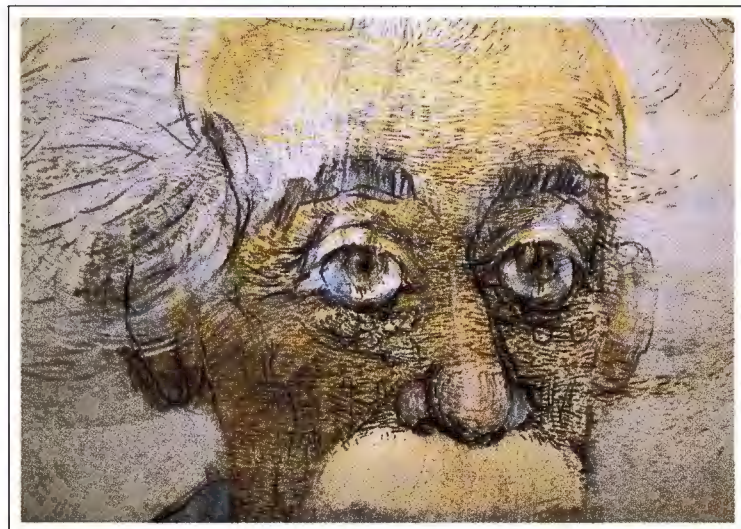
get to use your natural instincts, and everyone should, really, and you let... Well, like the saying says, these two belong together, and this belongs one with that one, you need this kind of vision. And the artist needs to make it (the decision to keep or trash the days work). The next day you are going to start all over again; and that's the way it goes. That's the way



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you learn to know what you don't like. You eliminate what you don't like. You are looking for what you do like.

An artist is all instinct. An artist is... Look, an artist is always the flower of any civilization. It's not as if he wants to do it, you do not pick (to be) an artist. An artist is picked; he doesn't even know (why), he is just picked. Why this is



DMACC Photo department

so, I don't know, it's beyond me. But, the truth is, he was picked. And when they say, "Artists this, or artists that," it's all just double-talk.

You see each of these states is complete, and could be the final version, I just need to ink the plates and go on, but I have to decide which one.



Sue Bjork

The Cat the Clock and Ballerina

You need to know (that) it's got a lot to do with egos. An artist has a big ego, and there's a logical explanation. When an artist has an ego, it's not crap, it's survival. Why? An artist has no way, nowhere to go. You can go look at a picture by Picasso, but looking at a picture by Picasso is not looking at the picture I'm working on. By metaphor, I can learn something, but, on the other hand, on the one I'm working on there is no scientific way to prove I'm on the right track. What your ego does then, is build up a wall around you, so you don't get lost. Do you understand what I'm saying?

What I suggest, after work every day, you analyze so you learn to control your ego without destroying what you need to survive. You realize that my problem is not your problem; we're all in the same boat, but it's not the same problem.



