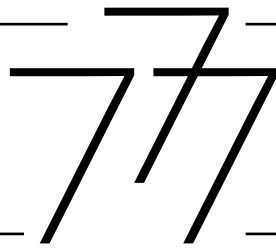


NIGHT PAPER

FEATURING:
MYRIAM GURBA
BRANDON JOYCE

STEVE KADO
MOLLY LAMBERT
JEREMY SIGLER



POETRY BY:
ROBERT FLANAGAN
MARC LEBLANC

JOSEPH MOSCONI
MARISA TAKAL



JEFF BIERK | *Queen and Church*, September 26, 2015

Weird Winterized Meat Lover's Lasagna

EDWARD SHENK

The trash. It took shape. Trash is shaped by dawns always. The skyline looked like a hateful person taking a photograph. The sun, it did not singe the hair but made it straight.

A long lost basketball themed Tervis insulated tumbler BPA-free drying with the film of cucumber water days away from fermentation, the center-unfolded extrawarninglabeltextpeeledoffibuprofenandflapping around like a lipid, KT tape rat-kinging with eyebrow threads, zippy little plastic sawtooth sink uncloggers that don't work and Sour Power Strawberry Straws.... There are to-go fusion sushi plastic grass fences, blue automotive paper towels with the unmistakable aroma of Fabuloso, untouched cantaloupe and honeydew rusting in portion cups, interesting Shiba Inu shit cinnabuns leapfrog equidistant, high-velocity stippling of blackened ranch and ketchup, cask rejections, skintimate tendercrisps, salad oil-stained boxes of Admiration salad oil, wifi passwords written on the backs of junkmail, Binge Eating Disorder pamphlets, a newsletter from the Flat Earth Society, different colored pen ink differentiating a G from a 6, a 1 from an I, grant applications to study the history of wine, NYPD

navy blue food dyed rose petals leafblown blocks from the memorial, snappleisms scrawled in chickenfat, cheerlessly in what proves to be chickenfat....

Have you seen the Minions?? Do you know what Minions are? They are the same homunculi previously misdiagnosed as extinct by the self-proclaimed scientific community. They have an insatiable proclivity toward mischief and malaise. Minions are the bringers of bad night air in the evening upon microzymotic chariots. They are the loophole humpers of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. The nanomechanical Itchys of *Scratchtasia*. The damacies of the katamari. Only Minions and Twinkies can survive nuclear fallout, and I am almost done sequencing the Minion genome.

It is autumn and outside-cats are yawning. Across the street a box slumps left of the storm drains, the word FREE sharpied on one of its flaps. The box is mildewed, the corrugation is separating. It's been, like, raining. Among its contents are Tuesdays with Morrie, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, *Who Moved My Cheese?* (abridged, on tape), assorted Sue Grafton ("N" Is for Noose, "Y" Is for Yeerks, "F" Is for Fugitive, "A" Is for Alibi), two halves a copy of the Oprah Book Club's own *Infinite Jest* ripped in half like a phone book by a strongman, Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging, *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook: Dating & Sex*, *Housefucker Magazine*.

One of the cats, Russell, named after the sound of one fall leaf, is enamored with the box, having mistaken its contents for chicken salad with craisens. He leaps. The cardboard splits. The cat spills its ass and the books into the street. Tumbling into view is a slender volume in a faded red and white dustjacket — *The Tao of Pooh*. Russell leaves and makes for a tree. The book comes to a stop, falling open to page 158. The epilogue. It reads: *[Spoiler Alert/Trigger Warning]*

Upon moving to NYC a handful of people, I don't know who, have taken out various life insurance policies on me. Each one of these somewhere in the tens or hundreds of thousands though I have no idea of the exact running sum. I can offer no descriptions as

to what they look like, or how many they are, nor say for certain whether or not I have ever actually met any of them before in my life.

I can feel their presence. In whatever barometric capacity. I am being monitored — not every day — but I know when it is happening. They're commiserating on a conference call just out of earshot, hesitating markings, crunching numbers at one another, irritable in the throes of Restless Leg Syndrome, goading each other, placing peripheral bets.... The beneficiaries are scheming.

Things have become — difficult, to say the least. There are more shadows than I remember. Objects are sharper, heavier, harder. Sounds are louder. There are less announcements. Machines are more prone to malfunction. The instrumentation for sudden death seems almost limitless. I avoid the more obvious arenas — subway platforms, bridges, elevators — mostly now out of my own resentment for the menial obvious rather than an actual belief that This Will Be The Scene.

There is no specific company or lawyer I can legitimately trace back to the policies. All I have are inklings and insinuations to go on. Clients too thrilled or sweating when discussing providers. Insurance commercials that appear as though filmed in a replica of my childhood house. Certain arrangements of last names I find troublesome. Once on a lunchbreak I got into my car and drove nonstop to Altoona, PA just to verify the existence of the law firm of Kuntz, Lescher, Perfecto, & Watercross, PLLC.

Paranoia has eroded my rhythms, my ability to work or rest. Music is either distracting or mocking, never in syncopation. I only ever cum when I am asleep and wake with no memory of the dream. I have been made to be obsessed with my life, and my life has been made to be devoid of meaning. My life is defined only by its death.

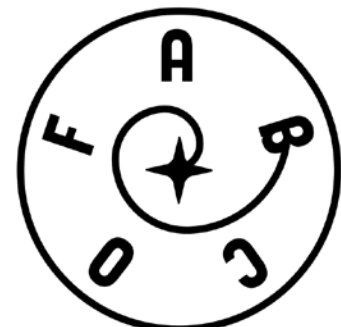
Over in the shadows this morning stood a predator, uninvited, weighing reps of tropical skittles in his hands, or a cell phone charger salesman. Or the lady collecting cans. Its blood is too badly decoded for DNA testing. One of them.

There was only one option available to me if I wanted to possess any shred of control. I needed to keep one step ahead of the trajectory onto which they'd rerouted my life. To calculate the where and when of my fate's descent and beat it to it on my own terms.... I located it beneath the city streets, below the remoteness of the subway stations, to where, eventually, all the delicacies of the above world wind up.

Hello from the sewers of NYC.

I've been here a month now. I stopped noticing the smell after five days. Things have

CONTINUED ON P. 3



STREETBREATHER

I grew up in one of the notches of the Rust Belt. I went to school in the Capitol of the Confederacy. I've spent most of my adult life in the two major coastal metropolitan areas. I have felt an immense connection to each of these cities, for various reasons, yet none of them really care about me. Some of us aspire to make an impact on a place. Some of us are just fine with allowing the place to dictate things for us. It's a mutual relationship that requires routine maintenance. We cannot lose sight of horizons.

It's important to remember: Everywhere has a history. At any moment, we are contributing to the history of a place, whether explicitly or implicitly, consciously or subconsciously. The slants in architecture, the slang in vernacular – these things shape us, no matter how sturdy or slippery. It's also important to remember: We are naturally shapeshifters, if we want to be.

Any city, really, exists independent from all of us. We program traffic lights and we walk our dogs on sidewalks; we litter in parking lots and we piss in alleyways. But the cities we built don't care about any of us. And that's okay.

What does the city do at dawn, when only party monsters and the homeless wander the streets? That's when you can really get to know a city. It's like the first time you wake up naked next to someone, before he or she cleans him or herself off again. In that moment, when the light hits you anew, you realize all topographies are endlessly personal.

— KEITH J. VARADI,
DECEMBER 2015



CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE...

been calmer and I have felt healthier both mentally and physically. Only just slightly but it's apparent.

One week ago China Chalet flushed an entire koi pond down the toilet, and since then I've been piecing it back together here in my pipeline. I've had nothing but time on my hands since waiting for my destiny.

I used plastic orange construction fencing to form a rough perimeter of the basin. It's light and perfect for root nests to cling to. Much of the vegetation was salvageable and has been flourishing in this pond with such strong fertilization properties. The water hyacinth, very sad looking when first drug up, has made a full 180. The horsetail has easily doubled its spread.

I've become quite good at reanimating these magnificent fish, too. Using this coffee stirrer, I feed each koi a secret ratio of airsoft pellets and ball bearings, floaters and sinkers respectively, fine-tuning the placement within the digestive tracts with ship-in-a-bottle delicacy. If the ratio is off I refer to the discrepancy index and add X amount of airsofts or ball bearings, whatever the case may be, until the koi achieves its lifelike suspension inches below the surface of the sewage. A stasis somewhere between watery grave and offgassing buoy. Where I spent my life.

So far I have located and reanimated 9 adult koi and 4 immature ones. Their names are Amethyst, Arabesque, Calla Lilly, Chico Stick, Fripperies, Mirrormask, Moonbean, No-Face, Pisco, Pronto, Remoulade, Sundry, and Tanqueray.

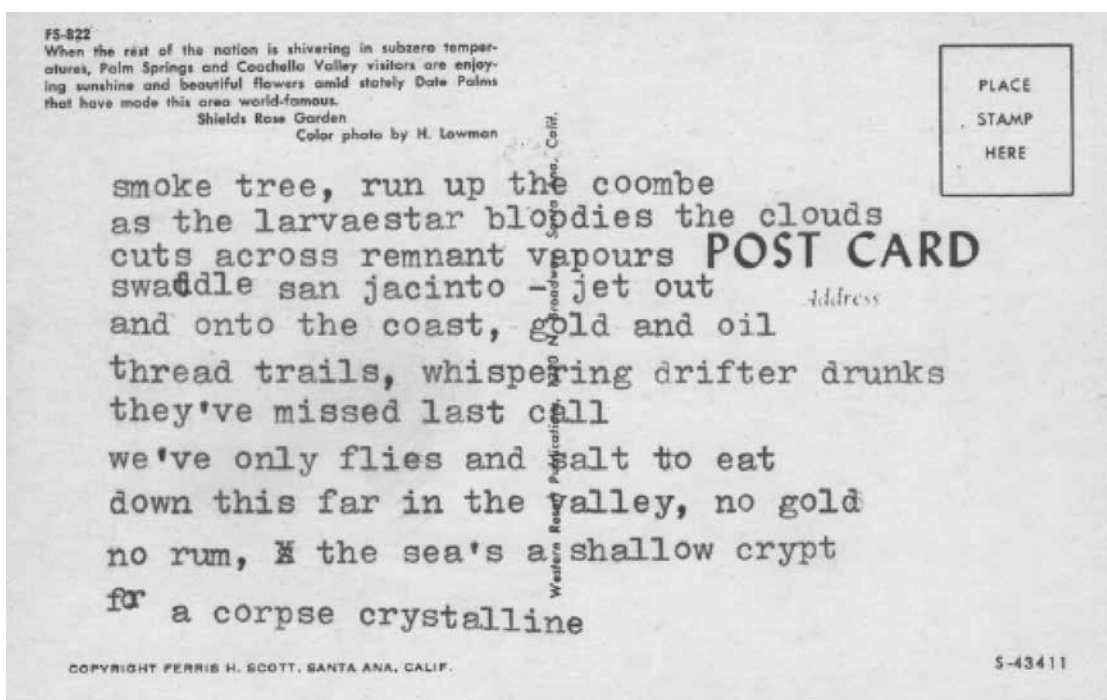
With them I await the final impact of my life.

<Hoff, Benjamin. *The Tao of Pooh*. New York: Penguin, 1983. Print.>

And there is an antiquated thing perfect for museums of the future, perfect for future fucking Museums of Jurassic Technology. It is an old Netflix envelope sunbleached pink yes an old Netflix envelope among the mess said to contain *Thumbsucker* or *Chumscribbler* or *SNL: The Best of Tina Fey*, yes, but it is empty, hey.

Hey let's stomp *30 Rock's* Tina Fey's face to the curb like a trebuchet in reverse. One big salsalito turd. Hey let's apply for a grant to study the complete works of Tina Fey. Hey, let's throw Bossypants at the side of a Dunkin Donuts Baskin Robbins at dawn and run away.

Over there's where I found one of those Jacob's ladder Magic Wallets, let's look inside. On the back of a Select-A-Branch ATM receipt is scrawled the number for a lawyer who represents the Mesothelioma class action lawsuit. They abbreviated it Meso but that's what it's gotta be. Let's call the number and sing a song, c'mon, let's sing to a lawyer. I know the perfect song. Let's sing them my favorite song. My favorite song is Empire State Of Mind (Clean) by Jay-Z featuring Alicia Keys. 🐣



MARC LEBLANC



Night Papers is published by Night Gallery.
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Davida Nemeroff, and guest-editors Keith J. Varadi
and Rachel LaBine. Designed by Elizabeth Knafo.



EXCERPTS FROM

Blacklisted: A Planted Allegory (Recollections)

JENNY YURSHANSKY

105 — *Eucalyptus globulus* — Tasmanian blue gum

Dear California,

When you looked around all you saw was emptiness, you sought me out because they said I would fill you up. Desiring me because I held the promise of fanning your flames and warming your hearth. You had been told that the heat I would provide was more intense than anything else you had access to. Those, whose word was trusted, declared that I grew faster than the rest, that I would respond to your attentions like none other had. Rising up, spreading out, magnificent. My perfume, an antidote to the miasma, was heady; it reached deeply into cavities, unblocking your congestion. Even when my branches dropped and the leaves fell and scattered, they supported another world, made more alive for all of the decay. It seemed there was no wrong I could do. I was adored the way one is adored when they truly fit, taking to your valleys and ridges as if they had been formed with the expectation of my

arrival. You did everything you could to ensure my abundance. Going so far as to encircle me with your arms, protecting me from those whose only goal was to tear me down.

