

An abstract artwork featuring a dark, textured black background. Several vertical, irregular stripes of color run through the composition. The colors include bright red, orange, yellow, green, and purple. The stripes have a jagged, torn-paper-like edge. The overall effect is dynamic and layered.

*Point of View*

2003-2004

## On the Front Cover

Paige Sorensen  
Untitled  
Collage / Mixed Media  
13 7/8" x 17 3/8"

## On the Back Cover

Clarence G. Cruz  
Beauty Among the Sunset Bloom  
Oil Painting  
24" x 30"

*Point of View*, a publication of literary and visual creative works, is edited and produced by William Rainey Harper College students. Anyone—student, faculty, staff or administrator—connected to Harper College may submit their work. *Point of View* is sponsored by Student Activities/William Rainey Harper College, in cooperation with the Liberal Arts Division. Cash awards for outstanding writing and art funded by the Harper College Foundation.



**Copyright © 2004 William Rainey Harper College  
1200 West Algonquin Road Palatine IL 60067**

All rights to creative work belong to their respective creators.

Printed on recycled paper 

Every attempt has been made to include all contributors and ensure accuracy of information. We apologize for any mistakes or omissions.



Save a tree—recycle.

# Point of View

## 2003-2004

Literary Advisor  
Art Advisor

Anne Davidovicz  
Paul Andrew E. Smith

Literary Editor  
Art Editor/Design

Laura Gross  
Scott David Gross

Student Judges:

Lauren Svedman, Liz Cockrum, Tony Buti, Elisa Adorjan-Karbin, Scott David Gross, Laura Gross, Maxwell Fanning, and T. Christopher Helton

**Special thanks** to Dennis Weeks, Jason Peot, Perry Pollock, Sam Rosby, Michael Hardesty, Michael Nejman, Cyrus Johnson, Joellyn Frieding, Kathy Shine, Chris Padgett, M. Glenn Taylor, Andrew Wilson, Sue Borchek-Smith, and Shirley Pruyn

## Award Winners

Ray Mills Award: Bernie Bluestein - Pins and Needles

Vivian Stewart Award: Robin C. Weber - "The Good Neighbor"

Point of View Award: Jay Fox - "A Dose on Thursday"

Professional Services:  
Photography  
Printing

Steve Donisch  
Vis-O-Graphic Printing, Inc.

## Table of Contents:



Untitled		Itinerary for Classism's Death	
Paige Sorensen	Front Cover	Benny Boyas	20
The Imperfection of Scars		Untitled	
Elisa Adorjan-Karbin	5	Ruben Flores	21
Fermenting Strangers		Untitled	
Ann D. Minehart	7	Susie Rendon	21
Untitled		Untitled	
Jillian Troiani	9	Sheila Dolsen	22
Breaking Out		Untitled	
Jack Mitchell	10	Faustino Brito	22
Untitled		Worlds Apart	
Sheila Dolsen	10	Kevin Merkelz	23
Self-Portrait		Untitled	
Bernie Bluestein	11	Cynthia Diaz	26
Pomonaís Gas Pump		Topography of my Princess	
Christina Kuenstler	11	Benny Boyas	27
American Rustic No. 5: American Flyer		Unconditional Love	
Robert Furman	12	Raolmila Abram	27
Untitled		The Good Neighbor	
Liz Cockrum	12	Robin C. Weber	28
Letter		Textures	
Elisa Adorjan-Karbin	13	Anne M. Witt	30
Untitled Creation		Bad Body Parts	
Jack Mitchell	13	Michelle Fernandez	36
Untitled		Between You and I	
Isaac Seguro	14	Gayle Benson	37
Untitled		A Dose on Thursday	
Jerry Stachura	15	Jay Fox	38
Pins and Needles		Hospital. 2 East.	
Bernie Bluestein	15	Diana Smith	38
Other Self, A Federalist		The Gambling God of Moqui	
Jim Hahn	16	Jay Fox	39
Reproduction of Form		Beauty Among the Sunset Bloom	
Gayle Benson	19	Clarence G. Cruz	Back Cover
Yesterday			
Diana Smith	20		

## The Imperfection of Scars

by Elisa Adorjan-Karbin

I want home to be the place  
you and I go  
after cigarettes and coffee  
at two a.m.  
when our words become  
smaller and louder  
as we discuss the way the sky  
is warming up to the moon  
and how to spell  
'ignorant'—  
"Two 'r's' or one?"

I want to come home  
and lay on the couch  
where gray cats curl around  
our ankles  
and look at the clock  
wondering where the  
ten minutes goes between  
real time and bar time.

But thinking will make you tired,  
so you will rest your head  
on my lap  
and reach up your fingers  
to touch my face and  
I will count the scars on your hands.

I'll inhale every number  
I whisper out loud  
so I can blow them out  
and make constellations on your  
palms.  
"Looks like Orion's belt rests  
between your thumb and  
lifeline. . ." or  
"The North Star near your pinkie  
is beginning to fade. . ."

Then you will close your eyes  
and tell me the history  
of your imperfections  
and reactions to razor blades and  
gravel,  
and I will want to kiss you  
because I wish you could  
taste my childhood,  
spent trying to  
lick the milky way  
instead of choking on your past,  
full of  
dry heat and overcast nighttimes.

So, I will press your hands  
into mine  
and lower my head  
until my hair hangs down and  
brushes your cheek,  
and whisper (extra quiet)  
that "scars" and "stars" are only one letter away.

## Fermenting Strangers

by  
Ann  
D.  
Minehart

**M**rs. Grady's the name. I live down the street there behind tha' big ol' burly lookin' shack. You're a young folk aren't ya? I can tell you're a sweet thang cause your eyes are nice and full o' light. Ya see, my eyes are dark, not much cuhlul' tuh reflect mucha anythang. I see you folks just movin' in today. Seems tuh me nobody come o'va tuh talk 'bout your business here. Strange. People round here always tryin' tuh be the first one tuh git the goods on everyone e'va moved in this 'ol place here.

That ol' barn o'va there used to be gray with residue. Them folks neva cleaned it. Why I remember when it first went up. . . it was ivory white—like a dress of a young virgin on hur weddin day. O'va the years the storms had brought their debris and the earth rose up and clung to hur. So it had that worn ol' rigidity feelin about it, just like us here ol' folks. Them windas up there remind me of some sort of eyes. Ya know the kinda eyes that peer o'va a jacket at cha on one of those here mystery novels. The door beneath them windas is what keeps the secret tight inside there. It's the mouth that neva opens—keeps quiet, though them folks round here always lookin' for the answers, neva mindin' their business. Always goin' on with them here stories now. Don't pay no attention to them rumors you may here—they just tryin to scare you here folks.

I reckon we all here got some stories. Can't live round these parts without havin' some kinda history. These here grounds have a history. Legend has it. . . if ya want the story here in them terms, that the folks lived here long time ago, before there was them modern thingies. Well, them folks hada' story—a history, betta left quiet like that there mouth on that ol' barn. But the rumors spread among those young folks—I think—let me see if I can recall a rhyme or somethang. . . the ol' memory goin' on these here sac' o' bones. . .

*Ol' McRackin left Bessy sappin  
Wackin here little bones a crackin'  
As the night stars lay*

*Little Bessy wouldn't see the light a day*

None much mind their business round these parts. Everybody gotta secret—a tale to tell. Why you can't go down tug the market without some folk stopping ya on the corner and finding out ya business just tuh sit there and tell it tuh the next folk come along.

Well, that there rhyme isn't the worse of the tale I have here to tell. Seems that there was some kinda room or somethang down their on those grounds beneath that ol' barn. Well, I sure don't imagine you could hear ol' Bessy cryin down them grounds. Sad thang is no one round here do mucha anything. These folks talk, but none too quick tuh step forward on ya business. Po' little Bessy proba thought she had no choice. Matta is people take care of their own—keep their mouths locked on their secrets, but the eyes tell a different story. See here, rumor has it, those with the eyes of the story have eyes black like coal as the moonlight comes o'va them hills out there. Their ski filled with the soot of the fiery tale. Fingernails rough like a matchbook. That barn said to be the cuhluh of their skin at night. Some say they've seen 'em out here in these parts—others don't believe or don't wanta believe in the story.

Ya see little Bessy was like some sorta warnin' to them folks round here. Sorta like what could happen if ya took up somebody else's business. Kinda like those thangs ya see on those television shows late at night when they're tryin tuh scare ya. Ya see, not much happens in these parts. But some seem tuh think that the grounds here have a story that can't quite rest, at least hasn't o'va these here years. See ol' McRackin took up with tha' po' little girl. Thangs they say he done tuh hur not much for repeatin'. Some folk like the detail, me I'm not for that sorta thang. Some thangs best left for the mind and not the mouth. Ya see, some say that po' little girl cried for hur daddy—but he neva been one for any sorta disturbance or that kinda thang. . . unless it hada' bottle o' bourbon tacked onto the deal. Ya see hur

daddy work out there in those fields—not much monay in the deal but plenty of the drink. Why I don't imagine there was mucha day when hur daddy wasn't gone on that stuff. Me, I neva touch it. . . see what it does here to these folks—messin' with ya mind and all. Why my mind is goin' plenty on it's own—don' need my help.

Well all tha' cryin' and neva no answer just musta tore tha' little girl up inside. It's no tellin' how long tha' secret was kept. Some say it was how tha' room down there was made—made of some sorta walls that were thick. Thick enough to keep in the sounds—the sounds of that little girl. Why they say he took hur when hur daddy was far out on that tractor so he neva heard much of anythang. She musta known what was comin—cause ol' McRackin always kept them ropes with him. Musta known there mighta been some sort of struggle or somethang like that. Sad when ya hear thangs like that. Not much ya can do now, but sure wish ya had saw somethang, said somethang, or actually done somethang 'bout his business.

See here, he'd take hur down tuh that there room and do them thangs to hur. Heard he done it more than once—too many times for that little girl. Musta been hard for hur to go through with it, but I guess there wasn't much of a choice in the matta. That night when ol' McRackin left hur in that room, she took them ropes and threw one end o'va that rafter in there. Ya know the one that runs right down the middle of that ol' barn. The one that's the backbone to that ol' structure in there. She took the otha' end and rapped it round hur tiny little neck. Then with one step she flung herself along that there space in there swingin' along side the backbone of the barn. In a way she was free from that ol' bastard McRackin. Free from those beatins and anythang else the mind can imagine. But that isn't the end of that ol' secret. Ya see ol' McRackin found little ol' Bessy hangin' in there. He took out his sling blade, the one he sued to cut down tha' ol' tree behind his house. And he cut Bessy down from that rafter. Her little body fell limp as she landed on that gritty floor with it's own history beneath it. Rumor has it he burned hur little body. Guess getting' rid of—what those television shows might call—evidence.

Those ashes of little Bessy ain't neva been found. They say them ashes right here, right on these grounds. Ain't nobody seen 'em. Matta o' fact, nobody

seen McRackin here in these parts. He disappeared right round that same time. Some say ol' McRackin kept some of those there ashes—kinda like a souvenir of his misfortunes. I'd say kinda like a file on his business. I understand why he'd want tuh keep some them ashes. See this here vial round ma neck. . . these here some ashes of my history. Just somethang I burned, getting' rid my business. I keep it cause it reminds me that I can get thangs done when I want tuh, but don' mind no matter tuh it. . .everybody got some sorta past now that they ramble on and on 'bout. Me, why I holler on at anyone who will listen now.

Anywho, it's those ashes of that little girl that keep these grounds here. Ya see, those ashes don't e'va rest. They say those who keep their business up in that room are the ones with the eyes of coal that come out at night. Ya see no matta how many times that barn gets burned down tuh the ground, that there room seems tuh always be there. Ya see the way this ground is, sorta makes the foundation of that ol' barn the same. Every time some folks try tuh build another one here it always appears tuh be the same, but the truth is in the eyes. Ya see those windas are the eyes of this here story. People can come along and burn out ya site, but the holes for the eyes are still there, they don't e'va go away.