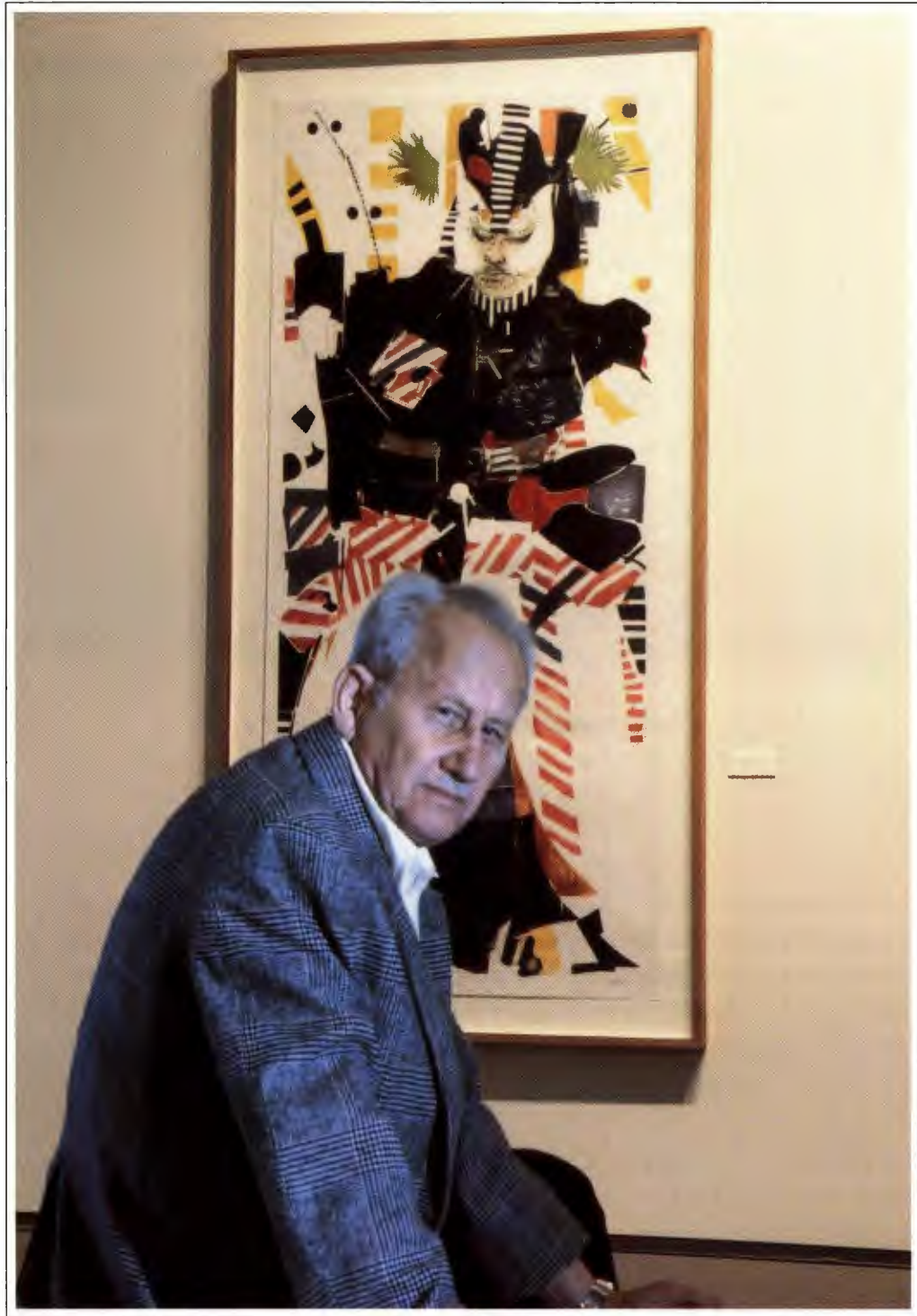
Mary Ohland

The Lasansky Galleries in the Cedar Rapids Art Museum

Now art is in very bad shape. Too many mosquitoes. Mosquitoes breed mosquitoes. I never stressed technique. I'm trying to get more flexibility into the work. Instead of working by techniques, they become the tools. I never taught technique to any of my graduate students, and they have more knowledge of techniques than any artists in the country.

My motto is you use the technique you need, and if it doesn't exist, you invent it. That's the principle. After I have trained them, they can do as they goddamn please. Art is like picking a wife. You pick what you love, what you need.

**Any good picture can teach. My portraits tell people
who I believe is historically important.**



Cal North

**Mauricio Lasansky in front of Quetzalcoatl
at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art**

The Salmon Pool

by Ron Jones



Illustration by Molly Millenkamp

Jon was about four cards shy of playing with a full deck the last time I saw him. Let's see, that was back in '76, out in Santa Cruz. He had "holes in his mind"; at least that's how he put it to me in a letter he wrote some years later. But before the secondals, the quaaludes, the really heavy boozing, and all of the personal wreckage that followed, there were some good times.