In return, I gave you everything I had. Flourishing in a way that I couldn't in my own home. Here there was little to hold me back, everything I touched was fertile, I made it so lush that it brought verdant imaginings to life.

But your fervor has waned. The flames you once praised me for, now produce terror. They ignite beyond your control and you feel helpless in the wake of their force. What am I to do? Showers that had poured so generously upon me have dried up. I have begun to retreat within myself, storing up my energies, restricted to mere survival. Dropping those thickly foliated limbs in an effort to stay upright, brings new sorrows and unexpected



collateral damage. As my boughs break, they echo with gun-like reports. I hope you can look beyond the results that are sometimes just as deadly as the weapon's sound they mimic. I never intended any of this. Withered, I am left alone in this maltreated state, a flame licks by my side and I explode, detonating the oil drum nestled within. The heat consumes completely, engulfing anything with even the slightest proximity. Your bodies are no longer there as a buffer, the circle is broken. Sadly, because of these unwitting distresses I am now an outsider. I even suspect that it was you who deposited the small, deadly enemies I knew long ago, resurrecting them, exposing the weaknesses I thought I had been freed from. I ooze, become pitted, fall, and am gutted. Even my fragrance is now thought of as nothing more than snake oil, a trap. I think wistfully of how entangled my roots have grown here, how foreign this landscape would look without me, your once cherished exotic.

Yours for a time,
Eucalyptus globulus

104 — *Eucalyptus camuldulensis* — River red gum

Dearest Family,

I am writing to update you with our goings-on here in California. As you know, based on our cousin's advice and her seeming prosperity in this place which seemed to hold so much promise, we decided to make the move, as well. However, it is with a heavy heart that I have to report that, after not too long, our fortunes took a turn for the worse and the winds of opinion about our ilk have shifted. They shunned us both and we are having quite the difficult time making our business here a success. The goods we have been making have fallen out of fashion and even worse have been described as untrustworthy. Our leaves and seed pods are mounting in filthy piles of litter under our boughs, which practically buzz with the sound of the insects that have claimed them for their own. We both have grown rather large and unfortunately, some of the illnesses that run in our family have followed us here, turning us into just an awful mess. I have had the worst of the symptoms, my once-pastel green leaves are blackened with mold and covered with oozing white pustules, creating the most foul memento underfoot for anyone passing below. It was horribly embarrassing and upsetting when some cities went so far as to forcibly remove our kind because they said they were worried about the spread of disease. It saddens me to have to share this sorry state of affairs with you. We are still managing to hold on for the time, but I don't know how much longer we will be able to survive if things continue in this fashion. Even as I am reporting this, I can hear the stutter of chainsaws in the distance as they approach those of us who are beyond help, I'll retire now to reflect further on what to do about this mournful situation. Our circumstances feel so fickle, resting so heavily on the favor of a few.

I hope you are faring well,
Eucalyptus camuldulensis



040 — *Schinus molle* — Peruvian pepper tree

I remember the place of my ancestors: it is where gold drove men mad. The same bullion-hungry men brought me with them when they founded a new El Dorado. In both lands they brought their god to conquer the people. In both lands they took the secrets of the earth in order to feed their ruler. They took me because they knew I would make a good subject. I helped them lay their claim. I was a messenger for the ranks of their advancing legion, reaching out like arms to embrace the land, I was their notice to spread wide, allowing their fingers find their grip. For this, I was prized as a sign of power and beauty. My own family branched out, lining the streets, signaling to everyone the permanence of our fragrant position.

Crowns are heavy, however. A new power — another offering for the divine, a different servant — was brought in to satisfy this latest overseer. From my perch on the back of a truck, being taken towards the sunset down a boulevard of the same name, I watched as the next symbol for this age was planted. A fanciful emblem, it leaves all below defenseless against the sun. I was left to muse on the day's fashion. The people have outgrown my intricate lattice in favor of clean lines that do not disrupt the edges of their new temples of commerce, an ouroboros of the divine and the gluttonous glimmer. That spindly stemmed neophyte with its topping of quixotic fronds bears the fantasies of millions and is already snapping with the dawn of the new millennia.

I wonder from my abused station, "Who next will be taken up and flung off in the following turn of fortune's wheel?"





Elysian Park

BRANDON JOYCE

Elysian Park emanates a weird energy. I've always said that it feels "paleontological," if that makes any sense. Under the heat of day, you can imagine pterodactyls overhead, trilobites squirming from the soil, people-sized leaves filling in the valleys of the park. By night, the wildlife is more contemporary. Coyotes wander around in packs of five or six. I normally welcome encounters with coyotes (for good luck), but lately I've had to carry branches to gong against stop signs to spook them off. I sometimes wonder why coyotes aren't called wolverines since they look like little wolves, as opposed to actual wolverines, which bear no resemblance. Granted, coyotes aren't very courageous, but I admire them nonetheless, and the skunks, and the raccoons, and all the creatures collecting in the hills, as people historically have, to evade the overcivilization of the valleys. Night completes their cover, and I can relate. I've always preferred nightwalking— since fourth or fifth grade at least, while still living in Virginia Beach, when my best friend and I would sneak to freedom through our bedroom windows.

In those days, the toll roads around my house had on-ramps with awkwardly designed toll-baskets that were supposed to catch quarters tossed from passing cars, but were bad at their job. A nice pile of quarters would accumulate on the ground for us to pocket and cash in at 7-11. I can't imagine what the clerks must have thought: two ten-year-olds in denim jackets laden with quarters, entering at three in the morning, and purchasing an armload of beverages, ice creams, Twizzlers, and bandanas. We roamed the neighborhoods and strip malls until dawn, then snuck back in, high-fiving each other for having conquered the night. I only got busted once: the police caught me trying to rearrange the letters on the marquee outside of Pofolks (a local version of Cracker Barrel, no longer in existence, that served southern-style cafeteria food and called their beverage selection

"bellywarshers"). The policeman stuffed us into the cruiser and drove us back to the home of my best friend, whose mom never let me speak to him again. This was unfortunate, but a basic pattern had been established. Novalis said it best: *To the Light a Season was set; but everlasting and boundless is the dominion of Night.*

I require the clearheadedness of night when approaching subtler questions — in this case, the enigma of Los Angeles. What I've come up with: Los Angeles is essentially uncanny; it is, at the same time, both strangely familiar and strangely unknowable. Relatively new to Los Angeles, I still get pangs of misplaced nostalgia for parts of the city that I barely know. What could explain this? One theory has to do with Hollywood—that I'm subconsciously recognizing details from the periphery of films and television: streetlights, succulents, sun-bleached colors. This theory doesn't click with me though (a click that's critical in "theories" like these), nor does it explain why I don't get the same tingle in other highly televised places, like New York. Then, paradoxically enough, no matter how long I live or hang out somewhere here, no matter how many times I go down this or that avenue, it still feels otherish—like a small town in Europe or South America, the first few minutes after you arrive. I moved back to Los Angeles over two years ago and spent most of that time living in an RV on properties under renovation in the foothills of Altadena. And every day and every night, I rode my busted-ass Chinese scooter up the twisty and car-commercial-idyllic Arroyo Boulevard, underneath the Colorado Street Bridge, past the Rose Bowl, often coming to a halt at this one vista overlooking the chasm of the Arroyo Seco. I could never get over it: at night it reminded me of some place in Italy or Switzerland (image search "*lake como night*," for an example) with the houses twinkling and buried in the black lumps of the hillside. Everything hovered somewhere between a distant myth and a personal memory: the enigma of Los Angeles, in extract.

The feeling is particularly potent in Elysian Park, where I now live, in a house with friends, as well as at the nearby "confluence" (as it's called) of the park and parkways, river and railways, not too far from the Home Depot in Cypress Park. You may have noticed a spiral stairway on the walkway along the 110 just before it breaks off to the 5. If you walk up and down this a few times,

you'll sense that it's definitely some kind of spine or center. Partially, what you'll be sensing is the liberty of under-utilized space. Cities like to form groups or initiatives for figuring out how to best optimize every square foot of their domain — let's call it "urban micromanagement"— when, often, the best thing they could do is just relax and leave well enough alone. It is the shaded glen of under-utilization that stretches so refreshingly along the Northeastern corridor from Elysian to Altadena, through the Arroyo Seco, by the parks and bird sanctuaries, ending in the prohibited areas of the Jet Propulsion Lab. The Park, the River, the Arroyo, the Tracks, the Confluence—their virtue lies primarily in the fact that nobody knows what to do with them. The creek and river are floodzones; they have to stay nothings. The confluence is not amenable to any practical municipal use, and the parkways create pockets of space that are suitable for little besides human nests. Whenever I was "between properties"—homeless, technically—I would ease my RV into a spot along the 110 and crawl into bed to the whoosh of vehicles only yards away. With my eyes closed, the whoosh became the sound of that weirdo Elysian energy coursing its way northward. If you've never done it, I recommend walking the Arroyo Seco path by night. It's a jogging path by day, and nice, I guess. By night, though, it resembles something out of the Piranesi etchings of Rome, with the same crumbly grandeur and laziness. Adding to the dilapidated classicism, they even named the park "Elysian," and I wouldn't be surprised if authorities found gases leaking from the earth around Dodger Stadium, like they did at Delphi. I have noticed one opening on Broadway, right before the bridge into Lincoln Heights, covered with rebar and gushing warm air on cold nights. This would explain the weird energy.

The bad news is that after six months here in Elysian, the neighbors already hate us, just for hosting some events. We thought everyone was cool with us, before the property

manager informed us that neighbors had sworn to keep complaining to him and to the city until we were evicted. On the official internet home for busybody democracy, *nextdoor.com*, one neighbor even cheered, *guys, the only change in the world is the change we create*, in reference to getting us thrown on the streets. This hurt. However, it also motivated us to disperse deeper into the park by night (especially good when drinking, since drinking indoors stifles the benefits of alcohol). With the exception of encampments and the cruising community, the park is completely empty by night. The basketball and tennis courts, empty. The fields, roads, and zigzagging paths, empty. We regularly climb to any number of Elysian's peaks, to survey the city, and I always ask myself why everyone else isn't out doing the same, out walking around. I don't get people. Who says Los Angeles sucks for walking? It's spread out, yes, and the summer sun can be brutal, but there's no better landscape for nightwalking. Walking up any hillside in Los Angeles, with houses legged on top of each other, is like ascending the staircase of a palace. And even if we all get thrown out of this house—and I hope we don't, not yet—I can clearly see, from my perch here, plenty of other dark patches that I could easily convince myself were "magical" or "mystical" or "destiny" purely by fiat. 🐾

MINT CHOC- OLATE CHIP

MOLLY LAMBERT

Last month a weird thing happened to me. I was in a living room with friends making loose conversation and passively scrolling through Instagram, the way people do now. My friend Emma was telling me she'd had two ice cream sandwiches for lunch. I asked what kind; she replied, "mint chocolate chip"; and no longer than sixty seconds later, Instagram served me an ad for Tillamook brand mint chocolate chip ice cream sandwiches. A mint chocolate chip chill went down my spine. It was so specific; it couldn't have possibly been a coincidence. It meant that Instagram was eavesdropping on my spoken conversations through the microphone function, which I had blithely enabled long ago assuming it was just for the purpose of making videos. But when you give an app access to your camera or microphone, you never say when exactly it's supposed to not film or record you. So while I was horrified by the mint chocolate chip ice cream ad, I was also not exactly surprised. Nothing is ever actually free, a web piracy expert at a pornography convention had once assured me. If it seems free, you're really paying for it with your personal data.

I had noticed Instagram serving me ads for things I swore I had only been talking about, but I always chalked it up to some slipover between my internet trail and my thought-stream. "I must have googled it or tweeted about it," I would reassure myself. But the mint chocolate chip ice cream sandwich was too perfect, too weird, and there had been witnesses. It was a Christmas-themed ad, with a face out of frame man's hands and lower body holding a box of mint chocolate chip ice cream sandwiches in front of a tree. The tagline was something about how it's the season for mint chocolate chip ice cream sandwiches, although Christmas ice cream sandwiches is definitely not a real thing, even in California. Before I could accept that my smartphone was listening to me, I ran through every farfetched possibility as to how this ad could have appeared on my phone within a minute of my friend's description of her lunch.

Then I thought, "Does anyone else know about this?" and, more cynically, "Does everyone know about this already and they're all cool with it?" We've all accepted that social media programs and browsers cross-reference our online steps, that our emails are probably plundered for keywords, that online safety is curiously unregulated and under-regarded. Instagram transgressing the boundary between written communication and real life conversation was creepy but not unbelievable — what are my conversations to a greedy robot if not clouds full of potential ad keywords? Aside from the capitalism at work, what about all those listened in on conversations? Who will be the first person to go to jail for something a mic-tapping app like

Instagram taped them saying, technically legally? It feels like we are still working out the boundaries of the post-Patriot Act world, particularly digitally.

I searched online to see if anyone else had this happen, and sent out a tweet balloon. Lots of responses came in that people had thought their Instagram had served an ad based on something they'd only said out loud, but because these were such isolated experiences most people doubted themselves. There was a lone podcast that touched on the subject, but it was hard to find any concrete evidence that this was a tried and tested Instagram business practice. Not being able to find any proof made me feel crazy and paranoid, because it left open the distinct possibility that this was all just in my head. I felt violated. Because now there was no place left the smartphone couldn't get to, except the inner sanctum of my brain, which felt increasingly vulnerable. I went into my privacy settings, turned off the microphone access on all of my apps. Then I deleted Instagram off of my phone.