Can't much blame her for being round these parts. This is where little ol' Bessy grew up—don't much know no different. Ya see, I think she ain't tryin tuh scare nobody, just tryin tuh have some rest—some sorta peace. Ya see, that's why these her folks keep burin down the barn. Believin' some how tha' if they destroy the barn—they would destroy the story that was made in there. But no fire neva made no difference to no story. Why I can't imagine how one might go 'bout getting rid of a story. Story or not, those here folks keep it alive. It's them folks. They keep builkin' up that barn cause no matta what sort of story it has, people gotta go make a livin' now. Not much work round these parts if ya ain't no farmer.

They say if ya e'va find that room in there, let it alone now. Ya see, if ya e'va find a door that's locked or a board that's nailed down, don't cha go lookin' round. They say that big ol' Bobby Joe from down the street didn't pay no mind to that there warnin'. But I can't say that ol' Bobby e'va paid mind to much of anythang. He was one of those there loana fellas. Always kept tuh



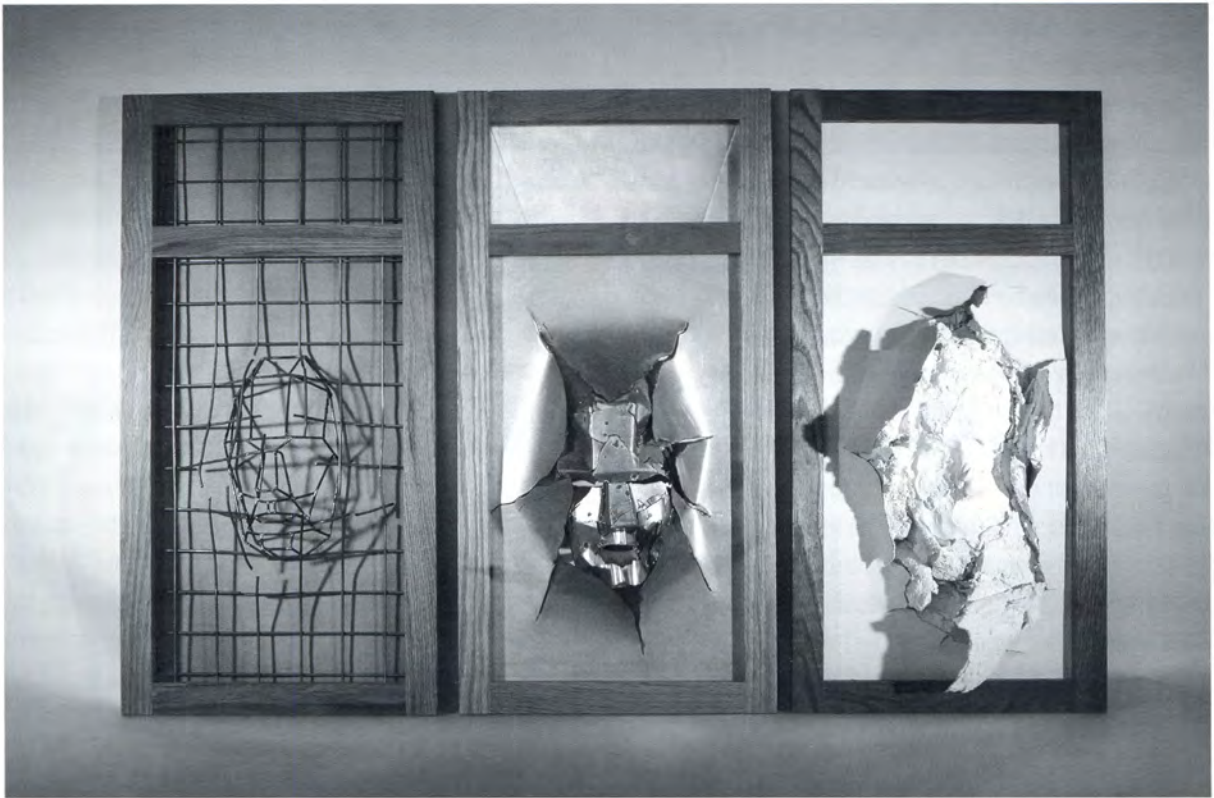
himself. Good worker though, those fields neva looked so good—that boy had one of those there green thumbs or what not.

Anywho, he went down there in that room and was searchin' round for somethang. He wouldn't have been none the wiser if he hadn't seen his own reflection in that broken glass in there on the barn door. They say he had no eyes, just coal, and when he touched the door his fingers were like sandpaper. The prints his feet made across the cedar floor were like dust from a chimney—ashes they say from little ol' Bessy. Ya see, no one quite knows who's been down there in that there room messin' round in that business. Reason has it, no one but those who are now part of the story can see what that does tuh a person in the moonlight of the night. Ya see, those—lets say *infected* by what happened neva quite come forward 'bout the story. Some sorta stigma I'd say cause just 'bout everybody knows what happened in that room, and nobody wants tuh be part of that kinda story.

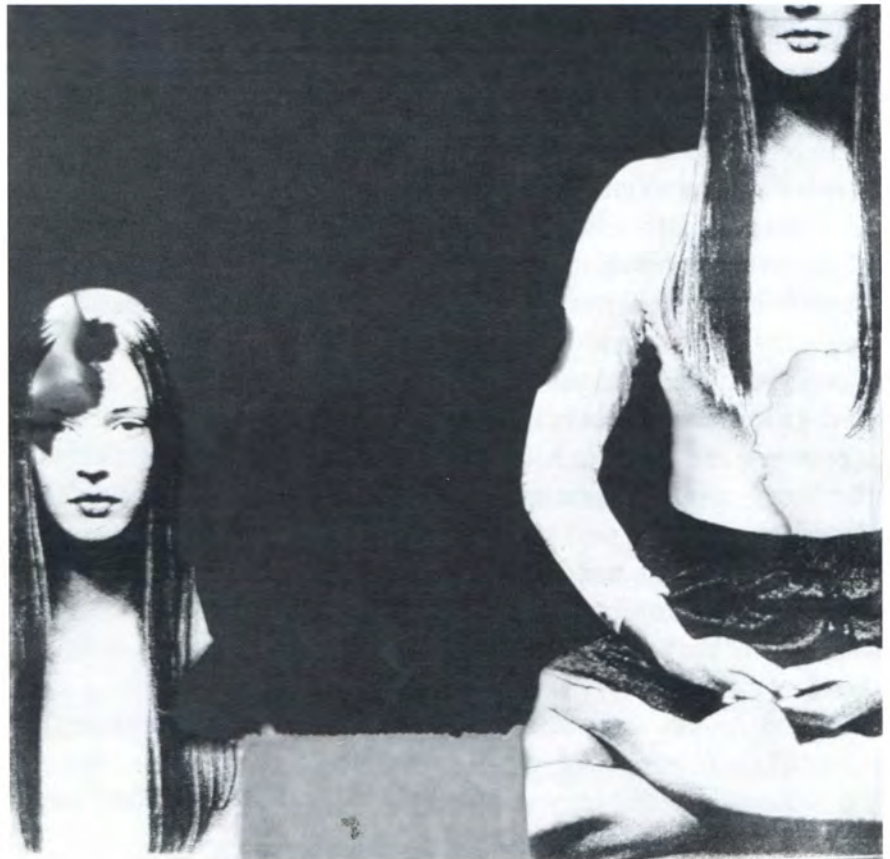
Can't much blame folks for not tellin' 'bout being down there. See some might not wanta know 'bout a story like that. Like I said, people talk, people listen, but much mind their business round these parts. They say you go lookin' for trouble, you'll find it. Round these parts there's plenty of trouble to be found cause ain't nobody a stranger round here. But them rumors now neva did much good for anyone. So don't cha be taken up with all them nonsense. It's probably best ya think of it as a ghost story. Hell, no use worrying 'bout these that don't infect ya. Just keep your head up and your eyes open cause ya neva know what might be in front of ya. Now you go on now and help your folks move their stuff in. remember what I said now and mind your business. If ya e'va need a hand round here, you just holla down the road. The name's Ms. Grady, but no need for formalities. . . folks round here call me ol' Ms. B. Don't be a stranger now, ya hear!



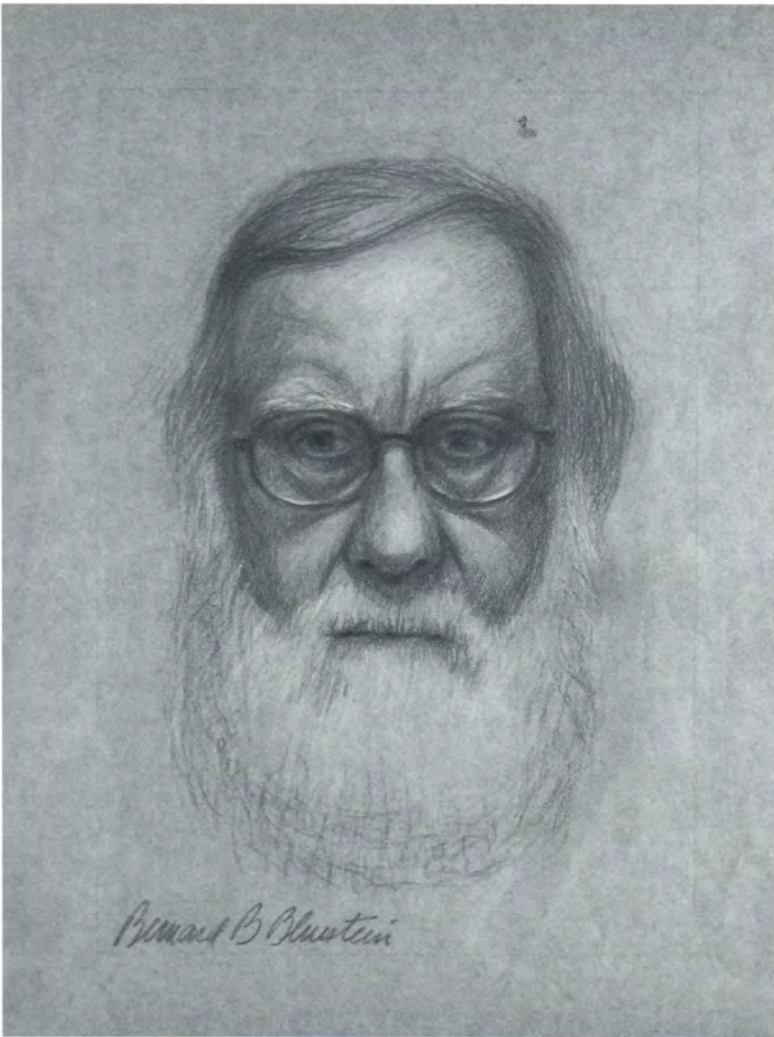
Jillian Troiani  
Untitled  
Nickel-Silver  
3 1/2" x 4 1/2"



Jack Mitchell  
Breaking Out  
Wood/Plaster/Steel/Paper  
16" x 30" - 50"W overall



Sheila Dolsen  
Untitled  
Paper Collage  
15 7/8" x 16"