I was a struggling young poet, working on my first book, when we met. One evening a friend from my Women's Studies group and I stopped for dinner at a restaurant near Bear Creek. It was one of those intimate little vegetarian bistros so popular in California in those days. The five or six round candle-lit tables were covered with red checkered tablecloths. It was a homey

place with good fresh food and several entrees to choose from. Jon was up on a tiny stage in the corner playing guitar when we walked in. He played some soft bluesy fingerpicking things while we ate, and we sent the waitress over to him with a couple dollars for a tip. After dinner, he took a break, came up to our table, and asked politely if he could join us. He was the most courteous man I ever knew: he always held my coat, opened the door for me, the whole bit. And remember, this was back when we were all into the radical feminist thing. Our heroes were Gloria Steinem, Sylvia Plath, Anaïs Nin, and women like that. We didn't quite know what to think of his gentlemanly behavior. My friend thought him chauvinistic, but I found him refreshing to talk with. He sat with us and we spent the rest of the night. After he finished playing we drank coffee and talked about writing, music, and life. He knew a lot about the "Beats" and had met the poet Allen Ginsberg, once in Sausalito. As it turned out, we had mutual acquaintances at the college I went to in Santa Cruz. Jon was playing clubs in the area and lived just a few miles down the road in the mountains outside the town of Felton.

I moved in with him a few weeks after that night. We lived in a weathered clapboard cabin that stood at the edge of a cliff overlooking the Santa Cruz River. I could lie in that tall rough frame bed he had, stick my head out the window, look straight down, and see two steelhead salmon swimming in water clear as air. They were big beautiful fish, about two feet in length, and their backs were a dappled silver-gray color. The lack of rain high in the mountains had trapped them there. When they had swum upstream to spawn in the fall, there had been water enough for them to reach the pool, but not to continue on to their spawning grounds higher up. By early winter, the river had dried to just a trickle and provided the salmon with

just enough water to keep the pool fresh and cold. I loved to lay in bed in the mornings, or sit outside on the mossy precipice, and watch the two of them swim lazily around below me.

You know, I can still recall times when I would catch the salty vegetable odor of the Pacific mixed in with the smell of the redwoods and the mountains; and when I breathed in deeply, everything would go quiet and sweet inside. We would stay up nights, me typing by the light of a kerosene lantern, on his funky Royal that always offset the "S", Jon sitting hunched over on an old tree stump he'd dragged in to use as a stool, playing all sorts of delta blues and ragtime songs on his "Miss National". That Mississippi steel-bodied National guitar had been made in the nineteen twenties, and it was his most cherished possession. Early bluesmen had played similar instruments at roadhouses and juke-joints in the South. I could go on and on. He was a walking encyclopedia of blues lore, and you couldn't shut him up once he got rolling. He'd get this intense expression on his face, lean way forward, and, running his long narrow fingers through his wiry hair, say something like, "Everytime an old bluesman dies, another library burns to the ground." Then he'd start rambling on, talking about oral folk music traditions and anything else that popped into his head. Other times he could be so funny. One night I happened to look up from a poem I was having trouble with. He stopped playing, leaned his guitar against the wall, reached for the bottle of muscadet, tipped the bottle up, and let the biting smoky liquid roll down his throat. Then he wiped his mouth on the sleeve of his flannel shirt, looked at me with those big brown eyes, assumed his best jive blues dialect and said, "Chile, best bring yo sweet little moneymaker on ovah hyah, set yo fine self down, an papa Jon drive yo bluees from yo doah. Mama, I sho be wild 'bout what you has. Show you how to shake yo yas yas yas." And he did it

all so deadpan and seriously that I laughed and hugged my sides until I felt I'd collapse. He took another long pull of the wine, clapped his hands like a kid at the circus, grinned and said, "Awright now, laughter. That's it! You looked all crumpled up there an' now you're a big helium balloon poet again." Oh, how I loved him then. He was just what I needed at that particular time in my life.

Later, when we were making love, I would feel as if I were falling through the earth. I would think of the salmon, silent and still below us, and I would feel the cool waters of their dark pool close over me. I would imagine us as the only two beings in the universe, learning the alphabet of the stars. "Women are water, women are rain," he used to say, and he immersed himself in a woman completely. Making love was like a baptism for him. Yeah, Jon the blue baptist.