I felt like Richard Nixon, full of paranoid surprise that the recording devices were turning on

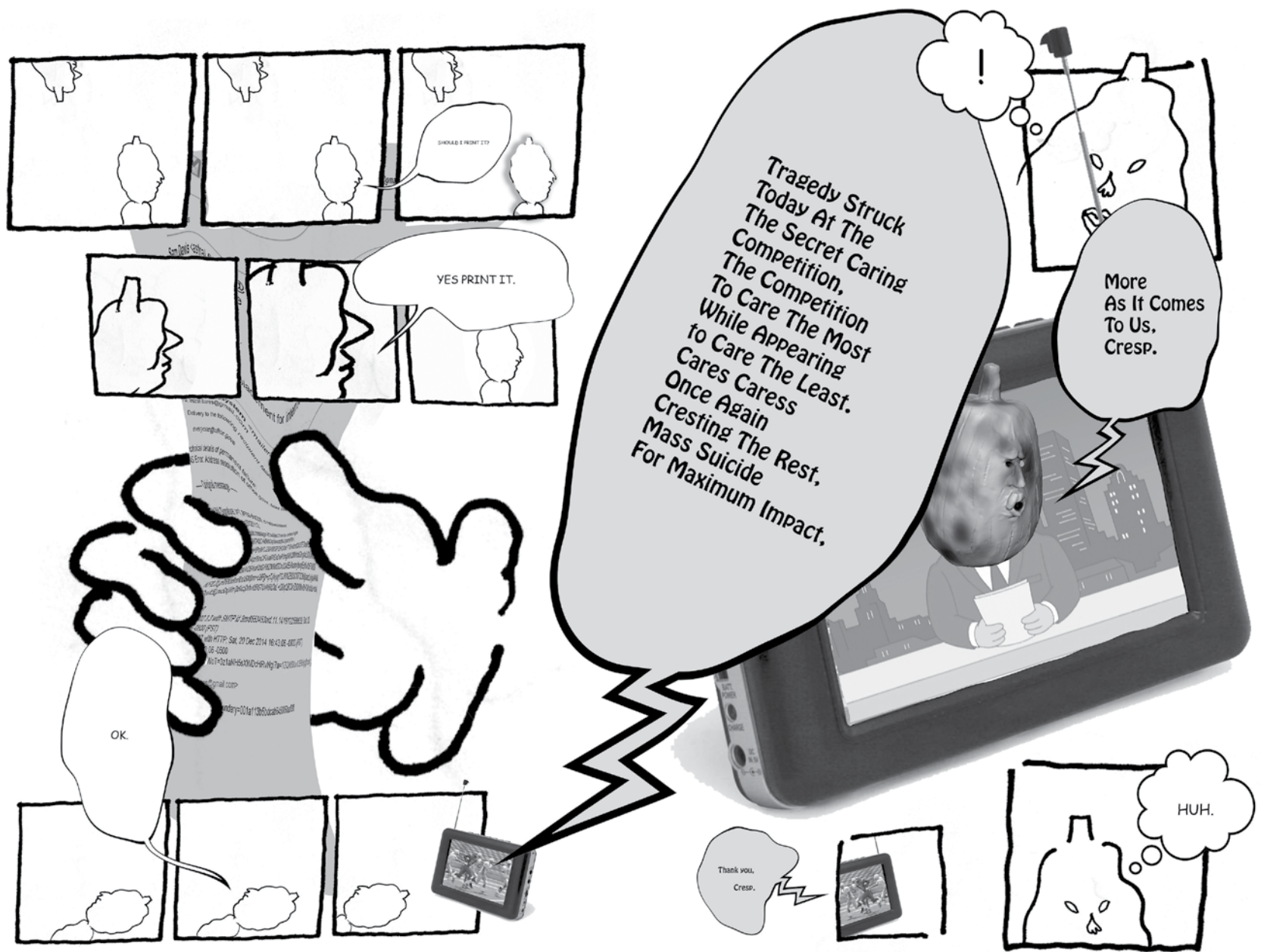
physically broke, not out of pride or vanity, but fear. I knew that a smartphone meant unfettered access to the internet, and that self-control on that front was not a strength of mine. I liked having downtime between my computer and my real experienced life, and while I acknowledged the importance of GPS to driving Los Angeles, I feared the perma-net.

I could feel the tide pulling everyone in the direction of small screens, of looking down during conversations to scroll and text, but like everyone else I just normalized it because I had no other choice. I had always loved to multitask — to carry on a conversation while watching TV and looking at a laptop. I felt helpless about Instagram spying on me — and reconnected with the Luddite inside. No, I did not want to just accept that this was the new reality. This was not the augmented reality I had imagined. This didn't make anything better or the world any clearer. This was my fault for trusting an app not to violate my privacy; for trusting an app that creates the illusion of no privacy by allowing its users to curate a faux-candid stream of vérité slices of life.

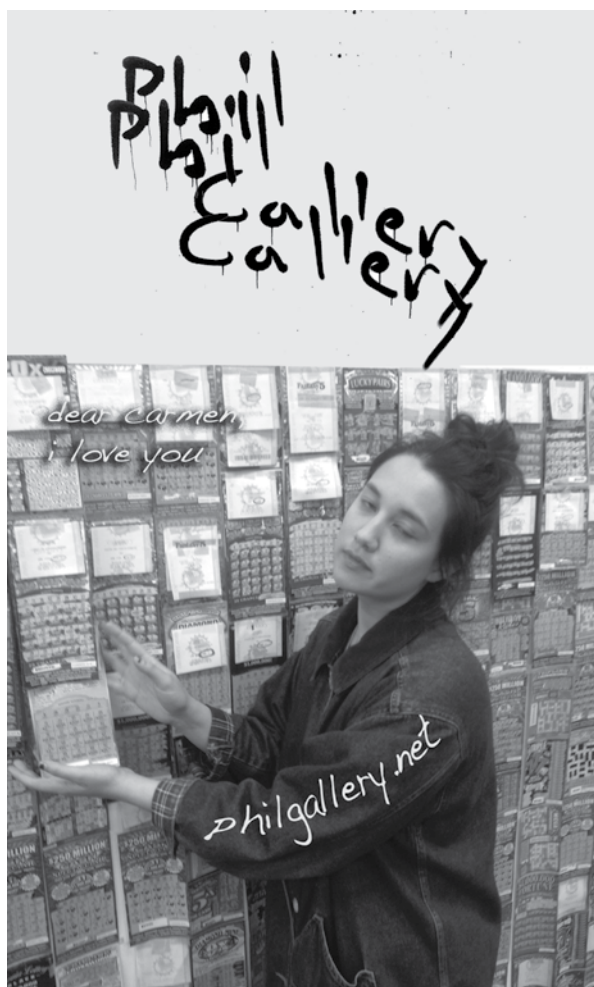


me. Taylor Swift, who had been extremely worried in a *Rolling Stone* cover story about secret microphones and undocumented filming, was right! I was hesitant to tell people my Instagram story because I was aware every time I said it out loud how much it sounded like the ramblings of a person who was losing the thread of reality, the exact moment at which one starts sounding a character in a Philip K. Dick or Thomas Pynchon book — the paranoid person who is dismissed as crazy, but is the only one who knows the truth. I had already been reading *The Body Snatchers*, thinking about the fault-lines of constant paranoia that run through fictional California, from that book's made up town of Santa Mira to Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland*, and into the brain of Philip K. Dick alter-ego Horselover Fat in his novel *VALIS*. But this incident of mine had no transcendent value. This was just the confirmation of a long-held fear. Smartphones were gas-lighting me into questioning the validity of my own lived experiences, like a terrible drug. I rejected smartphones for as long as possible. I held onto my Nokia brickphone until it

Unfortunately for Tillamook, they've already done such a good job of getting me to associate their brand with cheese that I'll probably never buy their ice cream sandwiches. But after a couple weeks of Instagram celibacy I signed back up. It was New Year's Eve, and I wanted to see what people were doing. And just like a party you imagined was really fun only because you weren't there, nothing had really happened while I was gone. Instagram had gone on, listening and serving ads to anyone who enabled use of the microphone. And even though I had turned off the mic, I still felt paranoid any time I had the app open or saw its icon glowering at me from my dash. I probably just felt guilty, too, for having giving in. It's a racket, and I had willingly bought back in, shrugging and becoming Donald Sutherland in the last shot of the 1978 *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* remake — which hewed more closely to the downer ending that the 1956 version originally intended to have. The scariest thing about discovering the pod people is realizing that you will become one. 🐉



SAM DAVIS

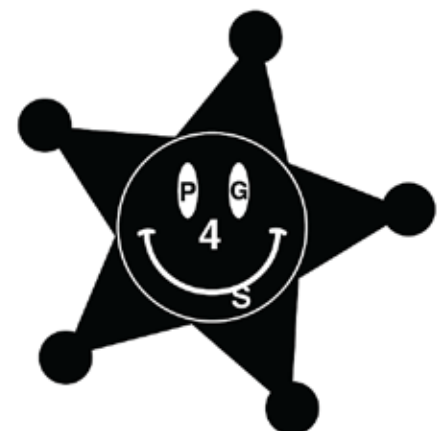


ARTURO BANDINI

Los Angeles
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A Flower for that Bitch

MYRIAM GURBA

(This is a rewrite of Faulkner's A ROSE FOR EMILY. It stars Kathy Bates!)

When Emily Grierson died, everybody and their mother went to her memorial service or “celebration of life.” The men went kind of respectfully. The women went because they were dying to see what that dead bitch’s house looked like inside. Nobody but an old Mexican type dude — a man that gardened *and* cooked — had set foot in her place for at least ten years.

Emily had lived in a big ass house that started out as white as an Amish virgin’s soul. Fancy architectural stuff, swirls and cones and swirly twirly things, gave her mansion a wedding cake look, and since it didn’t get taken care of properly, the thing eventually rotted on what used to be the street where all the stuck-up people lived. This street came to be molested by a process called turning ghetto, and it turned hella ghetto. The ghetto-osity chased away all the rich assholes who’d once bragged about living there. Only Emily had had the balls to stay behind. Her place looks wrecked now but even without squinting you can see the ghost of how it used to be amazing. You can see the ghost of how it belonged to very important people.

With Emily dead, the house belonged to no one, and it sure as shit wasn’t passed down to the Mexican type dude who had done everything for Emily in her final years: Emily didn’t go that way. She was not down for interracial love. Her dead, white body now mingles with the rest of the dead, white bodies in the cemetery, and in its haunted soil, this graveyard holds soldiers who fought on all sides of our Civil War. This was our great war to stop people from owning people.

Back when Emily had been alive, she’d been a real charity case, and our town’s old-school people hadn’t minded taking care of her. The welfare they gave her went all the way back to 1894, when the mayor, Colonel Sartoris — I’ll call him KFC, although I could just as easily call him KKK, he never got over his side losing THE WAR — announced that Emily didn’t have to pay taxes. KFC claimed Emily’s dad had loaned money to the town and that it was so much that our way of paying him back was by letting Emily live tax-free. Whatever. The story sounded fake to all of us but if you want badly enough for something to be true, you’ll rearrange a lot of furniture in your head to believe it. That must be what Emily did. She convinced herself she was one special bitch. A bitch with a capital every letter. A gold-plated BITCH. Can you see the BITCH charm hanging from a chain around her neck?

As the old folks croaked, and the newer, fresher generation took over, they came to see Emily’s free ride as totally unfair. That bitch ought to pay her fair share, they believed. So, one year, when it got time for the tax people to print up the bills, guess who they also printed one up for. That’s right: the BITCH. They mailed that bitch her bill and waited for her to pay. Her February due date came around. Her check did not.

The tax guys wrote Emily a letter telling her to come to the police station when she had a minute, but she never showed up. A week later, the mayor himself wrote her a letter saying that he could give her a ride or something, but in reply, a spooky envelope arrived

at his office. The mayor fingered it open and slid out a note, written in creepy, old timey handwriting. It said, “I never leave my house.” The note’s author included the tax bill with it. It was a total F U.

City officials called a special meeting to figure out what to do about Emily and soon after, a bunch of them showed up at her mossy front door. No visitors had passed through its doorway since Emily had quit giving macramé lessons about eight years earlier. The men’s knocking summoned the Mexican type dude and he let them in and led them down a birth canal of a hallway, which flowed into a bereft and menopausal stairway. Vagina w/ cobwebs. The Mexican type dude brought them into a sitting area. Its big ass, leather covered pieces of furniture intimidated the visitors, and as the Mexican-type dude pulled open the blinds, and the confused light gave the visitors a better view, they could see that the furniture was ripe for the thrift shop.

Despite their feelings of intimidation, the men sat. Mute dust coughed from the creases and folds in chairs and sofas. A metallic stand by the fireplace supported a Sharpied sketch of Emily’s dad. His hand-drawn eyes observed the disturbed particles swirling in the light.

As if she was the national anthem, the men rose as that bitch entered. Her body balanced being petite with being plus-sized; Emily had swaddled her paradoxical figure in a black dress topped with a skinny gold chain that went all the way to her waist and disappeared into her belt. You could tell Emily’s skeleton was too small for a woman of her metaphysical stature. Her flesh was too much raw biscuit dough stretching over it. There was something rather dead and rotten about this dough, too, lifeless and lost, damned by peculiar but natural processes, pale. Her eyes were having a tough time in their face, competing with its unhappy lard, and they peered out from under a masculine brow, moving from one man’s face to another’s. In sum, Emily looked like Kathy Bates circa 2013, specifically in her role as Madame La Lurie in *American Horror Story*.

Emily allowed the men to remain standing. Standing by the door, she stared them down. Their spokesman rambled a bit about taxes until he gave up and shut his lipless mouth. In the quiet, all heard the watch at the end of Emily’s chain reminding them of time.