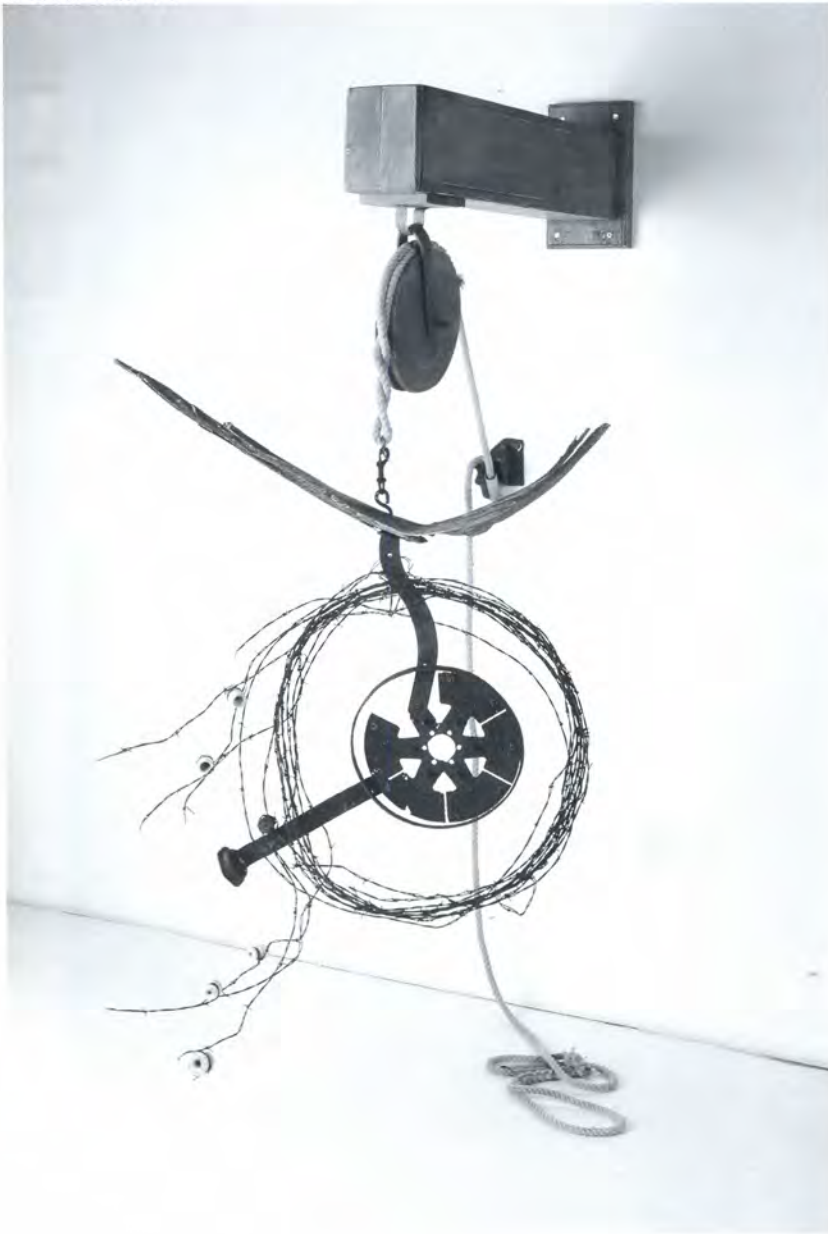


Bernie Bluestein  
Self-Portrait  
Colored Pencil on Brown Kraft Paper  
10 3/4" x 14"



Christina Kuenstler  
Pamonas Gas Pump  
Color Photograph  
9 5/8" x 9 1/2"

Robert Furman  
American Rustic No. 5: American Flyer  
Wood/Rusted Metal/Barbed Wire  
3' from wall x 6'



## Untitled

by Liz Cockrum

lined with crimson  
the velvet smell  
invites me  
to my six-year-old self  
letting the long beads  
that lived in that red  
sea of aroma  
fall  
through  
my  
fingers  
Abuelita's box  
was filled with  
sparkling gems  
we discovered together  
to make me feel safer  
in the  
scary  
city  
night  
a box of beads  
are all I have left  
but  
the smell still  
makes me feel  
safe

## Letter

by Elisa Adorjan-Karbin

Maybe I'll wait until it rains  
to tell you all of this.  
I'll wait until the sky becomes gray  
and heavy with nouns  
and adjectives and verbs, and  
let them tumble onto our faces  
as we walk from the car  
to the bookstore.

I'll hold the collar of my jacket  
over my ears, move just a little  
closer to you and  
lend you my new wool mittens  
because I know you aren't accustomed  
to such stinging rain.  
And when we get inside,  
I'll slosh my soggy shoes on the  
worn out carpet and  
make tracks all the way to the  
non-fiction section and try to find  
a book about swans  
and read to you about the way  
their necks arc to look like  
question marks on a pond.

But you'll get bored  
and you will coerce me into  
making muddy footprints along  
the base-boarded shelves

filled with Keats and Cummings and  
Kerouac and Rilke,  
and laugh a little too loud  
when I ask to stop and look  
at a new Byron anthology  
because you didn't know I was  
actually serious about my weakness  
for seventeenth century love poems,  
and the way they drip off of  
sunken lips and  
down the sides of burnt out candles.

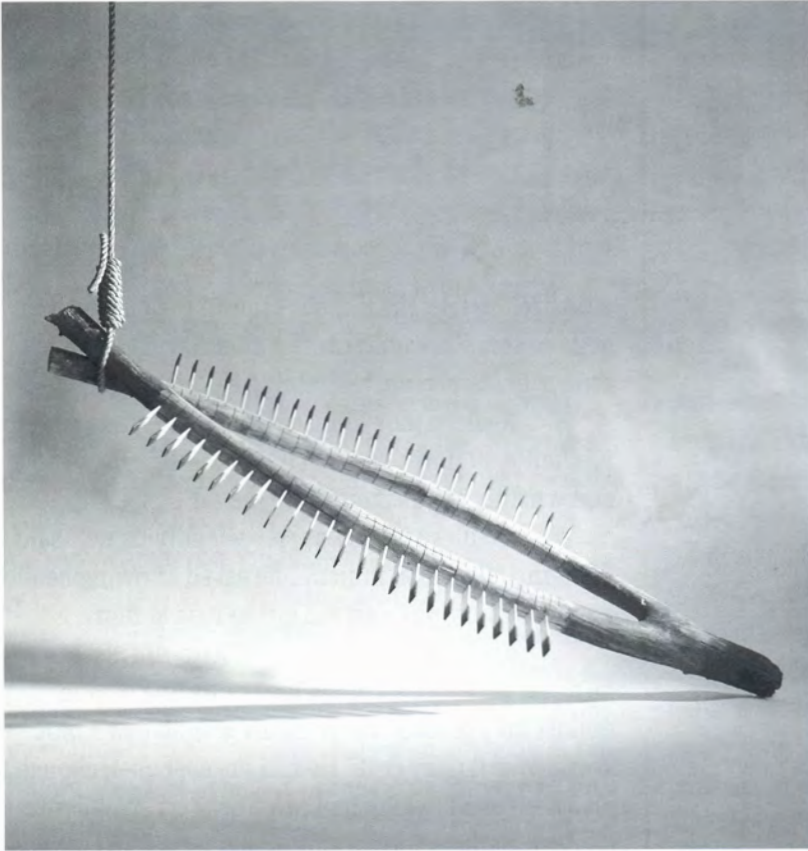
But you will get sidetracked too,  
because you will see the way  
my hands move across the page  
sniffing out details of  
drunken nights in Venice,  
or at least the original typeset of  
the collection, and  
you will see for the first time  
that my hands are covered  
with black ink,  
not the kinds made from  
newspapered soy,  
but the kind scented with the sourness of rain  
coming down on gray afternoons in January  
when you were too busy  
freezing  
to notice I'd spent the day  
picking up the soggy letters  
you'd spit into the snow.

Jack Mitchell  
Untitled Creation  
Bronze  
9" x 6" x 5"





Isaac Seguro  
Untitled  
Acrylic on Canvas  
24" x 36"



Jerry Stachura  
Untitled  
 Wood and Rope  
 7' x 8' x 2'-3'



Bernie Bluestein  
Pins and Needles  
 Cast Bronze, Aluminum Rod,  
 Limestone, Cloth on Foam Core,  
 Denim Cloth, & Various Woods  
 3'-7'H

## Other Self, A Federalist

by

JIM HAHN

James Madison. Isolated and otherwise misplaced author of another time altogether. Miss Poinsettia. Appreciates his authorship and then some. Studiously she is seated in the south wing of the James Madison College Library at a table under a black and white portrait of her infatuation.

Poinsettia styled her sickly brunette hair in a bun, a blue pen holding the bisected pastry in place. Her clothing revealed nothing of the female shape. Hunched over her books, it is quite impossible to make out the defining features of her body. She wore a faded Batman t-shirt (a holdover from childhood). Now twenty-years old, she continued to wear the relic. Her pants were of a professional sort: pressed, pleated, black, and a bit too large for her body.

As most women who have been smitten will do, she faced her infatuation, returning his stare.

An off-duty library yeoman then interrupted the couple.

"Madison. . . what a pimp, huh?" said the boy, startling Poinsettia who was whispering to Madison about her day.

"A what? A pimp?" Poinsettia replied, intonation indicating perhaps American English was not her native tongue.

"No, not a pimp really, I mean, uh he's got a hell a nice nose," he managed to say.

"Did you need something exactly?" she asked.

"My name is Redfern," said Redfern scanning the shelves, not looking at the person with whom he was speaking.

"Redfern? Are you Amerindian?" asked Poinsettia. It surprised her to ask this as she found she did not care.

He imagined himself as a prairie Indian chief. The compartment of his brain housing memories of Indians also contains memories of arrows. Synaptic nerves rapidly firing, he recollects he scene from Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring, where Boromir met his end. Redfern remembers Boromir as a perfect snob

who tried to take the ring for himself which was pure evil. Boromir breathes his last after having taken many arrows to his person, resembling a porcupine as he died.

Redfern took Poinsettia's question as a hint that he should sit down because it was the sign he wanted and whether it was there or no, he sat.

"Redfern is English; it's a family name," said Redfern. "Do I look Indian?" he asked knowing he did not; he was trying to get the girl to look at him.

Redfern wore large, gold, wire-rim glasses, as he never accustomed to the idea of having plastic against his eyeballs. He wore his grandfather's blue World War II navy coat. He had the coat open enough to reveal his shirt, which had Mr. Spock on it; underneath the Vulcan there was a caption that read, "To boldly go." His boxer shorts were along the same motif. Redfern's hair was parted and short. When people commented on his hair, he was wont to reply he "was rocking the Peter Parker."

"No, you don't look Indian exactly, you look sort of like a trekkie," Poinsettia replied. Redfern's shirt sent her the message she should try to beam him from her personal space.

"I get that a lot, but I'm not a total Trek fiend or suchlike. I don't speak a lick of Klingon, in fact I hate Klingons," said Redfern channeling Kirk's loss of a son to the very species.

"You hate Klingons? That's weird," said Poinsettia.

"Well I suppose, I mean hate is maybe too strong a word," said Redfern.

As if aflame, he noisily and with great guff took off the pea coat.

"You see this shirt, I bought this last weekend at the Virginia Trek Convention."

"Oh see, you are a Trekkie, you went to a convention," said Poinsettia nearly slapping her thigh but resisting.

"I ain't, I'm. . ." Redfern stopped and pondered how he could put it to her.



"You're gonna think this is stupid, but I'm a conventioneer," Redfern said.

"A conventioneer?" asked Poinsettia.

"Yea, I went to the ComicCon in Chicago yesteryear. This summer I'm gonna be going to the Air, Car, and Boat show in Norfolk. Next weekend there is this Fathers of Virginia thing here at the school. I live for conventions. After mixing it up with so many people in those crowded spaces, I feel like a new person."

"You know, James Madison is a Virginian," said Poinsettia. She made a little half nod to Madison.

"Madison was a Virginian? I thought he was a Yank."

"James is a Virginian."

"He was a Virginian," said Redfern.

Poinsettia didn't like to hear Madison referred to in past tense. Further, Poinsettia realized she had been conversing with this boy for a couple of minutes, more time than she usually chats with anybody in the library. Neglect—she felt—as she bore into the eyes of Madison and was silent.

Redfern felt the reservation in Poinsettia. He looked at her very seriously, and for a quick moment, she returned Redfern's stare and smiled worriedly; as quickly as she had noticed Redfern's eyes, her stare was back on the Portraiture Madison.