He had an ancient burgundy Studebaker ragtop that we would drive on our "day jaunts", as he used to call them. It seemed like we were always going somewhere during the day; up to "Frisco, out to the beach, or over to the east bay. and then back to the cabin at night. We would drive to places like Lost Weekend, just because he liked the name of the town. Like a lot of people living there then, we didn't have much money, but we always found enough to put gas in the car and drive.

Money was never very important to Jon, and I never knew him to worry over it. Every other week he would pick up an unemployment check and off we would go, heading east on Highway Seventeen. We'd wander through the smog, the traffic and the ramshackle sprawl of San Jose to the small Napa Valley vineyards where he liked to stock up on his favorites: tokays, sauternes, thick sweet muscadets, and muscatels.

I clearly recall the time we drove down Highway One looking for the house of the novelist Henry Miller. We never did find it, and stopped on the way back at a bar and restaurant called Nepenthe that sat on a point high above the Pacific. A slight mist rose from the sea far out. It was a warm, clear, dry day; unusual for northern California, but it was an unusual year. We sat in the open air on bright multi-colored cushions and drank port from crystal goblets. Jon raised his glass to the sun and said, "Sarah, look at this wine. It's the exact ruby red of the blood of the Savior who died for our sins."

"Let's not talk about the wine, and anyway, Jon, you're not even a Christian."

"Ah girl, you'll break the poor pagan heart of this old railroad bum talkin' like that. Really now, let's just drink up and dig on the rollin' ocean out there," he said.

I guess that I was upset that we hadn't found the "famous writer." At that moment, the whole day seemed pointless. Jon just liked to go places. He didn't much care what happened after he got behind the wheel of that old Studebaker. He wasn't interested in destinations and that frustrated me. We sat for awhile, drinking and watching the sun slowly redden and expand as it neared the horizon. I don't know why, but I asked him then, "What did you mean in that song you wrote, 'Love comes, love goes. Sometimes even the music lays you low'?"

"Nothin', he said, Hey, the words just fit the tune and they rhyme, you know. That's all."

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Well, tonight I'm going up to 'Buffalo Gals' and play some blues for the people."

"Sure, for tips and a meal. You and your



Illustration by Cal North

blues," I laughed.

It was a cold drive and I snuggled close to him as we headed back up the mountain. He let me off at the cabin and I walked around back and

looked over the cliff for the two fish. It was dark and deep with shadows. I couldn't see anything, but I could feel them down there, swimming aimlessly around in their small pool.

Chartres Street Memories

*You had an iron balcony,
A feather or two in your hair
A white shirt you found,
A suntan bought in Biloxi,
An open patio where I could sit
Watching magnolias melting in the air.*

*You played your ballads; I accompanied with bones,
Clackey-clackey, clack,
When I got tired of that,
You led me on a steamboat ride, exploring the place,
Where you found your rhythm, your niche in life.*

*Could you hear the alligators talking to us?
Did they see your head against my thighs, moving higher,
Your shining eyes moving straight into mine?*

*Meet me back on Chartres Street, my friend.
I slept so well when you were by my side,
Playing your ballads and the bones,
Watching magnolias melting in the air.*

Connie Burge

Armistice Day 90

11/12/90 by Ron Jones



Coyote stands stiff-legged
at attention across the river
poised to run
Buffalo run
on the shuddering prairie
the red-eyed stampede's begun
fall to the earth

(Lord have mercy)
on Armistice Day

Hey, Charlie Floyd, impatient fingers sift your amber bones
first American military casualty
interred in this luminous soil
 Comrades in vermilion
 Shades of the autumn Sumac
 Dead soldiers in Loess hills

How many more shall come to abide among Oak
River Willow & Cottonwood
 where old women lay flowers
RED

WHITE
 &

BLUE

on Armistice Day?

Illustration by Scott K. Schmitt

II.