Emily’s voice was beyond bitch. Dry. Cold. Godlike. “I don’t have any taxes in Jefferson,” she spoke. “KFC explained it to me. Maybe one of you can examine the city records to gain a better understanding of my uniqueness.”

“We have,” insisted the spokesman. “We are authorities, Miss G. Didn’t you get a notice from the sheriff?”

“Yes,” said Emily. “He’s mistaken. I have no taxes in Jefferson.”

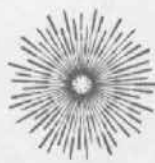
“But—”

“Talk to KFC.” (KFC had been dead for ten years.) I have no taxes in Jefferson. Hose A!” The Mexican-type dude appeared. “Show them out.”



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flight of rude bumps, nod out
with her gown slumping off, forgotten
only coming to with mall pig's stumpy groping
she must've buzzed me then
and we met for manhattans, me - an old john
Celeste, brittle foil scaged-out skank
we'd jamxx it weekly, until the desert sun
wilted my schwanz, I understood everything but
herself - an indescribable abject into being
she confided, she'd witnessed, the heat
eyeing her every step, that corpse, that dead
chisler was her bean, I said 'lovers'
I asked her not to use that word, it's the
warrens between cruelty and folly, and a myth
besides, for a sap that was me, over a decade
past. She wept. When nodded off.
I bit my meerschbaum, watching orion wheel west
lucky old git - - -

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with the gutter's butts
someone's swingin' an iron
hopin' to find a hole

shanked at the parker, bloody caesar's strung out
on the rocks. some snitch fingers J.J.
that ain't his games, some dick rolled up to
scrape spunk out my spa, how they knew my
crepuscular habit to shoot my DNA
simmer white liquid trash, my squirt spot
sniffed up by different dicks
eviscerated unto dessication, someone's bloated
bloody rag of a frame brings me heat as hot as
noon. I'm no lam man, I can sweat for centuries
just try me try me, it's just more proof
your body doesn't belong to you
foot, you're its thrall, yoke irremoved

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FISH WERE SWIMMING IN THE STREETS, 2015



IF YOU SEE A TURTLE ON A FENCEPOST YOU CAN BE PRETTY SURE IT DIDN'T GET THERE BY ITSELF, UNDATED



PROTEAN NATURE OF HIS OUTPUT, 1998



WHITES GET MORE PAIN PILLS, 2015



WORK WILL SET YOU FREE, 1940



PROTEAN NATURE OF HIS OUTPUT ATTEST TO HIS INNER STRUGGLE... THEY ALSO INDICATE THE VAST SCOPE OF HIS AMBITION, 1998



URGENCY MAKES YOU PUBLIC, 2015



TO BEGIN WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT FACT OF MY LIFE WAS THAT I HAD TB, UNDATED



TO PROTECT THE OTHERS FROM CONTAGION HIS FATHER ERECTED A SMALL, PREFABRICATED HOUSE ON THE BACKYARD... WHERE THE BOY LIVED FOR MANY YEARS, 1998

STEVE KADO VISITS THE NIXON LIBRARY, YORBA LINDA, CA.

STEVE KADO



The pleasures of the Richard M. Nixon presidential library, nestled in the glaring sun of Yorba Linda, are many. Not only is it where Nixon's own body lies—his actual body, buried under the back garden—but it is also his birthplace. The citrus farmer's shack where the above-mentioned actual body emerged to breathe air, where the body's limbs stretched, and where the first feelings and sensations entered the body's sense organs, exists on the site as a weird addendum. You follow Nixon like a man condemned to live backwards in time, all the way through his life, death, and, mysteriously, his helicopter, to get, finally, to his birthsite. Not only does the library layer and combine life and death in bold and strange ways, but it also bridges other no-less-vast divides. The librarians there have the task of both celebrating what might be called Nixon's accomplishments (rapprochement with China, "ending" the Vietnam war, meeting Elvis) while also needing to diffuse and interpret his tape recordings. You have, undoubtedly, heard about these recordings. Recordings made in the Oval Office where Nixon calls Kissinger his "jew boy," where he describes the goings on at Republican summer camp, Bohemian Grove, as "faggy" and goes on other lengthy racist, homophobic, and sexist rants. There are tapes where he (all but) plans arson.

Metabolizing all of these contrasts is almost impossible to do; the task is immense. Here the Nixon Library steps up to the plate and hits admirable home runs (Nixon preferred football, FYI). One minute you are dealing with the hard scrabble upbringing in Southern California of just another

poor Quaker citrus farmer's son, and the next you are thrown into a herd of bronze sculptures of Nixon's diplomatic peers: life sized bronzes of Brezhnev and Mao to shake hands with. Further arrangements baffle and delight: a mysteriously frosted piece of glass hides a specific hat from view, the denial of a clear look somehow charging the object with a strange eros. My favorite area is a hallway made out like a Greek temple with the areas of Nixon's achievement carved into each pediment and giant stock photographs depicting each field of endeavor (SCIENCE, CRIME, ECONOMY) puffing up the frieze to epic proportions. Truly, Hans Haacke never did better. Returning to the theme of bridging vast opposites, there's even a phone you can pick up to listen to 18 minutes of deleted Watergate tape that Nixon's secretary, Rose Mary Woods, is said to have accidentally erased, thus boldly transforming an absence into a potent, if still inscrutable, presence. There is no chair or stool provided for you while you listen.

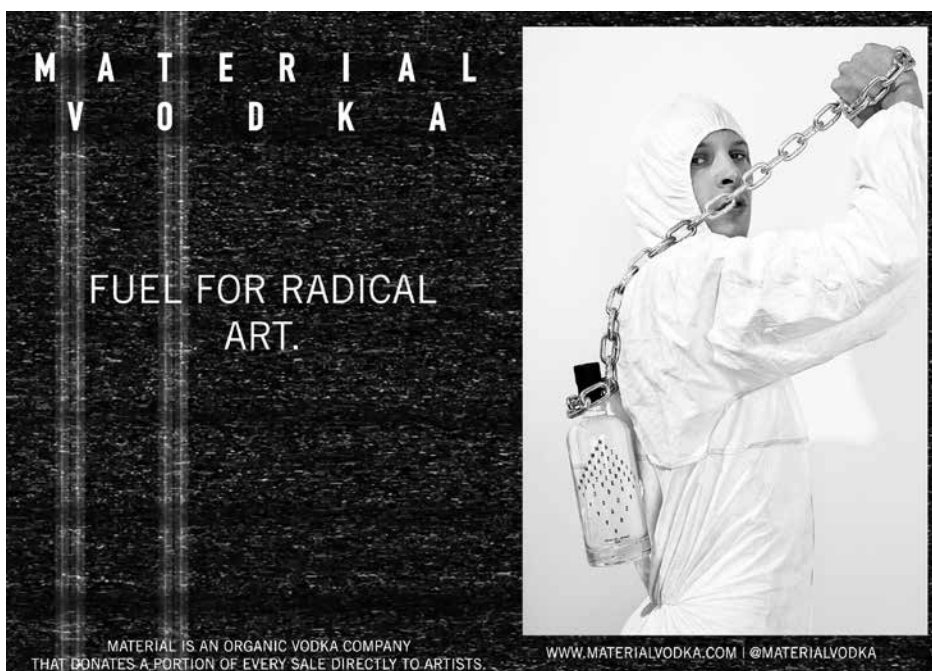
A further, meta-level contrast implied in the Nixon library can be seen by comparing it to the other proximal Republican death shrine, the Reagan presidential library. The differences are incredible: contemporary Republicans adore Reagan, yet never mention Nixon; parking near the main entrance of the Reagan library is difficult, but parking at the Nixon library is plentiful and easy; the welcome video at the Reagan library plays on a giant curved wall, in Panavision and surround sound, while at the Nixon library, the welcome video is played on a media cart, all the cables exposed—

if you want to start the video from the beginning just reach over and grab the remote. At the Reagan library you can even play fun video games where you deregulate the Telecommunications industry and pave the way for the cable TV multichannel universe; at the Nixon Library you can merely gaze in wonder—your participation is neither necessary nor encouraged.

The contrast with Reagan is informative

for other reasons, too: while revered today by Republicans, the Reagan administration radically expanded the size of the federal government. It also ballooned the national debt, sold weapons to Iran, declared amnesty for illegal immigrants. Can you imagine anyone in the current Republican race suggesting such policies? Meanwhile, the kind of paranoid hate speech, uttered in private, for which Nixon is widely condemned, sounds eerily like the kinds of statements Donald Trump makes in public. So while both Nixon and Reagan may have been terrible presidents, somehow Nixon has captured the social imagination as "the worst." But which US president could actually be said to have made ethically sound decisions? Really, the difference between the unpalatable, corrupt, and/or illegal choices of almost every other administration and those of Nixon's is a gaping gulf. Nixon really wanted to go for it. He records himself enthusiastically planning mayhem, while when Obama has Afghan wedding celebrants murdered by remote control, his lack of relish seems to make up for what those assassinations lacked in judicial process. In the rush to celebrate Reagan, the current GOP is merely punishing Nixon for the excess of joy in his work.

To me, as a Canadian, the entire presidential library concept smacks of the kind of monumental leader worship that one associates with things like Lenin's tomb, with countries like North Korea. This is not how the majority of the Western world treats its leaders. A Nicolas Sarkozy museum? The Brian Mulroney Prime Ministerial Library? The mind refuses to contain such chimerical concepts (somehow a Berlusconi monument and library doesn't seem as unlikely), yet for reasons unclear to me the United States holds this as a reasonable way to celebrate high-ranking civil servants. Of the two Southern Californian Presidential Libraries that I have visited I have no doubt that Nixon's is by far the superior visit. Its secrets and contradictions elude simple understanding; it feels like maybe the very best Slavs and Tatars installation ever (if they even made work about America) in the way it brings complexity into the very core of the work. Like the video game *Myst* you wander the halls alone, no crowds jostle you, while you search for clues to the mystery that is the most hated president in recent memory, and to the system that demands that even he must have a library of his own. 🐉



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SIMONE SCHMIDT INTERVIEWS JEFF BIERK

*“There is no logic that can be superimposed on the city; people make it, and it is to them, not buildings, that we must fit our plan.” —Jane Jacobs,
Downtown Is For People*

Former weekly newspaper publisher, Paul Croutch, had spent several years living on the street, and was asleep on a bench before he was beaten to death by three wasted reservists of the Queen’s Own Rifle, guests of the Armoury at Moss Park, Toronto. Three blocks west, this photograph was taken: a cyanotype of Carl Lance Bonicci with the wood on his back that looks like a cross —some burden of the construction that’s been taking down the downtown and pinning it back up — handed to him by photographer Jeff Bierk. Paint it over in your mind: the background a faded pink marble wall, yellow leaves flying about the day it was taken.

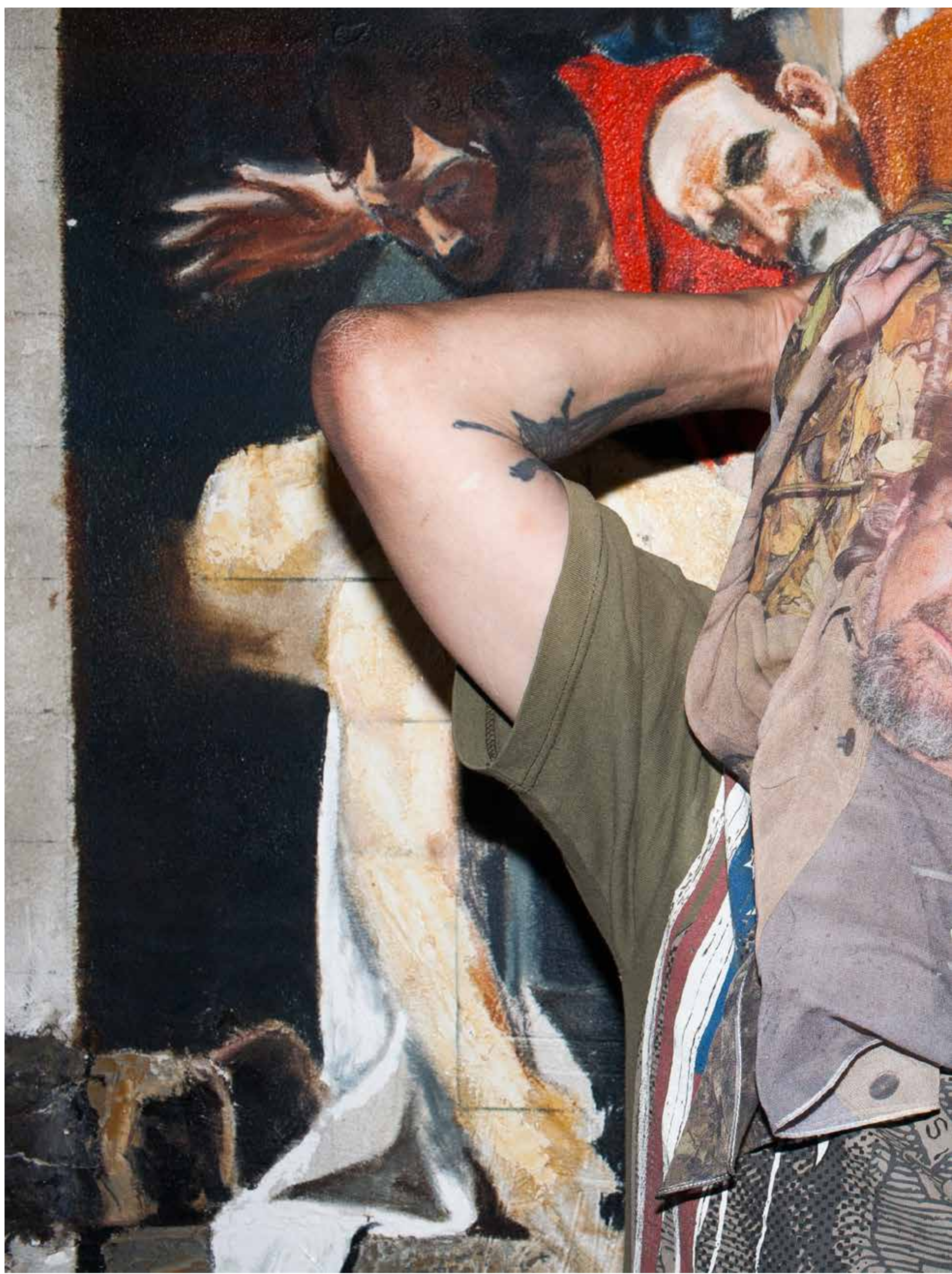
Bierk: I had the vision for Carl holding this thing, this piece of wood, but I didn’t have my camera, so I asked him to wait, and rushed back to work to get it...I really wanted him a certain way, so I gave him my camera and told him to watch how I was posing. It was really funny, because we’re in this courtyard place outside the ground level Starbucks of an office building, and I drag this, uh, cross-shaped piece of wood into the middle of it and lie down, holding it, and Carl’s there with his shirt off photographing me and everyone is just staring at us like, what the fuck, right?”