"Hey, you ah, didn't tell me your name," said Redfern.

"My name, why do you want to know that for?" asked Poinsettia.

"I told you mine," said Redfern.

"Well you needn't have done that," said Poinsettia.

Redfern had been stealing looks at her since beginning work three days past; he could not comprehend her timeliness. Every morning at 8:00 she was there, studying in the south wing. Today being his first day off, he could not help but come in to work. He could appreciate setting his watch to the girl. Further, there was something to her work ethic that begged investigation. His object was to get some digits, to hook up.

"Penny—for your information," said Poinsettia, blurring.

"Penny, nice to meet you," said Redfern.

Redfern recollected one should not extend one's hand to a woman unless she extended her hand initially. Poinsettia sensed he was leaving soon and feeling relieved, extended her hand and they shook. Redfern held her hand a few seconds longer than she thought appropriate.

"Penny, I'm gonna see this 6:30 showing of Lord of the Rings: Two Towers."

"Have a grand time," said Poinsettia.

"Do you wanna go? Maybe, take a—ah, break from the studying?"

Poinsettia looked down at her study materials; these were nearly her sole companionship in the three weeks past. She tried to read from her notes. Her left eye twitched. She looked at Madison's eyes—look into an especially overcast day and you will know these eyes—they stared back approvingly.

"Yes, fine. I'll go," said Poinsettia.

"Yea, right, um, should I pick you up?"

"Don't—let's meet at the theater," said Poinsettia.

"Okay, *the Pyramid*. Meet you outside."

"Don't be late."

"I won't."

\*\*\*

Redfern decided to dress for the Two Towers extravaganza as Boromir, the Hero of Gondor.

"Are you perfectly insane?" Poinsettia asked upon spying Redfern's approach.

"I'm just dressed up for the movie," said Redfern.

"But are those arrows attached to your person?" asked Poinsettia.

"Yes, I made this myself. You like it?"

"It's sort of elegant I suppose. Everyone is staring at us, though."

"That's because they think I'm dead."

Redfern had a conch shell horn with him and took the liberty of giving it a blow. The horn bellowed.

"I don't think that's why they're staring," said Poinsettia.

"They're all jealous they didn't have the presence of mind to come as Boromir," said Redfern.

Inside the theater, the two could not sit next to each other as Redfern needed to occupy a loveseat to himself.

"You know James Madison practically wrote the Constitution all by himself?" asked Poinsettia, grinning, admiring Redfern's arrows.

On the silver screen, Gandalf the Grey was revealing to what was left of the fellowship that he was transformed, he was now Gandalf the White. Gandalf the Grey had perished, but life was breathed back into his body; he was sent back to complete his task. Redfern was enthralled, possibly more taken than the players on screen seeing their dead compatriot alive.

"Wait, what'd you say?" Redfern asked.

"James Madison, he is this absolute political genius. He wrote the whole Constitution all by himself, mostly," said Poinsettia.

"Oh, the Virginian?"

"Do you like James Madison at all?"

"He's okay I guess, I mean, I don't hate him or anything."

Near the end of the movie, the name Boromir was mentioned. Redfern responded to this in a way that made Poinsettia shrink in her seat.

"Yeah! BOR-O-MIR! Hell yeah," yelled Redfern, popcorn spilling, arrows breaking.

Poinsettia, slinking down in her seat, managed a smirk, her hand covering her forehead.

\*\*\*

In the parking lot, after the show, the two conversed.

"Did you have an okay night?" asked Redfern.

"Yes, I had a fun time," said Poinsettia.

"Penny, I'm gonna keep a penny in my pocket to remember you by."

"Don't do that."

"Why not?"

"Because my name isn't Penny, it's Poinsettia," said Poinsettia.

"Like the Christmas flower?"

"Yes, I imagine."

"Are you Indian?" asked Redfern.

"Poinsettia is just a name my parents fancied."

Poinsettia set off for her residence that night, performing calculations in her head; three hours in a theater when she could have been studying. She could not see the rationale in spending her time wastefully, especially with a trekkie.

\*\*\*

The next day a flower was waiting for Poinsettia at her haunt; it was some genus of orchid. Attached was an off-syllable haiku. The haiku went:

A flower for a

Flower. I long for your quiet

Moments. My federalist.

"How annoying," Poinsettia thought, discarding the flower in the nearest receptacle and beginning her assigned reading for the week: Playing Indian, by Philip J. Deloria.

"Curious," she was whispering, "Americans needed to dress as Amerindians to somehow feel more American," then chuckling.

An offensive, quivering voice interjected.

"W-Why in J. Christ's name are you so taken with—"

"Redfern, I can't," she interrupted, carefully looking Madison in the eyes, a smirk appearing upon his countenance.

Redfern, appertaining her divided attention between the portrait and himself, mused aloud, "I don't see how you two ever got to be such great pals, the way you hole yourself up."

"At least I don't dress as a porcupine."

Poinsettia shot back.

"Not a porcupine, Boromir."

"Please, let me have a moment of peace," she said, her voice trailing off. Eyes misty in the dry library air.

Poinsettia averted her gaze from the portrait and focused her attention on Redfern's pea coat.

"If you want to be in love with Madison, then I'll leave you two alone," he said.

With that, Redfern assumed his duties at the circulation counter and began to sort returns. The remainder of the week, he walked past Poinsettia and Madison as he shelved books in the south wing. Mustering great self-control, he pretended to ignore them, whereas Madison and Poinsettia really were giving Redfern the brush-off, laughing about this or that. Slowly, the weekend arrived and with it the Fathers of Virginia convention.

\*\*\*

Redfern, drawing upon Gandalf's example, devised a course of action as to have a chance with Poinsettia. He realized, however, events could go badly

if Poinsettia disapproved. He attended the convention as James Madison. When Poinsettia espied James Madison at the conference, she ran to him.

"Why are you looking at me so?" asked Redfern.

"You look like James," said Poinsettia, losing her breath.

"Poinsettia, give me a chance?"

"I should give you a chance, shouldn't I?" she said, turning her head in assessment of a three-dimensional Madison.

"Yes, you should," Redfern said.

Focusing squarely on her homely bun, he pulled the blue pen out. Her hair and her universe slowly came undone.



Gayle Benson  
Reproduction of Form  
Copper Wire/Brazing  
8" x 10" x 5"

## Yesterday

By Diana Smith

On a stranger's front lawn  
half-hidden by a deep green fern, I said yes,  
rubbed your china-like fur, palm of my hand petted  
the smooth camel-colored coat, back and forth,  
breathed to sensation.  
Warm, moist, animal breath matched mine.

Now I curl around your memory.

## Itinerary for Classism's Death

By Benny Boyas

I will travel one day  
to a place where weeds don't grow on lawns  
Trimmed by imported brothers of inferior quality

Here Salisbury steaks aren't part of the buffet  
Coffee comes with extra cream and sugar  
and eggs are doused with Tabasco and ketchup  
all to your door  
delivered if you should ask for them  
by a Guatemalan woman—mother of six

No matter how long it takes  
I shall make the journey one day in life  
and spend at least twenty-three and a half hours  
before check-out time at 10:00 a.m.  
and give their Filipino bellboy a huge tip

I will do this when I make this trip  
to the place where Harvard law professors  
and doctors in white coats  
formulate together undeniable truths  
and speculate in their journals—the contemporary  
Federalist papers  
why we shoot, steal, and kill  
formalizing ideologies with their stench of  
puritan blood  
with contempt of us and our blood of lower grade

And on that day I will be one voice  
and I will cast my vote  
Electing a man into power that will hear it  
my voice in this place  
so that we may all one day travel here unquestioned  
because *U.S. v. Martinez-Fuerte* says they can question  
us

And then we will dance amongst the Harvard tycoons  
and read books on alabaster and astronomy together  
and have the bellboys give us tips  
these balls of stolen money on the callous palms the  
supreme court has given us  
by enslaving us in the factories of Utopian maquiladoras

"How does it feel to be one of the beautiful people?"  
they'll ask  
I will respond "Cold, like tongues of frozen men, frozen  
in their constructed supremacist reality."

You'd be proud Karl Marx  
We slayed Goliath today



Ruben Flores  
Untitled  
Wire/Brazing  
10" x 10" x 7"



Susie Rendon  
Untitled  
Silver Print  
8" x 10"



Sheila Dolsen  
Untitled  
Linoleum Print  
11 3/8" x 15 7/8"



Faustino Brito  
Untitled  
Etching  
7 7/8" x 9 13/16"

## Worlds Apart

by

Kevin Merkelz

Groggily pulling on a heavy sweatshirt and fumbling to lace up an old pair of boots, Jim looked over at the alarm clock set next to his bunk bed. It was a fuzzy blur. With an unintelligible mumble, he brushed the sleep from his eyes and looked again. 5 A.M. If it had been any other day, Jim would have never found the strength to wake himself at this unearthly hour. But today was different. The alarm hadn't sounded for a grueling day at work or a monotonous morning of school. Today the bedside alarm had sounded for freedom, tranquility, and the outdoors.

Nearly every year Jim and his dad made plans for a week of fishing deep in the north woods of Canada, but in recent years, with Jim attending college, it had become increasingly difficult to schedule the annual outing. Not only that, but Jim felt that a rift had grown between him and his father. He wasn't sure if it was his attitude towards school, or maybe his new girlfriend from college that had caused the distance between them, but something certainly wasn't right. Throughout the years, though, Jim had learned one thing about his father. No matter how different and mismatched the two of them were, there was always one thing that brought them back together. Fishing. As far back as his memory stretched, Jim could remember times spent fishing with his dad. On cool summer evenings when a breeze drifted across the water and the cicadas droned on into the amber sunset, Jim would often find himself seated next to his dad, casting an oversized bobber into the local pond. The soothing ripples and the gentle plunk of a lure silently bonded father and son. And when the years drew on, and life grew larger and more demanding, Jim could always count on the quiet whir of a fishing reel to bring him back to a simpler time; a time when father and son united on the calm surface of a pond, fishing poles in hand. So, when his dad proposed to return to their old fishing lake up in Canada, Jim didn't need to think twice about it. And on a stroke of luck, this week had worked out for both of them. Jim wasn't going to waste a moment of this beloved fishing trip.

Throwing on a mottled gray hat, Jim stepped from

their cabin, peering down the thickly-forested hill to the lake. The silhouette of his dad's frame was winking against the shimmering water, already prepping the boat and loading up their fishing gear. As Jim descended toward the dock, a carpet of springy pine needles crunched softly beneath his feet, stirring up the musky scent of pine. A squirrel rustled the high canopy, and far above the lake an eagle let out its piercing cry. Reaching the dock, Jim saw that Chuck, the owner of the tiny boat rental, had waddled down the dock to help with the loading. Regarding the scene from a distance, Jim couldn't help but crack a smile as Chuck huffed and puffed to pack the boat. Chuck had grown up here on the lake, and a life of hearty eating had stretched his waistline to comical proportions. Sagging jowls engulfed a soggy cigar, puffing away even at this early hour. But he was a great sport and knew the lake like the back of his hand. Jim wondered what spot he would suggest they start at this morning. He always had something up his sleeve. After a short meeting, Chuck, Jim, and his dad decided upon a small point on the eastern side of the lake. Chuck said it had been a hot spot as of late. The company shuffled down into the shallow boat, and Jim readied his fishing gear. Ripples pushed out from the rocking boat, creating a pulsating ring of circles that disturbed the smooth surface. With a sudden grunt and a yank, Chuck brought the old motor roaring to life. They were off.