Buffalo run
Red-tailed Hawk
 Spins, circles
 weaves the winds
Drops down low
to worry the slow moving
Iron Horse
 spanning the river Missouri
 Shore to shore

On Armistice Day we explored
the hollow
 corse
of the packing plant where our
fathers & their fathers too
made faith-full working lives
Swift Armours Rath
Down on the killing floor
revenent cattle
filled the room hung from hooks
conveyed on the line airborne units inspected
passed on.
An insurrection, revellant
as the concrete blood-trough flow.

Stainless steel augur
implanted high in the wall
 (Buffalo, Run)
issues pallid entrails
assorted body parts
to be chemically rendered
Humans fit for consumption.
Transported
in the logic of locomotive
in the bellies of C-47's
in an interior oblivion
clanking sand-colored tanks

soldier bodies fueled with little painted flags
rapped in
RED
desiccate
White
&
Raped in
BLUE

III.

On Armistice Day a TV star General "Sure there will be casualties, but"
(with a tactile American in camera look)
"there's more of us than there are of you."
sugar-coated small screen war
a killing box
gas bullet napalm virus
oil on the waters, a balm
Grandma, for me and for the
RED this is
The Machine that Lives
(Rise from the dead)
WHITE is
On Brute Force
(Canescent Bones wither, dust to dust)
BLUE
Eats Children for Breakfast
(Sharp-eyed Coyote on corporate White House lawn howls)

Buffalo run
Coyote & Red-tailed Hawk
Jump Swoop Scream it Loud
The stone obelisk that marks the
burial place of Sergeant Charles Floyd
(fall to the ground and pray)
Is not the only one.
(you who wound the earth when you lay them down)
Lakota Prairie trembles
And weeps again
& again
& again
at Red White & Blue soldier dead on
Armistice Day



Illustration by Jim Cash

Fat Boy

A traditional American blues

by Ron "Slider" Jones

“(I ask you to notice
who, songless,
rules us
here.)” —Alice Walker

Fat Boy stirs in the womb
Gots a diamond-studded jaw
Gots a silver-tipped cane
Pregnant in titanium
 Biding his time.
 Feel him kick; his time is come
again.

Fat Boy wakes
Ebullient in his finery
Don't forget him, or you
Gonna regret...
Him.
 He does a staid pirouette upon your grave.

Fat Boy walks on the moon
He don't like the rarified
Atmosphere or moonglow
 wants an earthy show
 to cast huge shadows across
 the seas and gloat.

Fat Boy sits at the head of the table now
 like some bloated
 beast or thing insatiable
Waiting on servants
Subjugated
 to his repast.

And laughing always laughing
Bleats out his
Reverend dinner conversation:



Illustration by Mary Ohland

“Kicked some butt today.”
And stroking his belly, groans:
“Feels good, feels good.”
Syndrome’s gone. Fat Boy’s
Feeling flatulent, again he grins.
(feeling good, whole round world should be
feeling good)

Fat Boy,
How come you always be the bully boy?
You ain’t so big; you just fat that’s all.

Author’s note: The name, “Fat Boy” came about through a combination of “Fat Man” and “Little Boy,” the two A-bombs used on Japan in August of 1945. Fat Boy exists today, brought to you by those candy***** excuses for human beings who think into existence things like “killing boxes” and “smart bombs.”

Anthropology 101

This is
how it is
chasing the particular scent
warm beery hot rod nights
Third world asphalt roads
digging Stones
pursuing insouciant flesh
through thickets
of prickly fur back seats