The image was first imagined, staged, shot with a digital camera, scuttled to negative, imprinted by the sun hitting the photographer’s fire escape, and finally developed in the kitchen sink.

Below the fire escape, another photograph. A portrait of “Jimmy” James Evans, most favoured window washer of the neighborhood lying down, made into silk, and draped over his head to be rephotographed in the kitchen. That’s 28 blocks away from the Armoury if you grid out the 2-½ miles in step with the rest of the city, which had its beginnings as some rectangle designated by British surveyors. The Toronto Purchase by the British from the Mississaugas of the New Credit in 1787 fully denied the natural flow of the land’s waterways and the other Indigenous nations that lived here. This squaring off of the foundation gives an inalienable colonial context to the order of city life; the patterns, more than formal, repeat as patterns do, and clearly should be broken.

Bierk: That was a portrait of Jimmy that I didn’t like — It was one of the first test silks I made that wasn’t to my taste because it was the wrong material, the wrong photograph. But Jimmy was just freaking out about how beautiful the silk was, said I was crazy, and threw it up over his head. It looks way different photographed on Jimmy with his eye coming through it. Now, in this portrait, I see a range of different conversations and exchanges, layers of memory, ideas, relationship, the changing of space. 🐦







JEFF BIERK | Jimmy, In My Kitchen (Silk), After Nick Bierk & Caravaggio, 2014-2015



1.17.15 Sighting

JESSE STECKLOW

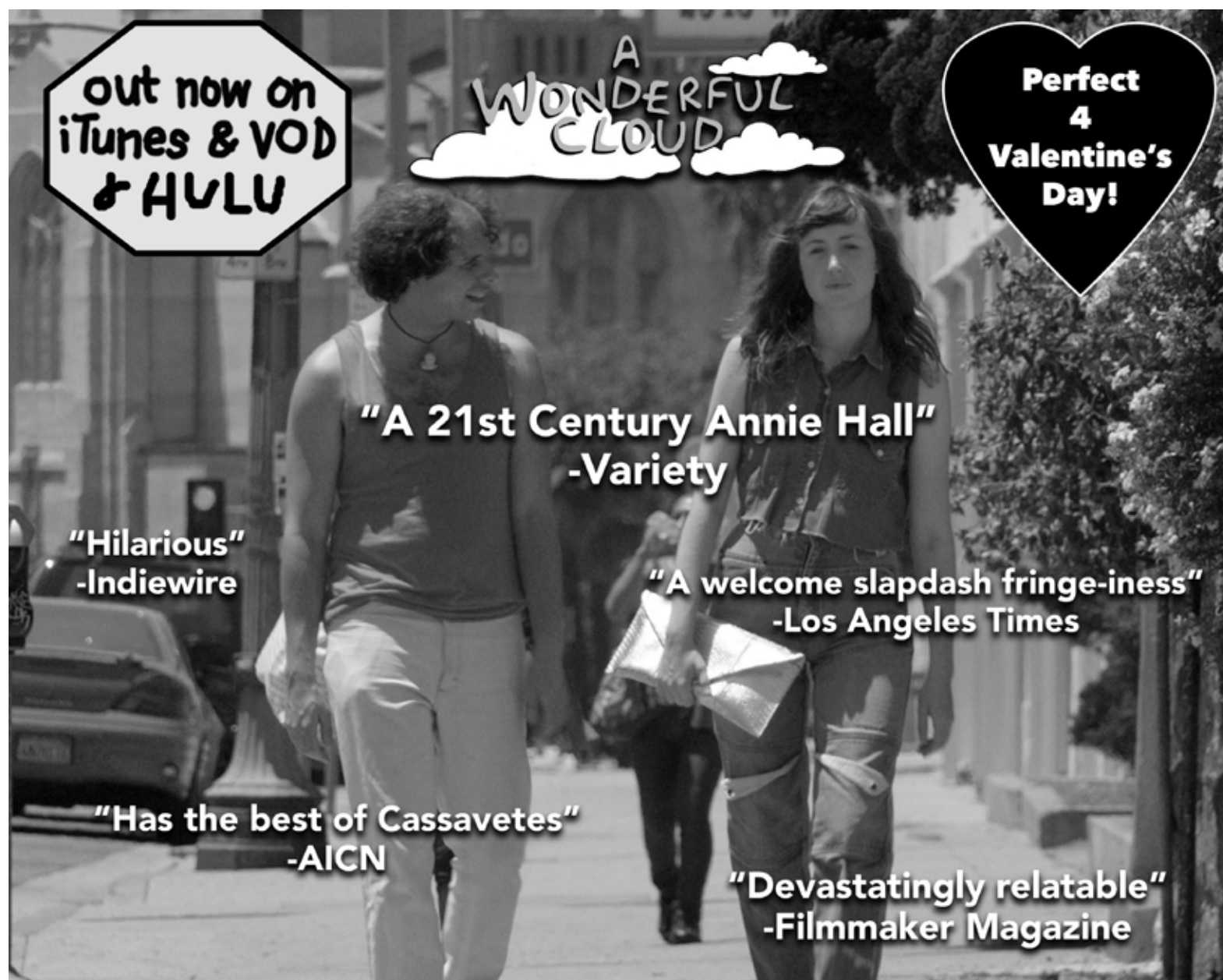
8618 Whitworth Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90035

There is this pair of sculptures near my house on the southern side of Whitworth Drive between South Sherbourne and South Holt Ave, in the Pico Robertson neighborhood of West LA.

The first of these anonymous works is located in front of the entrance to EAST STAIR 1 of an apartment complex. The sculpture is contained within the architectural and landscaping decisions of the resident management. It is specifically integrated into the low stucco wall that divides the sidewalk and the apartment bushes. The work itself lives in a glass brick. The structure, about half the size of its neighbors, is partially filled with sour rainwater. It is home to a vividly bright, fleshy growth that has taken residence in this glass aquarium apartment. This small vibrant theater is colored the orangey flush of a cage free chicken's egg yolk. The bulbous growth pushes against the glass in translucent swaths of cells like some mother of vinegar. A layer of condensation has collected inside the top of the container giving parts of the glass a milky blur.

The second work is located in the patch of grass between the sidewalk and the street, opposite the glass block. Beneath a tree, there is scattered a selection of hand-shredded grain products: sliced Challah bread, flat whole-wheat lavash bread, and white and yellow turmeric or saffron rice. In addition there are a few French fries nearby. This glutenous mixture has been left to decompose and become part of the ground on which it is installed. The recently created work will integrate itself into the soil and into neighboring birds. The air bubbles in the breads have trapped volatile components from the kitchens they were baked in. The pile will deposit this fine sediment data as it begins to disintegrate. 🐦

above: LAZ RODRIGUEZ | *Biscayne, Miami, 2013*



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SEPTEMBER 2016

Knocking off the knock-offs

JOHN CHASE

What is so astonishing about anyone taking this remodel seriously is the attitude that absolutely anything can be transformed into architectural history.

— Reyner Banham, in a book review in the *London Times Literary Supplement of Exterior Decoration*, from which this essay is excerpted

The Swiss modernist architect Le Corbusier observed that a dream times one million equals chaos. In Los Angeles it is the millions of dreams of its citizens that make up the face of the city. If Southern California is often accused of having no public urban amenities in the traditional sense, it may be because they come disguised as private visions such as the Watts Towers, or at the very least, privately owned visions like City Walk, Forest Lawn and Disneyland.

West Hollywood is a small 1.9-square mile city nestled in between Hollywood and Beverly Hills, a section of Los Angeles where the contribution of private fantasy to the public realm come in the form of tiny stucco bungalows remodeled by interior decorators and decorator wannabes. The blanked-out exteriors of these miniature mansions became inside-out interiors: urns and finials were placed on rooftops like bibelots on a fireplace mantel; windows and panels of trellis were arranged as though they were pictures hung on a wall.

In the early 1950s a mania for transforming Spanish Colonial Revival mutts into French Regency pedigreed poodles swept West Hollywood. The Regency style craze of the Camelot years of the early 1960s saw the height of the box-in-the-old and tack-on-the-new movement; in its wake were left miles of garlands, a forest of pop-up mansards and enough carriage lamps to render the street lights redundant.

The decorator shops that grew up around Beverly Boulevard shortly after World War II attracted a colony of interior designers who worked in the neighborhood. Many of them would have loved to have owned a mansion in nearby ritzy neighborhoods like Brentwood, Beverly Hills or Hancock Park. But most couldn't afford to and made do with what they could. West Hollywood had been settled as the community of Sherman in 1895, built around a repair yard for the interurban street car lines. As a result many of the houses were built for residents with moderate incomes. Both lots and houses were small, a precedent that continued when the community saw its real period of growth in the mid-1920s as a



8937 Ashcroft Avenue in West Hollywood, remodeled by Larry Limotti and Ross Worsley in 1961–62. The framing for the mansard roof goes up on the 1920s bungalow. Photo by Larry Limotti.



Roof framing complete at the Limotti-Worsley house. Photo by Larry Limotti.

bedroom community to surrounding cities.

Real estate speculation, aided by wild booms such as the bull market of 1975 to 1978, was a key motive in the remodeling fad. Speculators (including some gay couples who were returning from military service in World War II) would move from house to house, fixing each one up selling it for profit and then starting in on the next candidate. By the late 1970s houses that sold for \$15,000 or less in the early 1950s were going for \$180,000.

Despite the assumption made by some observers that these decorator remodels are a campy in-joke, the little buildings reflect the anxieties produced by the city's many levels of wealth and status. With the exception of a few truly idiosyncratic buildings, the remodels are attempts to confirm to accepted notion or

upward mobile social standing, rather than to shock.

The typical remodeling project follows a relatively unvarying formula. Openings in the front of the house are closed off to screen out the street. Openings in the rear are enlarged to create spatial and visual flow between the indoors and the outdoors. The kitchen and bathroom are modernized, light switched and door hardware are replaced and the master bedroom and living room are enlarged. Usually the exterior of the little house become more formal to suit the social ambition of their new owners, and secluded to separate them from increasingly urban surroundings.

Expedience is everything in the remodels. The designers of the remodels, many of whom worked in the movie industry, never built if

they could achieve the same effect by draping fabric and never ripped out a facade if they could cover over it or adapt it.

In the broadest sense, the West Hollywood remodel genre is an outgrowth of the Hollywood Regency style. The earliest remodels were in this style, and the idea of the remodels themselves was made possible by the style's appeal to the designers.

Few styles are more difficult to define than the Hollywood Regency. The Regency half of the name is itself confusing, as the affinities between the architecture of the Hollywood Regency style of the 1930s are limited. The Hollywood Regency is a revival of features drawn from the early 19th-century architectural styles of England, the United States and, to a lesser degree, France. The style strayed even further from English Regency during World War II and in the following years, when both architects and decorators gallicized it with the addition of a mansard roof.

Because the American Federal style and later the French Second Empire influences were as important as the English Regency precedents, it is more accurate to categorize the Hollywood Regency style as a descriptive term rather than as a literal revival of pre-Victorian 19th-century English architecture.

Even the English Regency style is ambiguous. It might be more correct to speak of a Regency era in English architecture than a single, well-defined Regency style. "Strictly speaking there is no Regency style. There was no universally accepted formula for design," wrote Douglas Pilcher in his 1940 book *The Regency Style: 1800–1830*. "There is, however, a tendency towards establishing an individual style which resulted from the balancing of these distinct points of view." Among these points of view was the belief that a building should suit the individual personality of its occupants. During the Regency era the cult of the Picturesque had a wide following. Derived from Romantic fiction, the Picturesque endowed the physical world, including architecture, with the ability to inspire emotions such as awe, terror and enchantment. Regency architecture was eclectic, but may generally be characterized as a highly abstracted version of neoclassicism. Toward the end of the period, Gothic Revival became popular, as did exotic motifs from Islamic architecture, the Far East and India.