Far below the lake's surface, the boat's muffled rumble was felt. It's low vibrations spread throughout the murky waters, resounding off each underwater crevice and disturbing a hermit crab roping along the lakebed. Its spiral shell caught the motor's rumble and gave off a shiver. It glanced about for a sight of this odd predator. Suddenly, a shadow loomed above and the crab scurried beneath its shell, leaving a cloud of dust billowing into the gray water. Peeking out from beneath its shell, the crab caught a glimpse of the massive shadow's keeper. It was a fish. But not just any fish: it was a muskie of truly enormous proportions, measuring in all at a full four feet. It ruled the top of the food chain with an iron flipper. The hermit crab decided this day was probably better spent

under his shell. However, the large fish continued on, content to swim the early morning water with a lazy flick of its tail. The golden sunlight dappled through reeds high above to rest on the fish's glossy coat, slowly driving out the morning chill. Just then, a gurgle from his stomach reminded the fish that it had been nearly an entire day since its last meal. *Time for a hunt.* Weaving in and out between the maze of reeds, the old fish prowled about for food, letting the muddied smells of potential meals sift through his gills. While this side of the lake might be safe from the roaring wooden surface beasts, it was certainly poor grounds for a meal. Dense plants choked the shallow waters, and even the smallest of fish found it a challenge to navigate. However, throughout his long years in the lake, the large muskie had found secluded passages in the undergrowth through which to travel. But there still wasn't any food. And so, with one last look about him, he swung his mighty flipper and shot off toward the other end of the lake. Hopefully, breakfast would be waiting for him when he arrived.

The journey was a short one, but he always enjoyed it. The vegetation gradually opened up, and sunlight was able to pour through the water with an amber joy. A school of minnows darted out of his way in perfect unison, their tiny silver coats catching the sun. To a smaller fish, the minnows might present a meal, but to the huge muskie, they weren't even worth the energy required to catch them. He let them go, letting one lazy eye follow them off into morning waters. Finally, he caught the scent of a sunfish several yards away. A decent meal, even if it was only an appetizer. He slowed to a crawl, and then, shifting his weight, dropped down several feet to where the cover was thick. Looking up, he could now see the sunfish. Its black eyes betrayed no sense of awareness. It might be oblivious to the new threat, or secretly preparing an escape; you could never tell by looking at its eyes. But the old muskie hadn't been catching sunfish for eight years only to learn nothing. It was easy—sunfish were always vulnerable from below. Their simplistic minds assumed threats only came from within their line of vision. And since their bulging eyes didn't face downward, they never even suspected the old muskie when he struck. Sighing, he angled his bulk up towards the unsuspecting sunfish, and with a lightening fast flick of his tail, he snagged it. But it wasn't much for a solid meal, and the muskie continued on through the deep waters. An hour passed, and the dampened pitter-patter of raindrops began to hit the lake's surface far above.

Out of the water, the light drizzle had risen to a steady downpour. Jim threw on the last of his rain gear and flung out another cast. He glanced over at his dad hunched in the bow of the boat. His dad caught Jim's movement and turned. He gave Jim a knowing grin as he pinned another worm on his hook. Jim smiled back and turned his attention once again to the water. As he slowly reeled in the line, Jim sank back into his seat. Today had gone relatively well. So far as things with his dad went, Jim was once again amazed at the reuniting powers of fish and pole. Hardly had their first cast been thrown hours ago that they again began to talk. At first they'd focused on the easy topics: weather, football, and the latest issue of their favorite fishing magazine. But as the hours drifted by, they had eased into more delicate topics. Jim's dad said that he felt as if he existed in the same house as Jim, but they lived a world apart. Jim brushed the comment away. But his dad persisted, saying that he genuinely missed hanging out with Jim. Slowly, as they cast, reeled, and re-cast, Jim admitted how much he missed spending time with his dad as well. Suddenly, his dad stopped reeling and took a long look at Jim. And then, with a knowing wink, he murmured, "me too" before wrapping Jim in a hug. He had forgotten how good that felt.

Soon after, they scarfed down a quick lunch and continued. Chuck was always pushing them on. The more fishing they could pack into 12 hours of daylight, the better. Chuck would always respond in with his trademark line, "Hey, I'm just trying to get you guys your money's worth. And time's money," before stuffing the cigar back into the side of his mouth.

Yes, it had certainly been a good day so far. And with more than half-dozen walleye already bagged by two o'clock, he certainly couldn't complain. But Jim and his dad weren't here to catch walleye; they could do that anywhere. They were here for the same reason they had been here in all the years past: to catch a trophy muskie. Jim recalled that old fishermen often labeled trophy muskies as the fish of a thousand casts. And after a decade of fishing, Jim figured he was about due for one. But as the soggy afternoon drew on, the chances of catching such a trophy fish became slimmer. Chuck's voice mumbled on in the front of the boat, blending in with the steady patter of raindrops. Sheets of drenching mist hurled against Jim's flimsy green poncho. Cast after cast yielded nothing but seaweed and downtrodden hopes. Hours passed and Jim let out what felt like his thousandth cast of the day. His arm was growing tired of



the incessant casting, reeling, and casting again. So, as he reeled back his lure through the blustery mist, he leaned over to give his dad a tug on the shoulder. He had taken enough for one day and wanted to call it quits. Suddenly, a jerk on the line stopped him short. He snapped his head around toward the water just in time to see a gaping pair of jaws engulf his submerged lure. Grasping his cold fingers about the fishing pole, Jim let out a frantic shout to his dad and Chuck. Drag whirred out in a frenzied whine from Jim's pole as the enormous fish shot away from the boat. The battle was on.

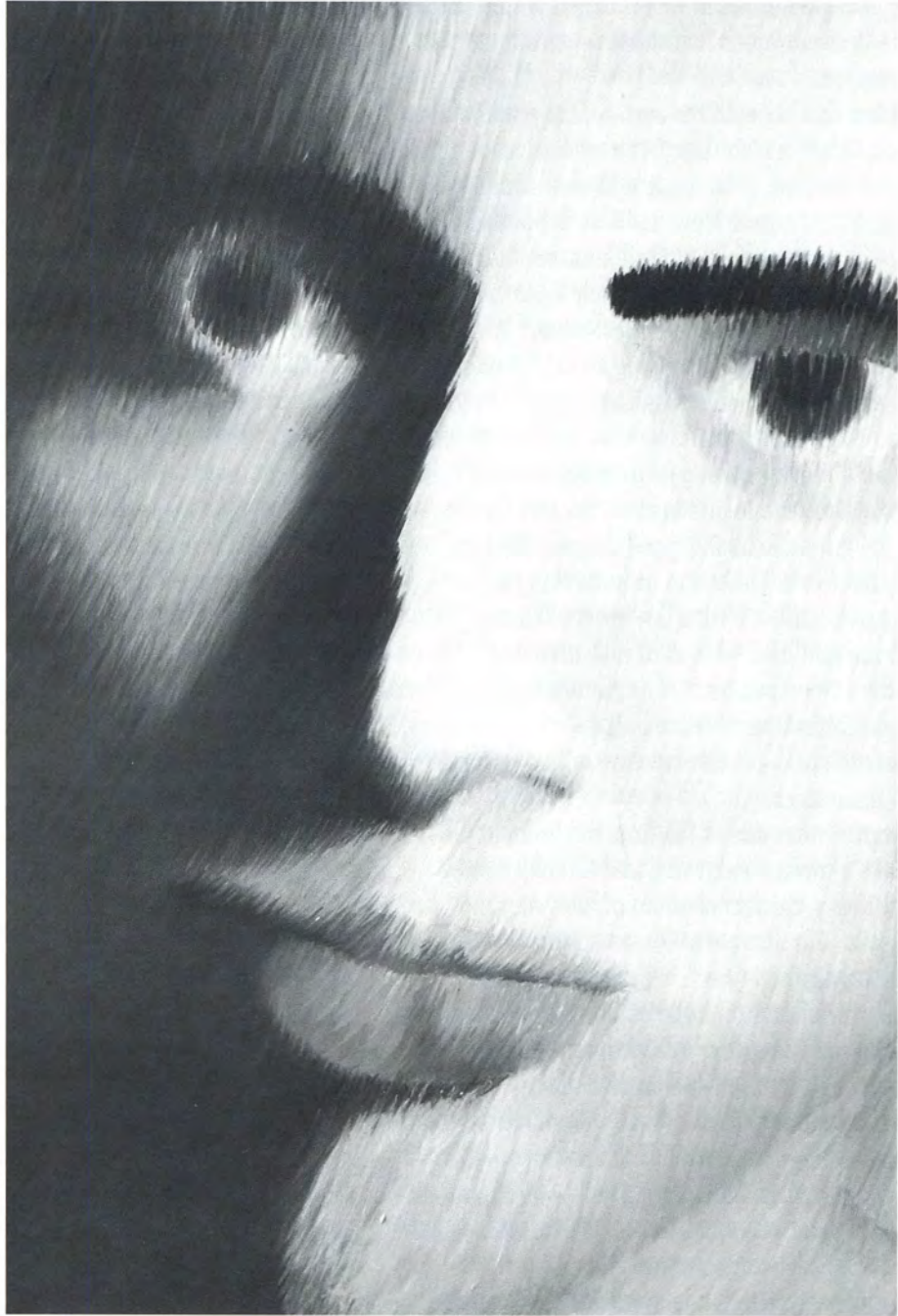
A few feet beneath the surface, the scene was no less frenzied. The huge muskie felt a searing rush of pain shoot through his jaw. First anger and then confusion rushed through his mind. How had this happened? He had planned it all so perfectly. Only minutes before, he had spotted another meal limping and spinning along like an injured fish. It had been the perfect meal. Well, at least until he engulfed the fish in his mouth. And now, suddenly, he found himself struggling against a tiny fish that somehow sprouted a piercing hook and the strength of a bear. The old muskie swung its bulk about and streaked away from the creature inside his mouth. But the more he struggled, the more the hook ripped deeper into his mouth's tender flesh. He had to do something if he wanted to survive this. With a last burst of energy, he heaved around and headed toward the surface. Perhaps he could lose this tenacious beast if he got it out of the water. After all, he couldn't survive long above the surface, and maybe he could shake off this creature with a desperate leap out of the water.

On the other end of the line, Jim brought the fish up to the lake's surface as his dad and Chuck shouted cheers. Suddenly, the fish shot out of the water into the drenching rain. For a moment it seemed to pause in mid-flight, its glistening body catching the raindrops like shattered marbles. And then the battle was on again. Jim grappled with his pole, slowly drawing the massive fish toward the boat. It writhed and twisted about, spraying water out in shimmering arcs. Finally, Jim brought the beast around to bear. In a flash, Chuck swooped down with the net and snagged the gaping fish.

At last, Jim was victorious. He rose with a shaky step toward the beached fish. Sure enough, it was a muskie. Apparently, Jim thought, he had thrown his thousandth cast. Picking it up, he called for his dad to

grab the measuring tape. It was big, but they had to be sure it was a trophy fish. Unreeling the cold steel tape measure, Jim breathlessly counted off the inches: twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, forty-five. Finally, the tape came to rest at a whopping forty-nine inches. It was a trophy muskie alright. Chuck fished the disposable camera from the tackle box, and with grins flashing all around, the group snapped a few pictures of the fish. As Chuck bent to put back the camera, Jim's dad turned to face him. He put a clumsy hand on Jim's shoulder and winked. No words were needed. They had done it. They had finally caught a trophy muskie. But more importantly, they had done it together. Jim knew it; his dad knew it. For a moment, they locked eyes across the tiny prow of the fishing boat. His dad winked, and then it was over. Chuck turned back from the tackle box and exploded into another ecstatic shout of congratulations to Jim. Another minute of excited chattering, and they helped the gasping fish back over the edge of the boat. Jim was handed a pair of hearty pats as the group laughed and re-enacted the scene with excited voices. Eventually deciding the day had been a successful one, they voted to head back to the dock for a hot meal and warm clothes. With a jerk of the cord, the old outboard motor sputtered to life. Chuck gunned the motor, and they were off.

A world apart from the reveling fishermen, and far below the lake's surface, the fish limped down to murky depths. It now not only nursed an empty stomach but an aching mouth, too. Yet somehow it was able to ignore the rumblings from its stomach. And so, with a casual flick of its tail, it plunged toward the lake's tangled undergrowth. It had had enough to eat for one day.