Today,
I walked past a
green '51 Chevy
and pissed,
went home
to watch tv

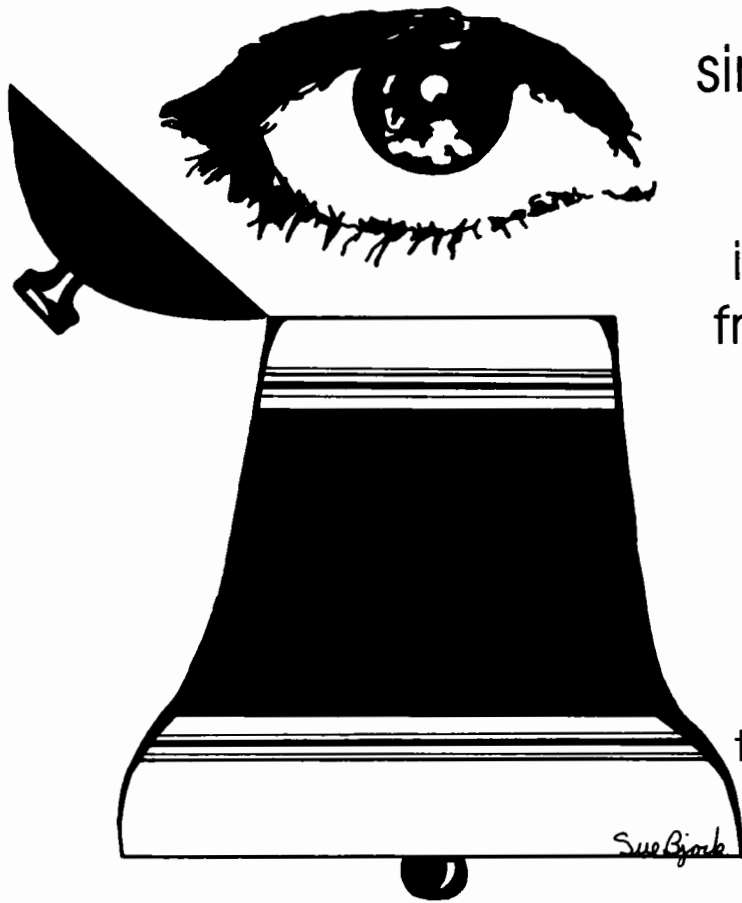
Ron Jones

Illustration By Russ Johnson



Russ Johnson

Life does
not happen



simply like
a bell

it's wrung
from every

Sin..
(Full)
Apse

More to
this
than meets

my
l.

Illustration By Sue Bjork

Joe Philippon

Goodnight Emily

By Nicola Gould



Photo Collage by Mindy Myers

May 25, 1917

Dear Journal,

Tonight is the best and worst night of my life. Henry and I are going to tell Mother and Father that we want to be married. At midnight the train will leave with Henry Alvord onboard, bound for the east coast and a troop ship to France. President Wilson's Great War.....

I am sitting at my dressing table. Soft lilac-scent wafts in my open window. A golden haze fills the western horizon and a pale, translucent moon is already visible. Yet a curtain of turmoil blinds my eyes. Butterflies flutter wildly inside me as I anticipate my reunion with Henry and tears pool on my lower lashes. I put down my pen, pinch my cheeks vigorously and smooth on a touch of

powder. I give my lips a couple of sharp nips to improve their color. My mother and father won't allow any of the new rouge or lip color sold at the Emporium. They believe that false colors are for harlots. I add a little extra powder hoping I will look the mature, engaged young lady about to see her love off to a foreign war. As I wait for Henry to knock at the front door, I put the last of the hairpins in the waves of curls at my neck and practice raising my eyebrows in the haughty expression of Lillian Gish. I hope Henry will be taken by my elegance and be blinded to the temptations of Paris. Lost in my fantasy, I raise my wrist to my tilted forehead like Pauline just before the train came across the bridge in last Saturday's matinee at the Orpheum. Suddenly I dissolve into giggles at the childishness of my musings.

"Emily, Henry is here."

That's strange, I didn't hear the door knocker. The sound of my mother's salutation sends me running down the stairs determined to save Henry from my father's queries. Father is a lawyer and conversation with him makes one feel like a defendant in a trial. Henry squirms under his piercing gaze, although he never says anything. He knows how I love the dear old ogre.

"Hello Henry!"

Instead of his usual breezy response, he meets me at the door of the living room and a whisper of a kiss brushes my lips. Stunned, I turn from his face to my silent parents. Mother studies her hands as they twist her snowy white, laced edge handkerchief. Father clears his throat as if to speak but seems to think better of it. He hooks his thumbs in the little pockets of his vest and directs his stern eyes toward Henry. I stand paralyzed with Henry's arm around my shoulder waiting for some clue to the stilted atmosphere. Finally, Henry speaks.