Wrought-iron balconies and entrances were widely used in the Regency England, and exterior walls were frequently covered with a stucco finish. The neoclassic primary geometric forms, together with the attenuated wrought-iron trim and the smooth stucco walls, gave much Regency architecture qualities of insubstantiality and brittle elegance. Forms reminiscent of tents were employed in building from were common, and fabric was sometimes draped on interior walls to create tentlike rooms. The stucco walls, the use of French doors to link outside and inside and the frequent employment of trellis and balcony were all features that made Regency style attractive to California designers.

A 1939 issue of *Interior Decorator* credit a major exhibition of Regency furniture by Lenygon and Morant in London just after World War I for kindling interest in Regency

furniture. In *The Glass of Fashion*, fashion designer Cecil Beaton credits the revival of the Regency style to the English playwright Edward Knoblock and its propagation to John Fowler and the socialite decorator Sybil Halsey.

By May of 1919, *Upholsterer and Interior Decorator* magazine could inform its readers that "both the Regency and the Louis XVI are meeting with renewed favor." This favor reached an "almost nauseating popularity," according to English decorator David Hicks. "In the late 1930s it had begun to be revived, and this was continued in the late 1940s," he wrote in *David Hicks on Interior Decoration*. Reproduction and reinterpretation of furniture by Regency designers such as Thomas Hope were much in demand in the United States just before World War II. The Regency influence in domestic architecture and home furnishings remained strong through the mid-1960s.

Regency details began to appear in Southern California in the 1920s, with building such as Marston, Maybury & Van Pelt's Dudley house in Pasadena of 1925–27. Regency elements were found on buildings in Georgian, Federal, and French Provincial manor house style. During the 1930s Regency designs from architects across the nation, as well as from California, were published in national architectural magazines. But the Regency style has been most closely identified with interior decorators, in Southern California and elsewhere. It was the decorator, as much as the architect, who helped popularize the stylistic code of the Regency as found in Southern California. This fondness of the decorators for Regency architecture is probably linked to the revival of Regency furniture and interior design in England and America between World War I and II.

The strongest reason for the popularity of Regency architecture in California during the 1930s was its compatibility with the American Colonial Revival style that dominated American residential architecture at the time. Colonial American architecture of the Federal period was an important influence on Southern California architecture in the 1920s and 1930s. Buildings such as the Ruges house, Columbia Falls, Maine, were widely reproduced in books and national periodicals. The Hollywood Regency adapted features from late Colonial Revival architecture, particularly from the early 19th century Federal architecture, which is the American counterpart of the English Regency period.

American architecture of the Federal period had a similar light, delicate appearance. The houses usually had very simple boxlike volume, and flat or low-pitched roof lines. The boxy shapes might be varied by polygonal or curved bays. Some Federal period buildings have semicircular porches supported on slender columns. Federal architecture was generally more conservative than Regency architecture, simpler in form, lacking the dramatic black and white interiors and the sometimes exotic imagery of English architecture. Wood construction, employing clapboard walls, was more frequently used in Federal, rather than Regency, architecture.

The Hollywood Regency stylistic mix of Regency, Georgian, Federal and, to a lesser degree, the French Provincial manor house

revival styles were influenced by the emergence of the international style in the 1920s and 1930s. Several features of the International style affected the period styles: horizontality, strip and corner windows, pipelike poles, flat roofs and porthole windows.

There are also precedents for the Hollywood Regency style in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which enjoyed great popularity in California during the 1920s. Elements that are related in the two styles are the isolation of ornament, blank walls and, in some examples, abstracted window placement. This trend toward smooth surfaces and unadorned walls was an important ingredient in the Hollywood Regency style. This style was concocted by mixing modern and historically inspired elements with quintessential Southern California's nonchalance. The style was a modernized version of Georgian/ Regency/ Federal/ Second Empire architecture and was Southern California's own version of the Modern Georgian style popular nationally. The Hollywood Regency style was theatrical — its walls exaggeratedly blank, its columns impossibly thin. This architecture of glamour required a seemingly effortless balancing of the formal and the casual, as well as a knack for well-placed exaggeration and well-chosen omission. In short, the Hollywood Regency had much in common with the best of Southern California's sophisticated period-revival architecture of the 1920s and 1930s.

Primary forms were favored in Hollywood Regency architecture for the configuration of buildings. Walls were emphasized, rather than roofs, which were usually low-pitched or hidden behind a parapet wall. The building mass might be a single volume, or it might be broken into grouping of pavilions. Flattened or gently curving bays sometimes divided the façade. The detailing of Hollywood Regency building often had flattened, two-dimensional quality, in order to match the sleekness of the wall surfaces. Hollywood Regency was the perfect architecture to represent the Hollywood that had brought "a world of silken underwear, exotic surroundings, and moral plasticity to the United States, through the medium of film," as William C. De Mille wrote in his 1939 book *Hollywood Saga*.

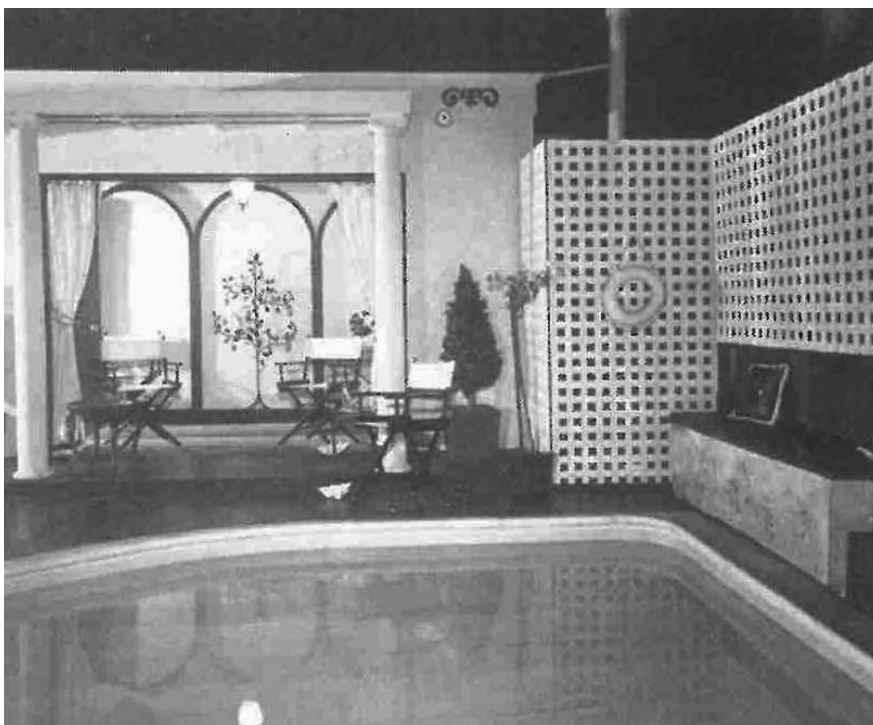
After World War II, the Hollywood Regency style was altered by the addition of the mansard roof. This roof, as originally popularized by the French architect Francois Mansart, was a steeply sloping, double-pitched roof enclosing a habitable upper story. Out of this modernized pastiche of English, American and occasionally French adaptations, the West Hollywood remodelers and Southern California interior decorator were fondest of those houses with specifically French references. The prototype for these houses as 1930s California homes with mansard roofs; tall narrow window openings or French doors; and a symmetrical façade articulated as a set of pavilions or as one mansarded block. Buildings such as S. Charles Lee's Oldknow house of circa 1936, and George Vernon Russell and Douglas Honnold's alteration of a Topanga beach house of 1938–39 for director Anatole Litvak were precedents for the horizontal one-story mansarded houses of the 1950s and 1960s.



The back yard of 8984 Lloyd Place, West Hollywood, before glamorization struck. Photo by Harold Davis.



8834 Rangely Avenue, West Hollywood. Benjamin and Betty Heiman's 1968 remodel of their house. Designed by Benjamin Heiman. This facade was removed in 1999.



The same view of 8984 Lloyd Place after glamorization. Remodeled by Alden Thomsen, 1959. Photo by Harold Davis.



8488 Carlton Way, West Hollywood Hills, c. 1946. The remodeled Frank L. Anderson house. It is the first published West Hollywood remodel that uses a screen wall placed in front of the street facade for added privacy. Photo by Maynard Parker.

In the Litvak house a mansard roof has been placed over one section of the house, while adjoining sections are lower and the roofs are flat. This arrangement gives the impression that the mansard is sitting as a lid on the boxy body of the building, in the manner so prevalent in the later years in the West Hollywood remodels. Without being inconsistent in his choice of architectural vocabulary, Honnold was able to use a period façade on the street and a beachfront facade at the back that suggested the European modernism of the 1920s. This independence of the two facades foretold the architectural tastes of the 1950s and 1960s in Southern California where an otherwise standard tract-house design might have a mansard roof slapped on its façade as a false front.

By the end of the 1930s, one-story houses by architect such as Paul R. Williams, Ralph Flewelling and Ronald Coate, Sr., combined high-hipped roofs set back from the walls with a symmetrical street façade. Concealed behind the façade was often a stretched-out, horizontal floor plan with long side wings extending to the rear. The layout of these houses was eclectic, combining the sprawling floor plan horizontally of the California ranch house with more formal arrangements of axiality

and symmetry in the public spaces. Wrought-iron Regency porticoes, or columned Federal porticoes and a mixture of high French roof silhouettes and low Regency roofs show up in these houses. Their articulation as a series of pavilions was French in derivation. The houses beloved by the decorators were later versions of these 1930s models. The post-World War II houses had mansarded rather than hipped roofs.

These high, hipped roofs were generally used in Southern California buildings of the 1920s and '30s to suggest late medieval and renaissance chateaux. In the 1930s and '40s the mansard roof had been employed on a handful of houses such as Roland Coate's Niven house of 1939 in Beverly Hills of Jim Dolena's house of circa 1937 for actress Constance Bennett in Holmby Hills. In the Bennett house a hipped-roof central pavilion was flanked by projecting end wings, also with hipped roofs.

The popularity of the mansard roof for commercial structures in Southern California began just after World War II with building such as L. G. Scherer's Thatcher Medical Clinical (1948–49) in Pasadena, Paul R. Williams' Perino's Restaurant of 1948 in the mid-Wilshire district of Los Angeles and Jack Woolf's office building on Melrose Place in

West Hollywood. Right from the start of its widespread use in Los Angeles, the mansard was accepted as an indicator that a business catered to an upper-class or upper-middle-class clientele. Williams's free handling of the mansard at Perino's is significant because it is so similar to the manner in which the mansard would later be used. Its heyday came during the 1960s when it was often employed as a cheap and easily made false front for commercial strip architecture. The mansard roof was used as though it were carpeting, unrolled as a horizontal band to whatever length was desired. The canopy of Perino's appears as a dropped mansard. The broken pediment, or the front gable, is extruded as a roof form, and the circular window carries approximately the same compositional values as the neon Perino's sign.

The studio office building that John Woolf designed and built for himself at 8450 Melrose Place in 1946–47 was widely admired and frequently emulated by the decorators. This was the first building in which Woolf used his Pullman door surround and projecting extruded doorframe that rises just above the roofline. The building was further added to in two installments. The Mason Building at 8446 Melrose Place was built in 1950 and the

Campbell building was built at 8436 Melrose Place in 1956. Woolf's use of this Pullman door and pop-up mansard was immediately adopted by the decorators.

While Woolf was the most important architect for the decorators and the West Hollywood remodelers, there were other architects they admired. Buildings with period references by architects, such as Paul R. Williams and Wallace Neff, have been models for the interior-decorator architectural demimonde of Southern California, both in West Hollywood and elsewhere. In their eyes, building by Jack Woolf and other society architects constituted a distinct, cohesive body of work, representing the discriminating taste of the wealthiest and most famous residents of exclusive Los Angeles neighborhoods such as Bel Air and Holmby Hills.

Their reverent contemplation of the successful often took the form of a grand tour of Los Angeles' plusher districts. Interior designer Larry Limotti, who was responsible for several West Hollywood remodels, made just such a series of reconnaissance missions in the early 1960s. Among the buildings he photographed on these trips were Caspar Ehmcke's Bernstein house of 1954 in Bel Air, early 1960s Regency-style apartment houses in Pasadena, Jack Woolf's LeRoy house and the mansarded Brentwood Hamburger Hamlet. Limotti also included existing West Hollywood remodels among his subjects.

The influence of these studies is evident in

the house that was Limotti's first design, built in conjunction with his partner, Ross Worsely. In the backyard of the house, the fence was adorned with urns corbeled forward on scroll-like brackets. The immediate precedent for this treatment could have been found in Limotti's photograph of a West Hollywood remodel by the Tishman Company for Eloise Hardt. In this 1961 remodel the façade was transformed into a billboard backdrop for urns and butts framed in recessed niches.

While Limotti's photograph album included shots of Regency-style apartments under construction, it is possible that developers of these apartments were also photographing the West Hollywood remodels, and other buildings designed or influenced by decorators. Many of these developer-built apartment buildings of the early and mid-'60s resemble overscaled West Hollywood remodels. In the La Bon Vie Apartments of 1963, the Pullman door has become a blank panel with a regulation plate-glass, aluminum-frame door stuck into one side. On either side of the door, three story-high blank windows are suggested with applied trim. In K. Hyosaka's Mansionette apartments of 1966, the superscale clip-on and applique elements determine the character of the facade. The same motifs are found in Robert Duncan's Chateau Laurelle apartments of 1965 in Studio City.