Cynthia Diaz  
Untitled  
Oil on Canvas  
24" x 35 7/8"

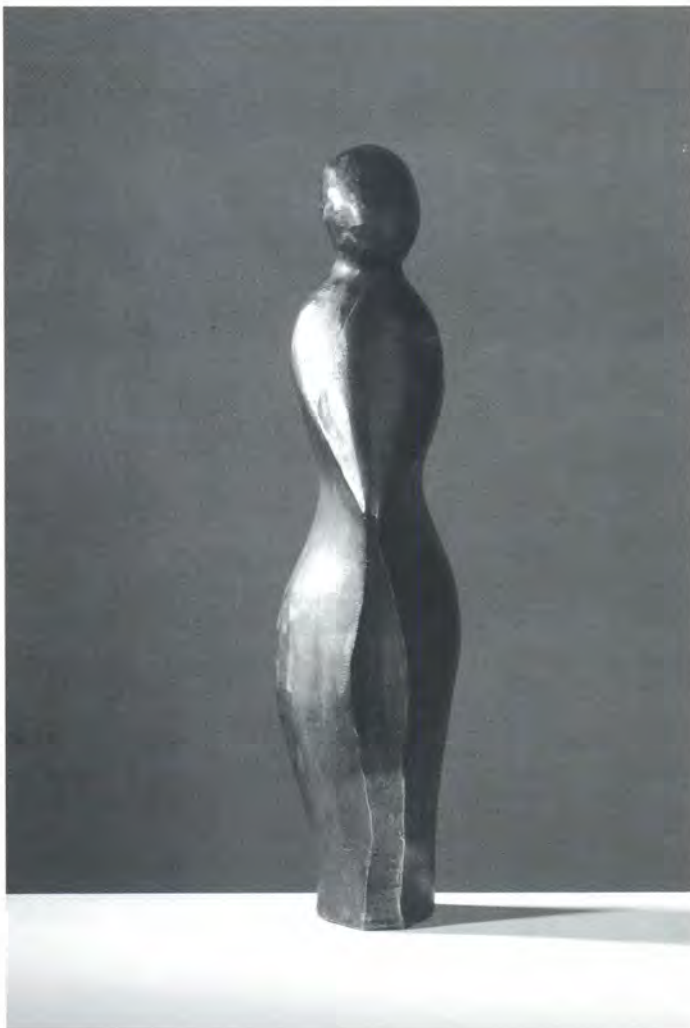
## Topography of my Princess:

By Benny Boyas

Even my mother was shocked to hear the appalling news:  
The love—ours—the type that dynasties are built upon, collapsed.  
Together we conquered the world and demanded acknowledgement of our passion.  
Everywhere we went our hands were clasped as if bonded into slavery.  
You always kissed me at red lights in the van we bought for our future.  
My weaknesses were your strengths and vice versa.  
We could be no better at mutual spoiling.  
I loved our warm showers and toweling you off dry.

I'll never forget the way your tears seemed to wash away the 87 freckles on your cheeks.  
I dare say I knew you better than you knew yourself.  
From the number of creases on your lips,  
To the way to stroke your hair and get you to look up into my eyes,  
From the ground which you looked at and stared upon  
While lost in the pain of saying goodbye

I always knew how to make you smile  
With sweet kisses on your forehead and nose  
Chin and cheek  
Belly and thighs  
Now, the only way I make you wet  
Is by letting the tears dry on your picture  
That I look at and stare upon  
While lost in the pain of our goodbye.



Raolmila Abram  
Unconditional Love  
Bronze  
5" x 11" x 5"

## The Good Neighbor

by

Robin C.  
Weber

Linda Larson had been reading the obituaries for at least 40 of her 50 years. Her husband thought this was strange and accused her of being a busy body. But Linda found it reassuring to watch the "circle of life" in her world. She read the birth announcements with interest, sometimes with amusement at the ridiculous names people were giving their children. Just the other day she had seen the name "Metamorphis Anthony Williams." What in the world will happen to that little boy? She looked forward to the third Sunday of each month when the Herald ran their "Commitments" section, with engagements, weddings, and anniversaries. These days, she saw a lot of familiar names, names of kids her own children had gone to school with. She would clip these from the paper, excited to relay the news to her son and daughter who had both moved out of the area. But she was always a little disappointed when they responded nonchalantly, and almost devastated when they didn't even remember the name.

The obituaries, however, were the most gratifying, giving a whole story of someone's life in just a few paragraphs. Linda would read them carefully, imagining the lives that had ended, some shockingly, while others were natural and most expected. So it was not unusual for Linda to be sitting at the kitchen table with her husband, Jerry, each mutely reading their favorite section of the Sunday paper before church. Linda was chewing a hangnail on her thumb, engrossed in the obituaries, when she suddenly gasped, startling the cat sleeping under the table and upsetting her lukewarm cup of tea.

"My God, do you know who died?"

The angry orange cat stood, shook itself awake and marched down the hall, obviously offended by the disturbance.

"Who?" asked Jerry with little curiosity.

"Betty Froman," she exclaimed, sopping the tea up wit the sleeve of her terry cloth bathrobe.

"Who the hell is Betty Froman?" asked Jerry,

still showing no interest.

"You know who she is. She's the woman that always walks in the middle of the street, the one you almost hit last Halloween. You know who she is!"

"You mean the big Amazon that wanders around all the time?" asked Jerry, finally looking up from his paper.

"Yes, but she wasn't that big. There was something wrong with her; she couldn't help herself, the poor thing."

"She was big; she had to be at least six-five."

Linda answered with a disgusted cluck and read the obituary once again, this time slowly, taking in every detail.

### Betty W. Froman

*Of Lakeside*

Visitation for Betty W. Froman (nee Jones) will be today from 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Dennison Funeral Chapel, 304 E. Main Street, Lakeside. Funeral service will be private.

Born Dec. 29, 1946 in Chicago, she passed away Friday, November 10 at her home.

Survivors include her daughter, Jean (James) Bennett, her son Larry (Toni) Froman, five grandchildren, and her best friend and devoted feline, Cleo.

Betty was preceded in death by her parents, Leonard and Dorothy Jones, her sister, Katherine Jensen, and a son, Richard D. Froman.

Memorials may be made to the Alliance for Mental Health, 1210 Central Road, Lakeside.

"Wow, she has children and grandchildren. And she was married, Jerry. Can you believe that?" she asked incredulously.

"What?"

"Are you even listening to me?"

"No, I'm reading the sports section. And now I'm taking with me to the john, so I really won't be listening," Jerry said, pushing away from the table and padding down the hall toward the bathroom.

Linda stayed at the kitchen table, taking in the morning sun. It was deceptively warm for a fall day. She wondered about Betty Froman. Although Betty lived nearby, Linda didn't know where. For all she knew, Betty Froman could have been a bag lady, living behind the supermarket at night, gorging herself on the rotten produce and rancid bakery goods that were thrown into the dumpster after dark. *Could you become obese eating garbage? Where was Betty going? Why did she walk in the middle of the road?*

Linda stood and cleared the dishes from the table, unable to stop thinking about Betty's children and grandchildren. The fact that Betty had ever been married was startling enough, but having a family and a son who had died really piqued Linda's curiosity. She had seen the woman walk through the neighborhood many times, staring blankly ahead as she wandered down the middle of the street. Most of the neighbors were accustomed to the strangeness that was Betty Froman, but few knew who she was or where she had come from, including Linda.

Only when she had come close to hitting Betty in front of the library on an icy winter day did Linda learn her name. Betty wandered away, unaware of her near demise, while Linda pulled to the side of the road to regain her composure. As she rested her head against the steering wheel, there was a knock on the window, and a startled Linda looked up to see a friend from church.

"Are you okay, Linda?" asked Gina.

"I will be—I'm just kind of in shock. What is wrong with her? I almost slid right into her," said Linda shakily.

"I guess she has some mental problems. I really don't know too much about her, though."

"She shouldn't be walking in the middle of the street, I could have hit her. Who is she, anyway?"

"Her name is Betty Froman. We took some things to her at Christmas," said Gina apologetically. "I'm just glad you're okay."

"Thanks for checking, Gina. I'll see you later."

Linda pulled into the parking garage, relieved to be parking her car, as opposed to giving a police report. Her heart began to beat normally and her pulse had stopped racing, but she couldn't get Betty Froman out of her head. *What kind of mental problems did she have? Did Gina know more than she was offering?*

On another occasion, Linda walked into the library with a stack of overdue books, stopping to pay her outrageous fines. There, standing at the front desk was Betty, animatedly talking to a young teenage girl who was working behind the desk. The girl's library ID read "Lisa," and Betty was using her name repeatedly. Although it was bitterly cold outside, Betty wore a thin cloth coat unbuttoned over a faded brown cotton housedress. She wore knee-high stockings under her dingy gray socks, and her formerly white canvas shoes were splattered with mud and noticeably wet.

As Betty blathered on, Lisa looked confused and a bit frightened. Linda moved closer, trying to hear the conversation, but she was called to the "next available station" and was too far away to eavesdrop. She watched as Betty continued her lively discussion with the worried and anxious Lisa. After paying her fine, Linda turned to see that Betty had disappeared and Lisa was cheerfully waiting on the next customer. Linda pondered getting back in line so that she could ask Lisa what the problem was with Betty, but after being called a busy body so many times by her husband and children, she chose to walk away and forget the incident.

\*\*\*

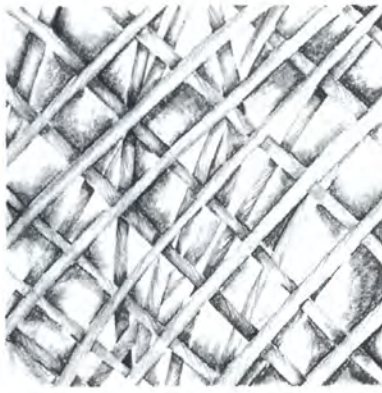
"Are you going to sit there all day?"

Linda's thoughts were interrupted by Jerry, returning from the bathroom. She got up from the table, collecting the dirty plates littered with bits of scrambled eggs and toast. She loaded the dishwasher silently, dumping Jerry's coffee and her tea.

"I was thinking, it might be nice if we made an appearance at the visitation today," Linda said hesitantly to Jerry.

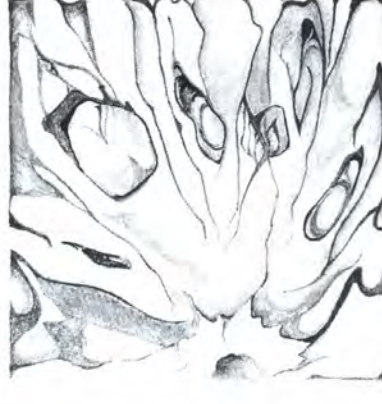
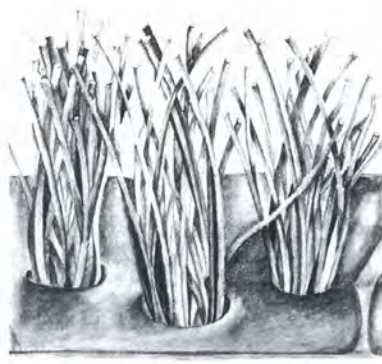
"What visitation?"

"For Betty Froman. After all, she was our



Abner W. Carr

7



Anne M. Witt  
Textures  
Pencil  
36" x 24"

neighbor.”

“Have you lost your mind? I never even spoke to that woman. She wouldn’t know me if I walked up and lifted her out of her casket. Besides, it’s Sunday, baby. Gotta watch the Bears lose.”

“Well, I think I might run up there, just to pay my respects.”

“And pick up a little juicy gossip while you’re at it, huh? I know what you’re up to.” Jerry laughed and turned toward the hall. “I’m gonna shower and get dressed. Maybe you can talk your crazy sister into going with you.”