"Emily, I have just asked your parents for your hand in marriage, but they do not think it wise that I should bind you with such a promise until the war is over."

"But...but you're wrong!" I hear my voice saying with a cry. "No! No! No!" Clutching Henry's arm, I bury my face in his scratchy uniform. They rarely denied me anything and this time of all times I expected to have their blessing. Henry's father owned the best department store in town and Henry would someday be a partner. How could they?

"It's okay, Emily, they are right and, understand, their concerns are for your good."

"No, you're wrong, I love you and they can't stop me from waiting for you."

"Emily," my father says, "speaking for your mother and myself, our decision is final. Please understand that we do not object to Henry, only to the timing. If I understand the situation in Europe correctly, this war will not last long and Henry will be home before you have time to miss him."

I move into my love's arms and nestle my head upon his chest. I feel the steady thud of his heart and the cold brass buttons on his jacket. My nostrils fill with the scent of wool, Ivory soap and lingering cigarette smoke. His youth drains away and I can see a long life that I know will not include me.

I stand on the platform of the railway station with my brother as a chaperone and wave goodbye. Henry's train pulls away with the best of the young men of our town packed in coffin-like cars. The crowd dwindles away as the last whiff of coal smoke from the Rock Island steam engine fades into the night.

The air is sweet from the alfalfa field across the road from the depot. A large, white moon throws shadows of silvery gray across the steel rails and puts lines and furrows across my brother's face, aging him beyond his twenty-four years. He doesn't say a word as he takes my arm and guides me to our father's Ford. With a turn of the crank, the automobile sputters to life and we drive in the moonlight toward home...

I've awakened, but with a vague, hazy, lost feeling. Even with my eyes closed, I know it is black night and I beat down the raising panic know if I backtrack to yesterday, I can remove this disorientation. The bed and even my body feels foreign but youth knows its strength and I indulge in a satisfying stretch. I open my eyes to the sight of moonlight streaming through the window and it soothes me. There is time, plenty of time for more sleep. Almost purring in contentment I say, "Go to sleep, Emily." And curling up under the comforter, fall back into the sweet oblivion of youth.

I am awake, but I have a vague, isolated feeling. Surrounded by a black void with fireworks of fear behind my eyelids, I take a deep shuddering breath and try to remember, but yesterday eludes me. A thread of common sense asserts itself and I dispel the blackness simply by opening my eyes. A ripple of confidence returns with the faint light at the window. I stretch vigorously and a dull throb in my hip sends an intense pain up my spine. I try to move my reluctant body into a sitting position and with



Mary Ohland

numb fingers find a switch on a lamp that hangs on the headboard.

The hand that turns on the light isn't mine. Terror blocks out the pain as I look with blurred vision at the knobby knuckles in front of my face. I reach to the bedside table and pick up a pair of glasses. Two ancient hands open the bows and place the spectacles over my eyes. My vision is definitely clearer but what I see cannot be real. For God's sake, I am only twenty-one years old! I lean back and close my eyes, forcing the panic to subside until I am unable to prevent the returning oblivion of sleep. My last thought is a hope that my youth will return and is the truth, and the nightmare of knobby fingers is.....

When my eyes open again, daylight is streaming in the window and my youth is gone with the black of night. I know I have lost someone and I feel the grief of young death but am unable to comprehend whom or when.

"Good morning Emily." I speak the words, but I

can't hear them. Dear God, I've lost the power of speech, suddenly bringing more terror than the sight of old age from the night before. Not to be able to communicate, no sound, no birds, no laughter.....

I shuffle into the bathroom with an old, old body; nothing like the willowy petite figure my father says doesn't know how to walk, only how to skip. I made it just in time, thank God, because if I don't, I'll have to call someone and I'll cry from the shame. As I'm sitting here I see a flesh colored, moon-shaped object — I remember — my hearing aid. Struggling to get it into my ear, the world comes alive all out of proportion. The sound of the toilet flushing is like Niagara Falls. The birds outside my open window chirp in faint whispers, but they are sounds, heavenly sounds, saying, "Good morning Emily." The world seems to right itself just a little and the threat of silence is detained one more day.