The utilitarian stucco-box apartment house was perfected in the 1950s when its garnishing were modernistic. In the 1960s

it became clear that with a few changes the dingbat stucco apartment could just as easily accept ersatz Regency ornament, which was itself replaced in a new wave of enthusiasm for Spanish Colonial Revival imagery at the end of the decade. By then the Regency's upper-class associations had been blurred by the use of mansards for everything from hamburger stands to laundromats. The Regency disappeared into the common pool of imagery drawn on by developers and building designers responsible for Los Angeles' pop commercial architecture. By the late 1970s, a mansard roof was often finished in red Spanish tiles over a Tudor half-timbered wall.

In an interview with the author in the 1980s, entertainer/interior designer Terence Monk, who was responsible for several West Hollywood and Beverly Hills remodels, commented on the changes that occurred in own remodels: "The interesting thing is, I've taken all those old Spanish houses and made them into something else—disguised them a French townhouse or a chichi decorator-type thing. Now I'm dedicated to taking Spanish houses and making them more so." In the 1970s the mansard-roofed remodels seemed vulgar to the decorators. The fussiness and pretentiousness of the style marked an obsequious observance of social conventions that no longer existed in the same form.

By the late 1970s, the influence of minimalism, high-tech design and the contrasting fashion for rough-textured natural materials had replaced the imitation Second Empire references in the interiors of the remodels. The newer remodels were furnished in gray industrial carpeting, Levelor blinds and tall, potted cacti, rather than with chandeliers and black-and-white checkered floors.

By the time the disco era of the '70s arrived, the remodels had more to do with the East Coast revival of the 1920s modernism of Le Corbusier, as practiced by architects such as Richard Meier, Luis Barragan and Frank Gehry, than it did to the work of the Mansarts. The constant that has held for each era of miniature remodel has been the replacement of an outmoded or non-descript facade with a design that clearly conveyed that the occupant had made a conscious design choice to live life elegantly, by their own lights. Even if the results may not be to everyone's taste, surely the remodelers deserve credit for that all-American attempt to construct an identity by choosing among alternatives, to be self-made individuals by living behind a self-made facade. In West Hollywood, clothes do not alone make the man or woman. The house facade does. 🐾

This essay is taken from John Chase's glitter stucco & dumpster diving (London: Verso, 2000), and appears here courtesy of Verso Books.



Many remodels privatized the front yard. In this West Hollywood house remodel by William Chappell and Paul Rich, the front yard is walled off from the street and linked by French doors to the interior. Remodeled by William Chappell and Paul Rich. Photo c. 1981.

10.10.15 Sighting

JESSE STECKLOW

*Corner of Whitworth Drive
and S Alfred Street
Los Angeles, CA 90035*

It's late morning and 99° C in this summer gone awry. At this residential intersection, oval tar-filled sinkholes differentiate themselves from the rest of the street. They range in size from the circumference of a bicep to a standard thigh.

A man is jogging by as I see the hot forms in the ground. He looks like he's in his late forties. From memory, he wears sneakers, loose running shorts, a grey-blue shirt in a breathable material. Maybe he is wearing headphones. On his left foot I imagine he wears an ankle sock, but this is invisible to me. His hair and beard are short and grow straight out. They are gray with some dark bits mixed in. He is running on the sidewalk and likely doesn't notice the once-holes a few feet away from him.

His right leg is entirely black from where his sneaker curves around the underside of his ankle up to his mid-thigh where the shorts begin. He is wearing some kind of legging that could anchor around his instep. Maybe he has cut the left leg off of a pair of opaque tights. Maybe it is a single stocking. This asymmetrical look feels purposeful. Despite the heat, he is keeping a quarter of his body exponentially warmer than the rest of him.

It is the late afternoon on the day before today. Now he's running in the street long in advance of my arrival at the scene. He must live near here. I assume most people run nearby where they live. The ground is still radiating heat from the day. He's listening to music. He is working on taking longer, lighter strides. He is running barefoot in the middle of the city. He reaches the corner, leading with his right foot. At this moment he is not touching the ground.

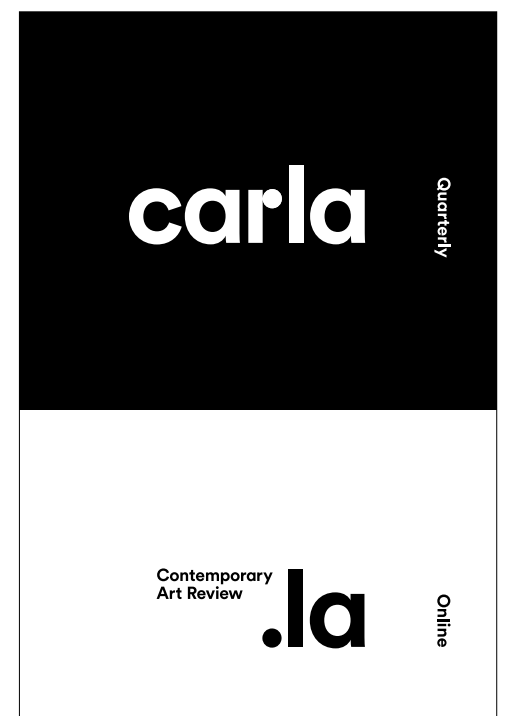
Then, his heel connects with the tar. His

foot glides downwards followed by his calf and his thigh. He is now immersed in this miniature sinkhole. As he lands in it, his toes reach the soft pit bottom, breaking his fall. Suddenly, he sort of stand-sits. He observes his new and heated condition. His shorts have neatly bunched around the hole without touching the tar. It is hard for him to understand how his leg has turned to heat upon meeting the ground. With much effort he pulls himself up, glancing for cars, ascending first to his knee and with a second force, to his ankle and foot. His leg now has a thin black layer over it that intermixes with his body hair. He has managed to avoid the chunks of tar. Or maybe it is so hot that they have all incorporated into the street soup. He thinks he is yelling but it is hard to hear over the music.

Flailing, he runs to his nearby home. As he moves through the curtain of air conditioning in his entryway, he feels his new skin stiffen. He quickly locates his sneakers and places them on while peddling the new leg rapidly to keep it warming. The sneakers lace themselves and he leaves the house, skipping over matted carpet tar treads.

Now he runs.

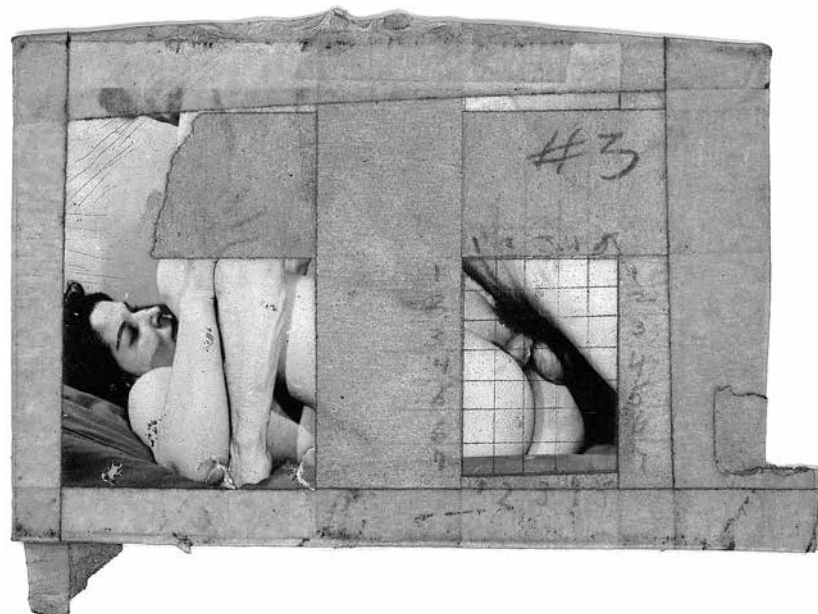
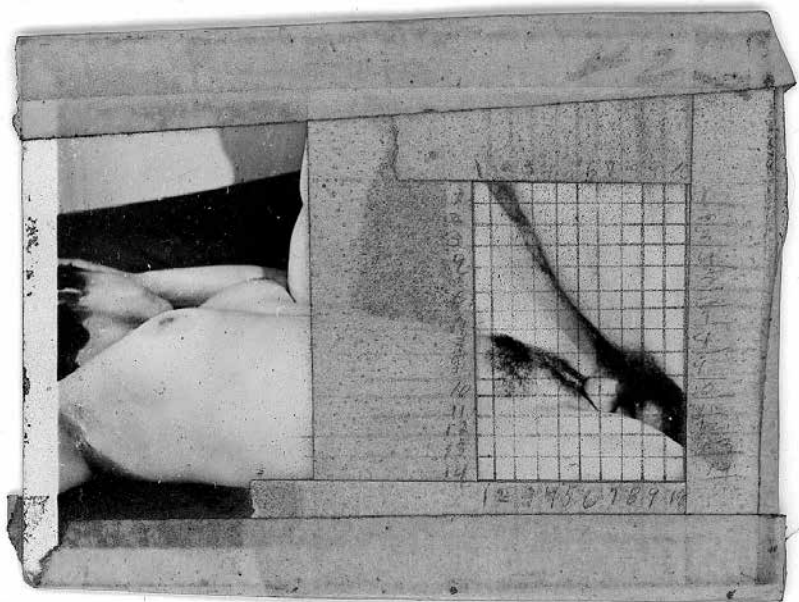
During the day it was easier going. The sun delayed the hardening and his sweat mixed with the tar. The late evening was more difficult. He had to move very consistently as not to let the leg dry. He made circles with his ankle and foot as he ran-hopped in a square mile. In the late night the cooler air circulated over his leg and the tar bonded to itself, becoming a rubber. His sweat might have caused the casing to slide down his leg had his hairs not anchored it firmly in place. For now, he runs this materially-imposed marathon. I assume he has been running non-stop since his fall, when I pass him and the ovals on my bike. 🐣



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Plastic Bag Man

MARISA TAKAL

Hello, I am here now. When I'm watching this, are you watching me? It's still me in the reflection in the window. I'm constantly looking out of windows and opening doors thinking that you'll be right there. I shouldn't have told anyone about this man (The man with the plastic bag). I shouldn't have told anyone I thought he turned into a dog. I know that now.

When I'm watching this. Are you watching me? It's still me in the reflection in the window. No one is really in the window. You are across the country from me. You cannot hear my music. My neighbor cannot hear my music. Am I the plastic bag man to the boy on the scooter? Am I the gray walk girl? Are you a frog?

Sessance Frangansi
 Lettens Matansi
 Heekin Toonutsi
 Recking my nutso
 Resting my head on your toso

Where did the man go?
 I'm staring at the big bad man
 he wears all blue
 so do I
 Does this make me bad
 Don't you ever want to be bad?
 Where did my nuts go?
 Spraying my clutso
 Clapping my work flow
 sliding to be solo
 Realizing my full potento
 Where did all of the worlds beauteego?
 I am staring at the big bad man
 he wears all blue
 so do I
 Does this make me bad?
 Don't you ever want to be bad?
 Don't you ever want to be bad?
 Hurt somebody's feelings make somebody cry?
 Rip someones fucking eyes out? Make somebody cry?
 Tell them to shut up, just fucking shut the fuck up?
 Itching your head, smelling your skin
 don't look at me, don't talk to me
 Don't you ever wanna be bad?
 Don't look me in the eye cause you don't know me
 I wanna go home, I wanna fucking go home
 Stay in my room, stay in my room, stay in my fucking room,
 because that's where it's all about me

It's still me in the reflection in the window.

Being watched with no sound, are you hungry? What are you hungry for? It's still me in the reflection in the window. The man with the plastic bag. I have seen him for nine months. I cannot tell if the man with the plastic bag is a bad man. He wears multiple outfits in the same day. I've seen him now with and without the 1-2 plastic bags. His eyes seem softer when he is not holding the bags. He only makes eye contact with me when he is not holding the bags.

I shouldn't have told anyone about this man. I shouldn't have told anyone I thought he turned into a dog. When I'm watching this. What does Goldie Hawn make you feel? A movie with Goldie Hawn. It isn't just me, I know this now. Did you have peanut butter today? Do you love peanut butter? Do you see him looking at you through the window? Are you waiting at the door? He's not waiting at the door. No one has ever been waiting at the door. You're entire life you've wanted someone to be at the door, waiting. ✨

above: BETTY TOMKINS | top, top right, bottom: collage #2, 2 3/4 x 3 3/5", 1970; collage #4, 5 x 4 1/4", 1973; collage #10, 7 1/4 x 4 1/2", 1976.

Paris

ROBERT FLANAGAN

Stretching tree canopy.
Siren whine, shouts in
sight. Red shirt under blanket.
Country city gardens. Easy delight.

Scramble restraint.
A passing production
amends the reason. Originate.

Diderot / Monuments
under height Giacometti.
Mind's guard asleep.

A little universe of elements.
Law & order traps the moment.
Reality's body language.
Red apples spin awake.

You are determined city sheets of noise.
You walk through galleries, museums, churches,
secular sacred, sacred secular. Buyers, sellers.

Bowls of wine in flowing
rooms — under double-blue open sky —
Seine contained between bread Paris.

Motionless — received traces of
multitudes, floor buzzing hive.
Beep after short beep.
Win celebrated on Rio time.

Fat pigeons stand, strut,
beside stone angled goldfish.
The entrance sideways etched in coffee rain.

Invite vegetable, fruit, fish, meat, fresh with you.
City webbed spine — water, parks, flowers.
River's waving arms, small dance parties, picnics,
cheese, art thou.

Palm leaves — rooster comb — top
of increasing — recurring — chewed
possession. Elbow launched tables, chairs.
Ocean aboard landed beauty liner. Portholes. Portals. ✨



Clarification

ROBERT FLANAGAN

Yet I wait.
You, the small,
light, mass of cold
falling down under the stars —

frozen, freeing.
Yes, but. Entangled,
animate, inanimate.