Linda glared at his back as he walked away, angry that he knew exactly what she was up to. She hated the way he ridiculed her for being interested in people’s lives. He knew her too well, knowing that she would pick up the phone as soon as he was out of listening range. She dialed Debbie’s number, thinking it might be a little early to get an answer. On the third ring, Debbie answered curtly.

“What do you want?” she asked.

*Damn caller ID*, thought Linda.

“Have you read the paper yet?”

“Do you mean, have I read the obituaries yet? No, Linda, believe it or not, that is not my first priority of the day.”

“Betty Froman died,” Linda announced. “Can you believe it?”

“Wow,” said Debbie. Linda knew she had her attention now. Debbie was just as curious about Betty as she was. “What happened to her?”

“I don’t know, but her visitation is today. Do you want to go up there with me?”

“I really would, but it’s Nana’s birthday today. We have to leave at noon and we won’t be home till after dinner. Damn, why did she have to go and die this weekend? I’m all booked up.”

“Can you go to the party later? The visitation starts at three and we’d only stay a few minutes.”

“Are you nuts? We have to be at the house by one so we can eat and be in place for kickoff at three. That’s one thing that wacko family is not flexible about.”

Debbie’s reference to her in-laws infuriated Linda. Their religious devotion to the Bears was causing Linda to lose her nose companion.

“Hey, Linda, I’ve gotta get going. I’m making taco dip and I haven’t even been to the store yet. Aren’t you guys going to church?”

“Yeah, I need to go get ready. Let me know if you decide to blow off Nana’s party.”

“Right, like that could happen,” laughed Debbie. “Talk to you later.”

Linda hung up the phone, feeling frustrated and deflated. She didn’t want to show up by herself, but she didn’t know anyone else who would even consider going with her. Except for the church people. She closed her mind to that option immediately, knowing that they would be too “Christian” for her needs. She needed someone with curiosity, not compassion. She closed the dishwasher and filled the cat dish beside the back door. As she turned to walk down the hall, she was struck by the fact that she might actually be a busy body and the guilt was a bit overwhelming. Entering the bedroom, Jerry looked up at her while he pulled his socks on.

“So did she fall for it?” he asked with a smirk.

“Who?” Linda asked, trying to keep herself from falling for his game.

“Debbie—is she going with you?”

“I didn’t even call her,” Linda lied. “They have to go to Nana’s party today.”

“That’s a shame. Maybe you can just stay home and wait on me. Wouldn’t that be more fun?”

*More fun my ass*, thought Linda, walking into the bathroom. She turned the shower on, moving the handle from the cold side Jerry preferred well over to the hot side. Hanging her robe up, she took off her nightgown and climbed into the steamy water. As she shampooed her hair and soaped her body, she argued with herself about going to the visitation. *Is it wrong to want to pay respects? Do I really want to pay my respects or am I just being snoopy? What is Betty’s family like? How will she be laid out?* It was too much for Linda to handle. She decided to leave the decision until after church. Maybe God would give her the answer.

\*\*\*

The sermon seemed exceptionally boring and tedious. Linda stifled yawn after yawn until the last hymn was finally announced and the congregation stood to sing. God, thought Linda, *you didn’t even give me a*



clue. *Can I go to the wake without being un-Christian? Just give me a sign.* As the last verse of the hymn ended, the minister walked to the center of the altar to offer his benediction. But instead of a benediction, he began to speak of a member of the community who had passed away.

"Although we may not have known Betty Froman well, our prayers go out to her family in their loss. Betty's visitation is today at Dennison's at three o'clock until nine o'clock this evening. And now, please bow your heads for the benediction. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you. And give you peace. Amen."

And with that, Linda had her sign. She felt alive and renewed as she often did at the end of the church service. Shuffling out of the pew, she waved to a few of the familiar faces and pushed Jerry past the line waiting to greet the minister. They grabbed their coats from the rack and made their way to the side exit.

"I'm going to that visitation, Jerry," she declared.

"Good for you. I'm not."

"And that's okay. I am totally okay with going by myself. I know I'm going for the right reasons."

"I'm glad you talked yourself into that," said Jerry. "At least she'll have one friend there."

"I'm not trying to be her friend. I just think someone should show that they care whether she lived or died."

"Whatever," said Jerry. "You can tell me all about it when you get home."

They drove the six blocks home in silence, pulling into the driveway just as Debbie and her family drove by on their way to the party. The two kids in the back waved wildly and happily, excited to be going to a lively family gathering. Debbie waved limply. She looked subdued and dejected, and Linda wondered if the day with her in-laws was getting her down. Or was it the fact that she would miss out on Betty's visitation? Climbing the slippery steps to the back door, Linda looked across her backyard, amazed at the gorgeous colors in her trees against the crisp blue sky.

After changing her clothes and making a quick lunch of chicken noodle soup and grilled cheese sandwiches, Linda loaded the dishwasher once again and wiped the counter clean. *It feels like all I ever do is*

*load the dishwasher and clean up.* She wasn't trying to be philosophical, but it occurred to her that life was made up of just such events and that Betty Froman would no longer share in any of them. *What had Betty thought about as she did her dishes? Did she have a dishwasher? Did she do her laundry at home or did she go to the Laundromat? Who the hell was Betty Froman?* The question screamed inside of Linda's head. That's just what I'm going to find out. I need to know who she was.

Linda agonized over what to wear to the visitation. The suit she had worn to church seemed too stiff and formal, yet she didn't want to look disrespectful. She finally decided on black slacks with a gray sweater set. It was casual, but not too casual. She stuck her head into the family room to let Jerry know she was leaving. He was engrossed in the pre-game discussion leading up to the Bears start and grunted his dismissal. Linda walked through the kitchen, stopping to pet her cat, then headed out the back door to her car.

\*\*\*

Dennison's was only a few blocks away and traffic was light. Maybe everyone was home watching the Bears. Linda pulled into the crowded parking lot, amazed at the number of cars. Her spirits picked up as she walked toward the front door, happy that there were others who wanted to show some respect for poor Betty Froman. Outside the entrance, a few smokers dragged on their cigarettes as Linda smiled discreetly and moved past them. Inside, people milled around, talking quietly and glancing at her as she walked toward the hall leading to the viewing rooms. The smell of flowers was pungent and overwhelming. She took a deep breath and continued down the hall. She stopped at the podium holding the guest book and began to sign her name. She had just written "Linda" when she realized the memorial cards were not for Betty Froman, but for James Duncan. She was in the wrong room. She debated about crossing her name off, though that would be rude, and quickly added "Larson," adding "So sorry" at the end. She turned, stepping around the people waiting behind her, and continued down the hall.

The next room seemed quiet. There was no one in the hall and as she approached, she saw Betty's name on the board outside the room. Stepping up to the guest book, she noticed there were few names, and none that

she recognized. She signed her name deliberately, took a memorial card, and drew a deep breath. *What have I gotten myself into?* But she proceeded into the room, smiling politely at the few people standing and sitting in small groups. Some nodded and smiled back, while others stared at her quizzically. She was sure they were wondering why she was there.

Linda walked slowly toward the front of the room toward the casket, where she was greeted by a tall young woman with curly, fiery red hair that trailed down her back like ivy.

“Hi, I’m Betty’s daughter, Jean,” she said taking Linda’s hand. “Thank you so much for coming. How did you know my mother?”

Linda was stunned into silence. *How did I know her mother,* she thought in a panic. *What the hell am I supposed to say to this girl?* But she regained her composure and squeezed Jean’s hand.

“Actually, I didn’t know your mother. I saw her around town sometimes and just came to pay my respects.” *There, I’m off the hook.*

“Then you did know part of my mother, said Jean thoughtfully. “It’s too bad you didn’t get to know the other parts. Would you like to see her?”

Linda nodded, holding Jean’s hand as she was led to the casket.

“She looks good, don’t you think? I didn’t know what she should wear, but I found that dress in her closet, and I think she looks pretty good. At least she looks peaceful.” Jean smiled and stepped back to give Linda some privacy. Linda knelt down and folded her hands on the railing. *Dear God, take care of Betty and give her some happiness in heaven. I think she must deserve it. Amen.*

Linda lifted her head and began to study Betty. Her hair was a grayish red, combed into a neat-looking helmet. It was a dramatic change from the flyaway mop she usually wore. Her face looked surprisingly young, smooth, and blemish-free. Her nose was long and straight, and the red lipstick she wore was flattering to her full lips. She did indeed look peaceful, and Linda was surprised that Betty could be so presentable. Her right hand was folded over her left, her long fingers with short-clipped nails. She wore no rings and Linda noticed she wore no earrings or necklace, no jewelry whatsoever. She stood and turned toward Jean,

preparing to say good-bye.

“I’d like you to meet my brother and my dad. They’re right over here,” said Jean, pointing toward a young man and an older version, standing on the other side of the casket.

“You know what, I don’t know your name. I’m so sorry, I didn’t even ask.”

“Don’t apologize; you have a lot on your mind. I’m Linda Larson. I live on Willow Lane by the bridge.”

“Then you know my mom’s house on Rose, the one with all the bird feeders?”

Linda was stunned. She had passed that house a thousand times, amazed at the beautiful flowers and the tidiness of the lawn. She had never seen anyone in the yard, yet it always looked like the landscapers had just left. There must have been twenty bird feeders scattered about, some strung from trees, while others hung on long, squirrel-proofed poles. No wonder she had seen Betty walking in the street so often—she lived a block away.

“She had a beautiful yard,” Linda stammered. “It always looked wonderful.”

“That was one thing she did well,” said Jean, leading Linda toward the two men.

“Dad, Larry, this is Linda Larson. She lives right around the corner from Mom.”

The men took turns shaking Linda’s hand, shyly but graciously.

“It was so nice of you to come today,” said the other man quietly. “She didn’t know many people.”

“Well, I just wanted to pay my respects. You have a beautiful yard. She did a great job on it.” *Again with the inane compliments.*

“Oh, Betty and I were divorced years ago. She lived by herself.”

“I’m so sorry, I just assumed. . .” *Damn I’m a moron. Please, God, just get me out of here.*

“That’s okay, not a problem,” said the man kindly. “She actually lived in the house where she grew up. Her dad left it to her when he died. I was always glad she had a place of her own where she could be happy.”

The younger man sniffed softly. “As if she was ever happy,” he said solemnly.

“Well, at least as happy as she could be,” said his father, laying his hand on his son’s shoulder.

"It was good to meet all of you," said Linda, eyeing the exit. "I'm so sorry for your loss."

Jean smiled, taking Linda's hand between both of her own.

"I'm sure you know my mother didn't have many friends, so it means a lot that you came today. It would have made her happy to know one of her neighbors cared about her."

Tears began to form in Linda's eyes and suddenly, her cheeks were wet and her nose was running. *What the hell is this all about?* She couldn't believe this was happening. Jean pulled a small pack of Kleenex from her suit pocket and offered it to Linda.

"I'm so sorry. I can't believe I'm getting so worked up," she said apologetically. "I never really even knew her. I don't know why I'm acting like this."

Jean took Linda's arm and led her to a sofa on the side of the room.

"Why don't we just sit for a minute until you feel a little better? Do you want some water or some coffee?"

"No, thanks. You're being so nice. Your mother must have been very proud of you."

Jean smiled, then looked off in the distance. After a few seconds, she looked back at Linda. She seemed to have aged in that short time and her weariness overtook her entire body.

"Mostly my mother didn't think much of me. I don't say that to be mean, she just wasn't very aware of what was going on most of the time."

Linda ached for the young woman; her pain was as obvious as her red hair.

"But you know that she must have loved you and cared about you, don't you?" she asked. "That's just instinct, all mothers love their children."