A voice, I hear a voice.....

"Grandma, I'm here."

A flood of memory, my granddaughter, the love of my life, but she gets so aggravated and frustrated with me. She tries not to let me know it but I can tell. I remember how my mother was in her twilight years and how I felt about her those last years before.....

"O honey, I'm so glad to see you, you have no idea how lonesome I get for you."

"I came to take you to your doctor appointment Grandma."

What is she talking about? That isn't until next week.

"You never told me it was today."

"I did too, I called you last night."

"No you didn't."

Why do I fight with her? Whether she did or didn't, it makes no difference. I'm never right because I'm old and that automatically makes me senile. But I'm not

senile! How can I convince her? Why doesn't she say she is wrong occasionally just to make me feel better? Sometimes I could just slap the little "know-it-all."

"I'm not going!"

There, I guess I told her. Who is she fooling anyway? We both know I am so old that I have the right to do as I please. Papa always said I was a stubborn little witch. He used to take me into his office and.....

"Honey, I'm too sick to go to the doctor, so just visit with me a little and tell me about that young man of yours and we'll make an appointment for another month."

Maybe I'll be lucky and not have to go. If I could die, I wouldn't have to go through getting dressed and putting shoes on and getting in and out of a car. The worst is that young twerp of a doctor and his, "How are we today?" I'm always tempted to say, "We, yourself, you silly young man. I was married, a wife, mother and grandmother, long before your were born, and now I'm supposed to trust you?" To quote my great grandson, "No way, dude." I really like the cartoons on Saturday morning, such outrageous.....

"Oh Grandma, he is so wonderful and bright. I'm just crazy about him. He just got a chance to study in Europe for a semester and I'm going to miss him terribly. He's going to get a rail pass and travel all over. I'm scared to death he'll meet some gorgeous French woman. You know, we wanted to get engaged before he left but Mom and Dad felt we should wait until he gets home."

"Just be patient, honey, you have plenty of time. You have a whole lifetime to be married."

This time I have a vague feeling that I'm very wrong and she's right. I love her too much to let her take a chance on losing her young man.

"I'll tell you what honey, I'll talk to your mom and dad and see if I can convince them to reconsider."

"Gee thanks Grandma, they always listen to you. Now, you have to eat something Grandma."

What on earth for? This stuff tastes like cardboard. That child doctor of mine has me on this diet, no salt for my heart and no sugar because of my blood sugar level, and no cholesterol, whatever that is, and *he* is helping me live? Good heavens, I'm 95 years-old and I've forgotten more than he knows.

"I ate so much yesterday, honey, you would have been proud of me."

"Now make like an airplane with the spoon, open your mouth, down the hatch."

Wait a minute, what is an airplane? How about make like a horse, gallop, gallop, down the gullet. Somehow I've gotten mixed up, this isn't my mother in front of me it's.....

"Bye Grandma. Call me if you need me."

This is why I love the annoying little dear so, she hugs. Her body is firm and strong and I can feel the slow even beat of her heart. She smells warm and clean and so fresh.

"Come again honey. I miss you already."

Begging again. All of this begging just to hold on to some young, warm body. Always for a brief second I feel warm wool and smell Ivory soap and.....

The sun has gone down. Where did the day go? While it was here, it seemed to drag like our old horse Mabel did after Papa bought the Ford. I was plagued all day with the ache of loss that I just can't put my finger on. A day lost in the countless days that have just disappeared in the weeks, months, and years of my life, gone and mostly forgotten.

I turn to an old woman's comfort, her bed. I used to use this time of day to remember, but I don't do that much anymore. There is so much to remember and I am so close to seeing all those I love again that I decided to save myself from the effort.

In a voice I can't hear, I say, "Good night, Emily," and return to the night.



Illustration by Sue Bjork

Sue Bjork

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For Those Who Love

who have needed love

and who are love. Thank you

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