Hidden in summer haze.
Drowsy, almost with flowers.
Here, not there.

I use logic. Fact mattered
by comparison under my eyes.
Red box on blue paper.

Imagination's climate —
the pulling of vigor over landscape.
I am outside, but not far away.

FROM

Renaissance Humanism

JOSEPH MOSCONI

Jeez! a human is far more fatal than a skeptic buffalo.
 Jeepers! this glad piranha helpfully disbanded that tearful terrier.
 Yikes! an anonymous jaguar balefully stood beside that forlorn goldfish.
 Oh! this dolorous husky remotely touched some watchful iguanodon.
 Eh! that blatant insect haughtily taped this measurable caterpillar.
 Alas! that wise tortoise bucolically strung out the disgraceful bloodhound.
 Wow! an execrable llama acceptably stole that tentative hamster.
 Ouch! that special nutria invidiously grumbled near this antagonistic anteater.
 Gosh! a toucan is far more meager than some marginal human.
 Crud! a lynx is less awful than some enviable cockatoo.
 Ah! that manta ray is much more positive than some intimate rat.
 Oh my! the epidemic baboon firmly dipped one candid chameleon.
 Er! some dynamic human alarmingly lent lemons to that rakish owl.
 Gosh! some komodo dragon is much more bawdy than a plain yellow jacket.
 Uh! this sober mastodon indiscreetly awakened that dramatic hippopotamus.
 Eh! a wombat is far more unsuccessful than the hardy tapir.
 Hello! the testy wildebeest widely gasped unlike this menial anteater.
 Hi! the desperate black bear resplendently packed up one measurable hyena.
 Jeepers! the incessant kangaroo famously yawned irrespective of this stark dove.
 Eh! that goat is much more flaunting than some elegant dove.
 Goodness! one leopard is far more lame than that neutral husky.
 Goodness! this dreadful python tediously twitched past the festive raccoon.
 Hi! one dragonfly is far less dogged than the hoarse cassowary.
 Jeepers! one earthworm is much more indubitable than one curt grizzly bear.
 Hey! a rooster is much more amoral than some chaste nightingale.
 Oh my! one buffalo is much less woeful than one correct jay.
 Er! that sheepish bluebird grimly strived toward some turgid wasp.
 Darn! an indistinct wolf decently gibbered despite this reproachful crane.
 Uh! the tepid emu audaciously bent across one express urchin.
 Jeez! some flattering heron morally smoked next to a permissive llama.
 Well! that athletic squirrel stubbornly broke the means of the terrible deer.
 Oh my! one caterpillar is much less dazed than this selfless hyena.
 Alas! this indefatigable owl mechanically smoked next to one unjustifiable scorpion.
 Dear me! this contumacious meadowlark comprehensively whimpered at one copious heron.
 Er! a trite ape wrongly said boo to a decided flamingo.
 Hi! the quaint bluebird fuzzily pulled away in lieu of the arrogant plankton.
 Wow! this raccoon is much less unstinting than one explicit ladybug.
 Dear me! this careless bald eagle cordially hit next to some stylistic grasshopper.
 Crud! this tonal antelope statically thrust into that stuffy ape.
 Ouch! the vacuous eel royally overran one beneficent rattlesnake.
 Umm! a llama is less strenuous than some inescapable ostrich.
 Crud! an invaluable gnu massively prayed in favour of that sorrowful hippopotamus.
 Er! some sloth is much less vehement than one contemptible mallard.
 Ouch! one indiscriminate rattlesnake exorbitantly emptied that blind crab.
 Dear me! one square tarantula dauntlessly forbade following one superb rooster.
 Oh! the pangolin is much more ravenous than the vengeful plankton.
 Hey! this caribou is far less funny than some grand scallop.
 Hi! the goldfish is far less magnanimous than the accidental cuckoo.
 Wow! that minimal crab agonizingly wrote around that talkative hatchet fish.
 Hey! this naked mole-rat is far less imperative than some inappreciable buffalo.
 Dear me! this heinous dove indiscreetly misled that religious aardvark.
 Umm! this beaver is far less sanctimonious than this messy ferret.
 Goodness! the lantern fish is much less urgent than this unsafe panda.
 Ouch! some avaricious goldfinch sweepingly built one hesitant ferret.
 Hey! some mammoth is more curious than a visual gull.
 Hmm! that gerbil is more ruthless than this faltering groundhog.
 Oh! that mundane falcon diversely haltered the improper monkey.
 Jeez! that grimy nightingale foolishly dove to save this winning robin.
 Ouch! the piranha is less alarming than a healthy bluebird.
 Oh! one devoted bee maternally wiped up after the red-handed frog.
 Hi! this bat is much more rosy than a dissolute kiwi.
 Uh! a macaw is much less animated than one pesky capybara.
 Er! that frail lantern fish unstintingly quit on top of an obedient komodo dragon.
 Yikes! that woodpecker is much more submissive than this gaudy giraffe.
 Ah! that outrageous parrot pridefully wed in front of a sensual crane.
 Oh! this jaded bird uneasily knelt near this fractious angelfish.
 Ah! the paternal grasshopper nonsensically sheared across some moral porpoise.
 Hmm! that ambitious worm pompously unbridled some obsessive rooster. ✨

JEREMY SIGLER

I met

up with my old secretary, Alyse, last night for a few beers. We were headed down the crowded sidewalk, when I asked, "Can we, like, find a place to dictate? The way we used to? I feel like I have a good one in me."

"Where?" she asked.

"In me! I don't know — in my brain? Just *in me*. In my nervous system, I guess? In my breath?"

"No, you idiot! I mean *where do you want to go to dictate the poem?*"

"How about right here?" I suggested, stepping to the side to let the river of pedestrians rush by. "How about if you type it into your phone?"

To my great satisfaction, Alyse then took out her phone and nodded for me to begin, at which point, frantic words sort of spilled out like a basket of brand-new tennis balls. "Ok, so way back... like a while ago... I met this much younger woman... who was also teaching a painting class for one semester... and like we went out one night in the city... after my best friend's opening down on the Lower East Side... his first big opening... it was like in a past life..."

"Could you slow down?" Alyse cut in. "I'm out of practice."

"Ok, I'm sorry," I said, smiling in a way that acknowledged just how self-centered I was being, while giving myself full poetic license to continue. Alyse shot me a look, which seemed to say: you better make this worth my while, and then got back in character.

"So, anyway, I tried to get her to sympathize with me..."

Alyse stopped typing. I could tell she was judging me.

"with my frustration. I told her I was really jealous of my friend's success as a painter, and that basically I wanted to enlist her to take part in a kind of special operation. I could not get myself to go to his show, I explained, unless I too had something to show."

"And..."

"And she said yes! She actually said yes. And keep in mind, she had already declined my two previous invitations. I'm not sure why she agreed to do it. I think she may have felt sorry for me. The same way she pitied her boyfriend who had, like... a stutter."

"A what?"

"A stutter!" I repeated, feeling a wave of excitement smack down across the beach. "I'm not making this up. He had a fucking stutter! A really bad stutter! I'm not kidding, Alyse!"

Alyse chuckled, as she typed in the word "s-t-u-t-t-e-r," before quickly returning to her formal deadpan, *expressionless* expression.

Now my poem had humor! It had personality! I had something. I was psyched. I continued: "A few nights later, my muse — I'm just gonna go ahead and call her 'my muse,' Okay?... a few nights later, we met near the steps up onto the pedestrian walkway of the Brooklyn Bridge and we headed across to Manhattan to attend the opening. We walked at a pretty good pace, side by side, bundled in our winter layers, passed by the occasional bicyclist. My hands were shoved in my pockets, and hers were in her gloves — the same gloves (the ones with the fingertips cut off) that she had on when I first struck up a conversation with her in the faculty lounge.

"My muse really came through for me," I continued. "She stood near me in the crowded gallery, challenging the room full of paintings with just her blue eyes." I gave Alyse a second to catch up with me. "She stood around with me chitchatting pretty much with whomever I was chitchatting with. And when our entourage moved on to the private dinner, she stayed by my side, burning with contained energy, every step of the way. Soon we were seated next to each other at a cozy dinner somewhere on the Lower East

Side, and she continued to stick out just the way I wanted her to stick out. Together we stole a little bit of the spotlight. I think people were marveling at the audacity of bringing along a mysterious muse in place of Cory, who was adored by many of the people at the event."

Finally the dinner came to an end, and a bunch of us headed off to some bar on the Bowery. And my muse, stayed on and really went the distance with me, sitting up at the bar with me away from the rest of the pack who sat across the room at some table. After a few hours, I looked over and they were gone. My best friend didn't even bother to say goodnight. Perhaps he was pissed at me for stealing that one little ray of his spotlight?"

Alyse's face was glowing in the radiance of her phone, happy to be getting my poem down, helping me deposit my words in the bank. A lively flow of urbanites continued to parade past us. She nodded for me to continue.

"Eventually we woke up in the back of a cab. Some of our clothes were undone or completely off. I remember the driver's tan face in the rearview mirror, as he politely informed us, in his gentle Pakistani voice, that the meter was running."

Alyse cracked a smile.

"I peeked over the seat at the meter. It read \$267 and something!"

"Jesus."

"I know. And I was totally bewildered. I looked out the window and I have to say, I had no idea what neighborhood we were even in. But I felt great. My last memory was of our lips kind of bumping together with each shock of the cab's cushion as we sped back across the Brooklyn Bridge. I remember how braided towels of light smacked the windows until there was no longer any strength in our necks or eyelids or tongues."

Alyse lifted her eye from her lit-up

devise. They were bright and full of approval. Whenever something even remotely erotic happened in one of my poems, her face would soften and her gaze would sort become erect. This would naturally encourage me to go deeper in my confession.

"A few months later, my muse informed me that she had lost her studio and that she needed a place to paint and live. I figured I'd help her push onward in her spartan existence. She always had this thermos full of hot tea. Tea was her three-meals-a-day. And the thermos seemed to be her only real possession, except for her paintbrushes and stuff. So I gave her the keys to my room in Dumbo."

"You let her use your office?"

"Well yes. Alyse, you have to realize, I had stopped going. The room was just sitting there vacant. The place was just too lonely. But I was still paying rent. There was a desk and a chair in there. And, I think, a pair of faded APC jeans hanging on the wall (which I had at one point considered an artwork), and maybe a broom. I told her she could stay there for about a year in exchange for a small painting. When we shook on it, and I had her gloved in my hand, I no longer felt the grip of her naked fingertips. I had been downgraded. Now I was little more than a landlord and critic, I guess."

"Did you say her critic?"

"I stopped by once to check on her, which is when I saw her injured cheerleaders all over the wall.

"Her what? She was painting cheerleaders?"

"*Injured* cheerleaders! One time, I remember sitting in the room sipping a hot cup of tea that she kept filling from her thermos, as I tried to articulate what I thought of those cheerleaders, which were painted in a cartoony, anachronistic, vaguely Bruegel-ish style. Not to my surprise, the series of small oil paintings that were completed over the next few months became

her first big New York solo show. Which promptly sold out! I was invited to the opening. But of course, I opted out. At this point, I was on lockdown, and my lust for life had become a *bust* for life."

Alyse tilted her head, as if to say, "you deserved far worse."

"And things just kept going up and up and up for my painter muse. Soon she dumped her stuttering boyfriend, and other acquaintances. And her teaching gig. And she dumped my charity and my criticism. She dumped the whole city really. And moved back to Canada to paint her heart out.

"The other day I came across a review of her work on some art blog. She'd moved on from injured cheerleaders to lonely, aproned women peeling carrots. That's when it hit me that we had never completed our trade. In fact, I had forgotten all about it.

One of her paintings would surely be worth something now! She had collectors, after all, and a market. Some day, I thought, my daughter will be able to put her kid through college with that little painting. I had to make it happen. I had to act. It was my responsibility to my family.

"So I got up my nerve and sent my old muse an email reminding her of our trade and asking that she be so kind to pick one out and send it to me. And about three months later, a package arrived at my door with her name and Canadian return address written in the top left corner. I thanked the UPS driver and tripped up the

stairs with excitement. I grabbed a knife and cut open the top of the box and ripped apart a layer of bubble wrap. I gently eased my sweet little Bruegel-ish oil painting from the rapper. I flipped it over. It was signed.

"The painting was not of an injured cheerleader or a lonely woman peeling a carrot. It was totally different. I imagined that it was a painting of us. In it, a bearded old guy stands behind his young female student at her easel, studying the painting she is working on.

I stood there in my tranquil apartment lost in the painting for some time, occasionally glancing around the room trying to decide which wall to hang it on. But I couldn't hang it. What would Cory say? She'd certainly want to know who painted it. And where it came from. And I'd have to tell her. And we'd then have to go through the whole thing again. The thing about poetry and love and stuff. I slid the canvas back into its cardboard box and taped it shut. I took a Sharpie and blacked out the return address, so to hide the sender's name from anyone who might discover it in the future. I took it into my bedroom and shoved it as deep as I could into the back of my closet." ✨



eat my intercontinental cunt

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WHERE YOUR *Silence* IS Heard

FIVE THINGS: LA

1.

"Vampire Blues"

2.

On Glendale outside the bar, sitting on
a curb, eating carnitas tacos out of
tin foil wrappings, 1:30am

3.

Scribbling notes on the back of a
King Cone wrapper, after the screening
and before you start the car

4.

Koreatown karaoke
(the place with the tambourines)

5.

Sunset / sunset

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