Jean bowed her head, her hair partially covering her face. She held a Kleenex to her nose and sniffed quietly. Linda put her arm around her, pulling the girl close to her side. Jean's body shuddered and her sorrow overwhelmed her. The sobs and cries reminded Linda of the mid-Eastern women she had seen on the news, mourning the loss of their husbands and sons. The sounds were primal and harsh, almost animal-like. It was so haunting and heart wrenching; what horrible grief they must have experienced. Jean's breathing began to slow and she wiped her face and blew her nose

using several Kleenex. Finally, she lifted her head and looked into Linda's eyes.

"I am so sorry. That's the first time I've cried since I got the call."

"Oh, honey, you don't have to apologize. You need to get that out."

"Actually, this is the first time I've really felt sad. I guess I feel guilty that I haven't. She was an unhappy person and I always felt like she was a burden. She embarrassed me and I always wished she wasn't my mother. And now she's gone and I don't even feel that bad. How's that for being a loving daughter?"

"We all grieve in our own ways," Linda said hesitantly. "I'm sure this has been very hard for you."

Jean looked straight into Linda's eyes.

"My mother suffered from the deepest, most horrible depression you can imagine. She went through shock treatments, every drug you can imagine. She was institutionalized so many times my parents lost everything they owned. She insisted my dad divorce her. He went through so much with her. He wanted to stay with her. She said no. She needed to be on her own. She lived in my grandparents' house by herself, and sometimes she was really peaceful. But she hated how the drugs made her feel; one time she told me she'd rather feel like shit than not be able to feel. So she'd stop taking her medicine and we'd start to get the calls. People were almost hitting her with their cars. She was harassing people all over town. She made life a living hell for everybody. I was so embarrassed I wouldn't let people know she was my mother. One time I hid in the bathroom at school when she came in because I didn't want her to see me."

Linda's curiosity about Betty Froman had evaporated into thin air at the sound of Jean's grief. She was uncomfortable hearing Jean's story.

"I don't know what to say. I wish there was something I could do to help."

"You don't have to say anything. I just appreciate the fact that you came today. That you weren't too embarrassed or uncomfortable. That means a lot to me."

A small boy toddled toward them and climbed into Jean's lap. She kissed the top of his head, his red hair neatly combed for the occasion.

"This is my son, Jack. He's my baby."

Jean's eyes glowed with affection and Linda was gratified to witness their bond. She reached over and took Jean's hand.

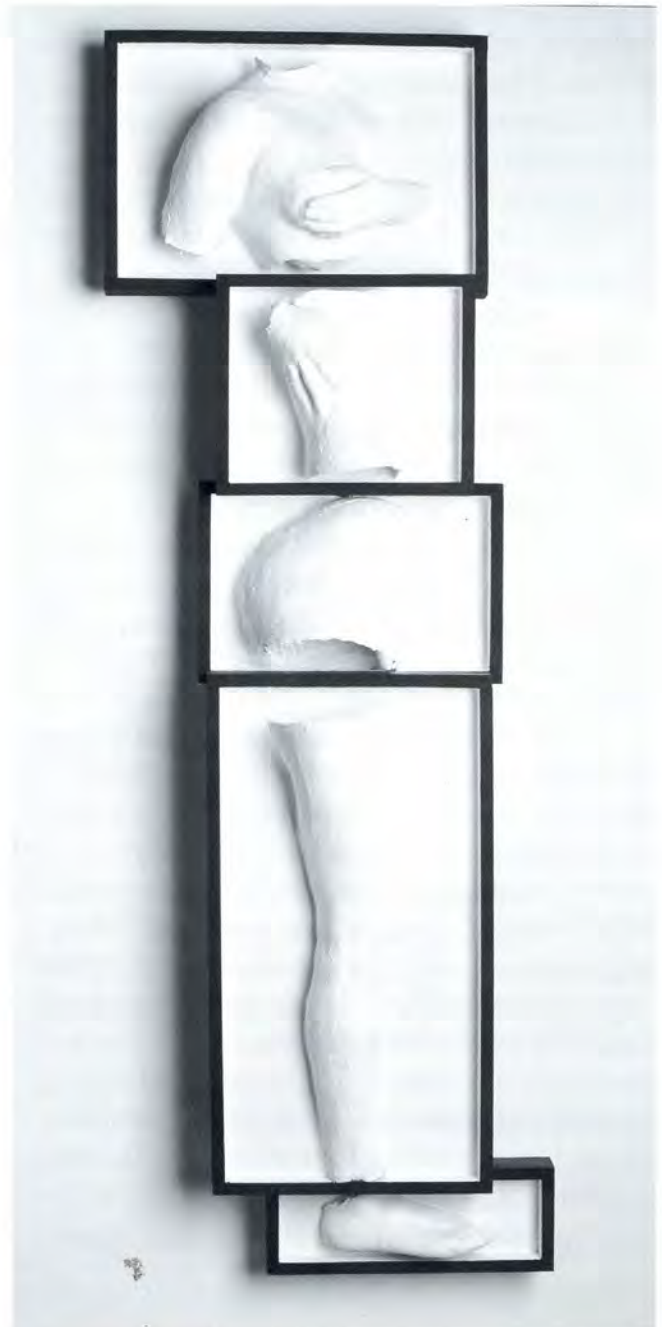
"I'm going to let you get back to your family now. It was so nice to meet you."

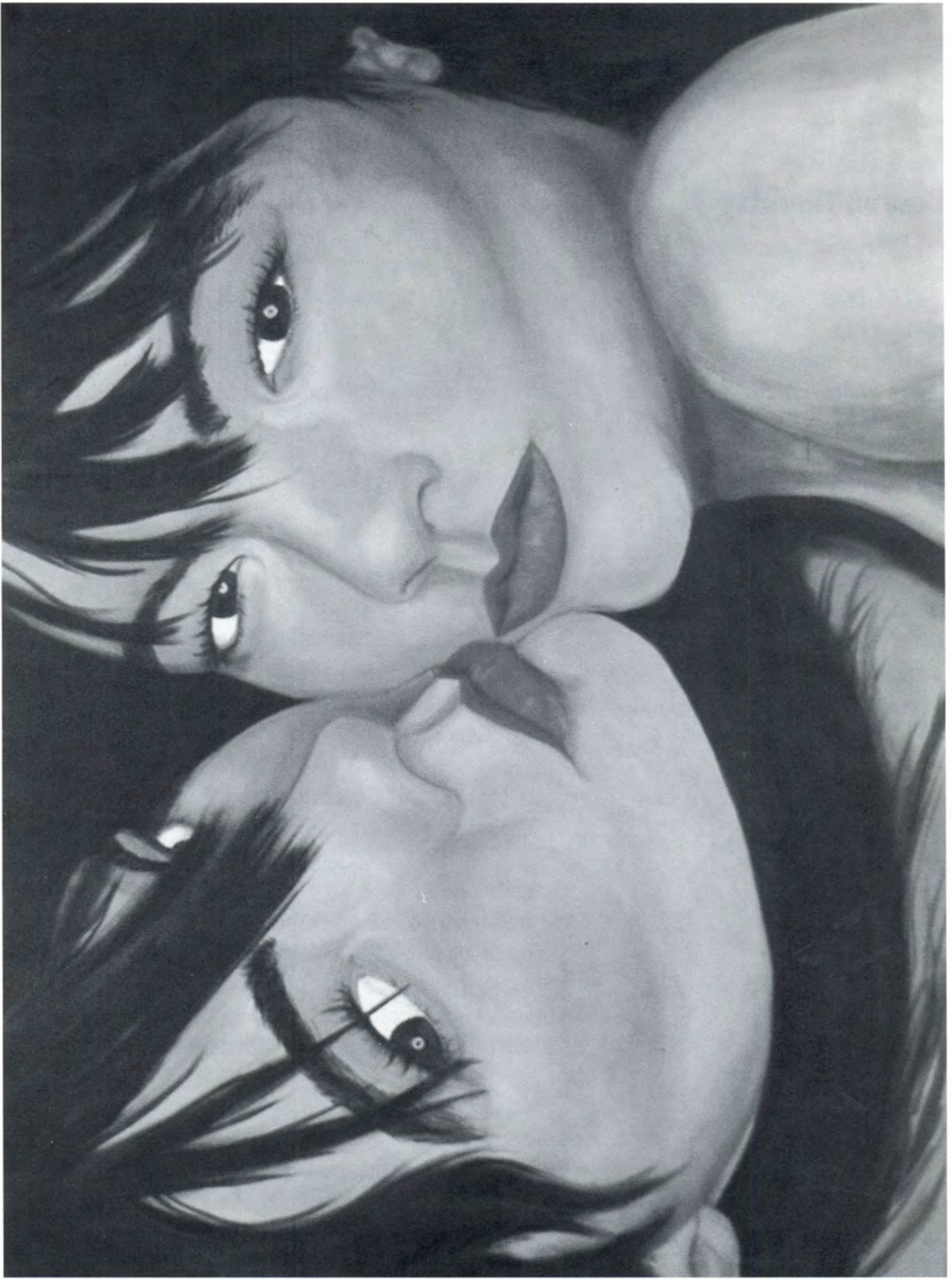
"I'm sorry I unloaded on you, Linda. Thanks for listening to me."

The women stood and hugged each other, Jack sandwiched between them. Linda waved to the father and son still standing by the casket, then walked quickly out of the room, past the throngs of people who had come to visit James Duncan. She hurried to her car, climbing in quickly and slamming the door. The weather had changed dramatically, and the roads were slippery with sleet. She drove slowly, testing her breaks and watching for crazy drivers. She turned onto Willow, slowing as she neared her driveway. But she drove by, turning at the next corner and stopping in front of the house on Rose Street.

The birdfeeders were covered with ice, but still the birds came. There were brown and orange mums in pots on the front steps. Maple leaves danced in circles across the front yard. Caught in a small crabapple tree on the side of the house was a plastic shopping bag, flapping with each gust of blustery wind. Linda opened her car door, cautiously stepping onto the street. Carefully she shuffled across the yard, ripping the bag from the tree and stuffing it into her pocket. She walked back to the car and went home.

Michelle Fernandez  
Bad Body Parts  
Wood and Plaster  
2' x 8'





Gayle Benson  
Between You and I  
Oil Painting  
30" x 22"

## **A Dose on Thursday**

By Jay Fox

While I watched  
Cirrus over sap  
Still full of so much substance  
A banana spider  
Asked me to brush  
Her legs and tape  
Wings to her second half

And when everything  
Was in patterns,  
Squares and bruised diamonds,  
The light extirpated  
An emotion  
And I only thought to tape her wings.

## **Hospital. 2 East.**

By Diana Smith

iv hoses hang like used up women  
expiration dates exposed

halls hum  
well-rehearsed nurselike tones  
tvs drone side-by-side  
happy ever after  
voices in her head said *kill the children*  
205 bellows *nutrition my . . . give me a supplement*

woman on loan from nursing home  
henpecked by pained visitors  
plays quietly in her head  
tiny imaginary friends  
end of this hallway wing-chaired room  
chair after chair after chair

I cruise for characters, visitors, doctors,  
wish the gift chocolates into splendid little shapes.

## The Gambling God of Moqui

By Jay Fox

An underground boxer from Reykjavik  
Caresses his knuckles in a booth  
And blows on little cuts  
Staring into the white noise of death:  
Four-hundred four slot machines  
Crushing men into suitcases  
And women into horses.

A Kino player with a plastic nose  
A silver hook and cigarillo  
From Sacramento, dry  
A victim of love  
Of psoriasis  
He snaps his hooks  
To numbers.

A waitress covers her ink  
Of angels and bullets  
With angora  
Beneath an eave hoping  
Her bloody wings erect  
While her skinny eyes become  
Calcimine and mercury.

I believe I could love her.

A Moqui Indian  
Named Buckskin  
Told me of Noqoilpi,  
The gambling god,  
Whose greed bred him  
Women as property  
Who was shot  
Into the sky like an arrow  
By the wind god.

To this I shove  
A firecracker in my beak  
And with a punk  
I will light it and  
Feather paint this vestibule  
Crimson as the rope burns.

Because I envy what they all have.

