# Gallery&Studio

## arts journal

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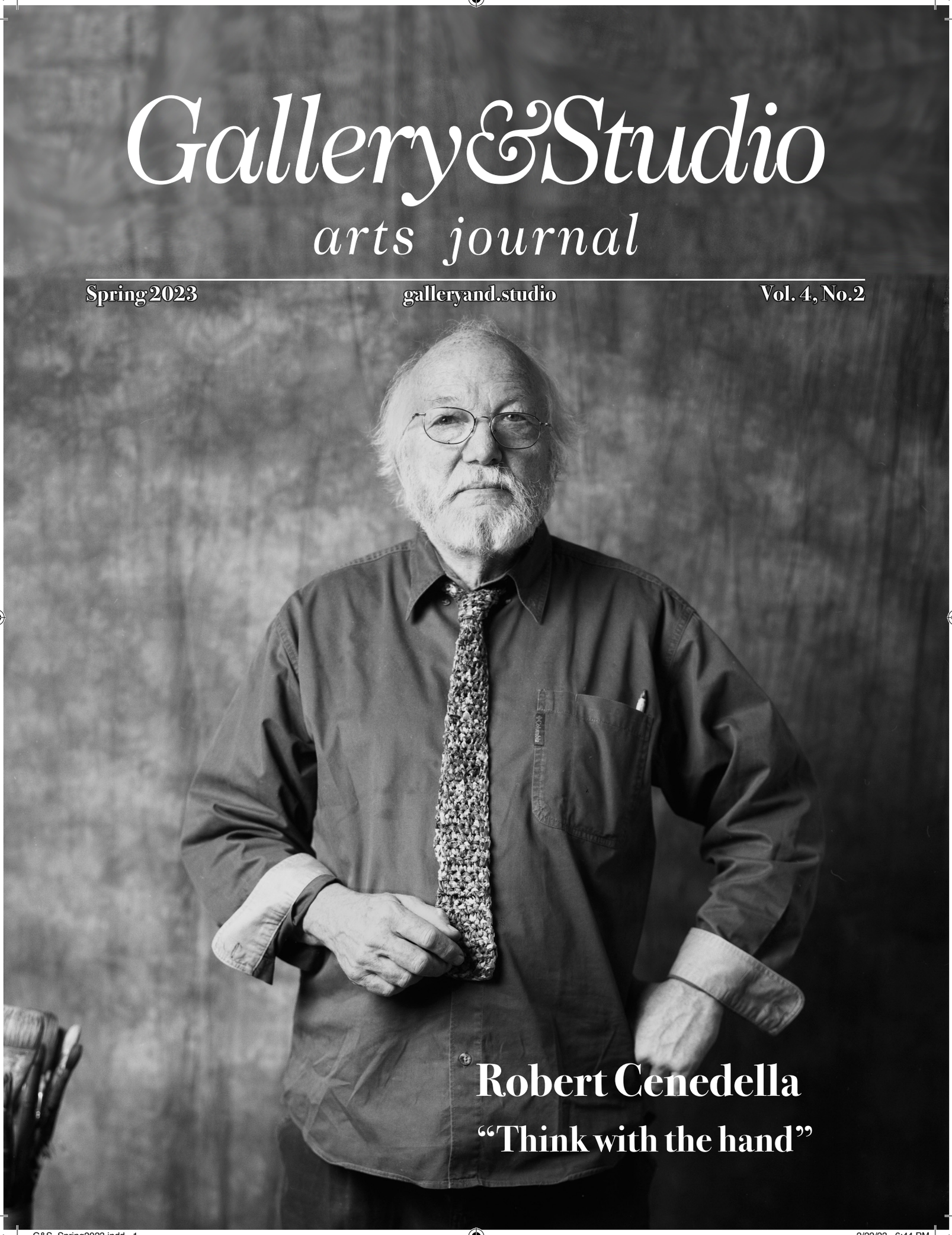

# Robert Cenedella

## "Think with the hand"

# Gallery&Studio arts journal

**In this issue we traverse the Past, Present and Future**

The Past returns with Japan's Master Printer, Hiroshige from the early 1800s, recounted by Dr. Bill Thierfelder. The Present is represented by Jeff Tocci and his etchings and aquatint.

Norman Ross covers old and new Jewish Museums from around the world. Ed McCormack reminisces about the early 1960s in his memoir about the Brata Gallery on 10th street. The Grateful Dead, whose legendary concerts began in 1965 and still continue today, are brought to life in Bob Cenedella's visionary and timeless landscape. DT Alexander counters this by introducing Felly, a millennial rapper who has struck out on his own as an independent label.

Current artists and poets are strongly represented by Karen Gentile, Friederike Oeser, Margo Mead, CC Arshagra and Christine Graf. Julia Szabo showcases Christina Massey who is creating art with recycled materials, with an eye to the future.

The future is explored with the explosion of Artificial Intelligence generated art, their impact on the art world and why we should be involved in how they are allowed to progress, because the future is here already. In the next issue we may find articles written by AI content creators such as ChatGPT or Bard!

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this issue and we welcome any feedback.

—The Editors

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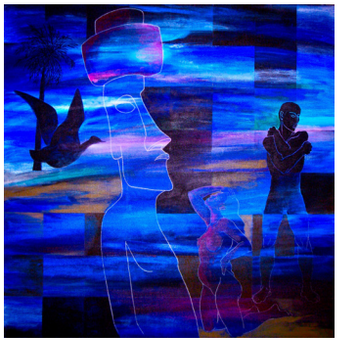

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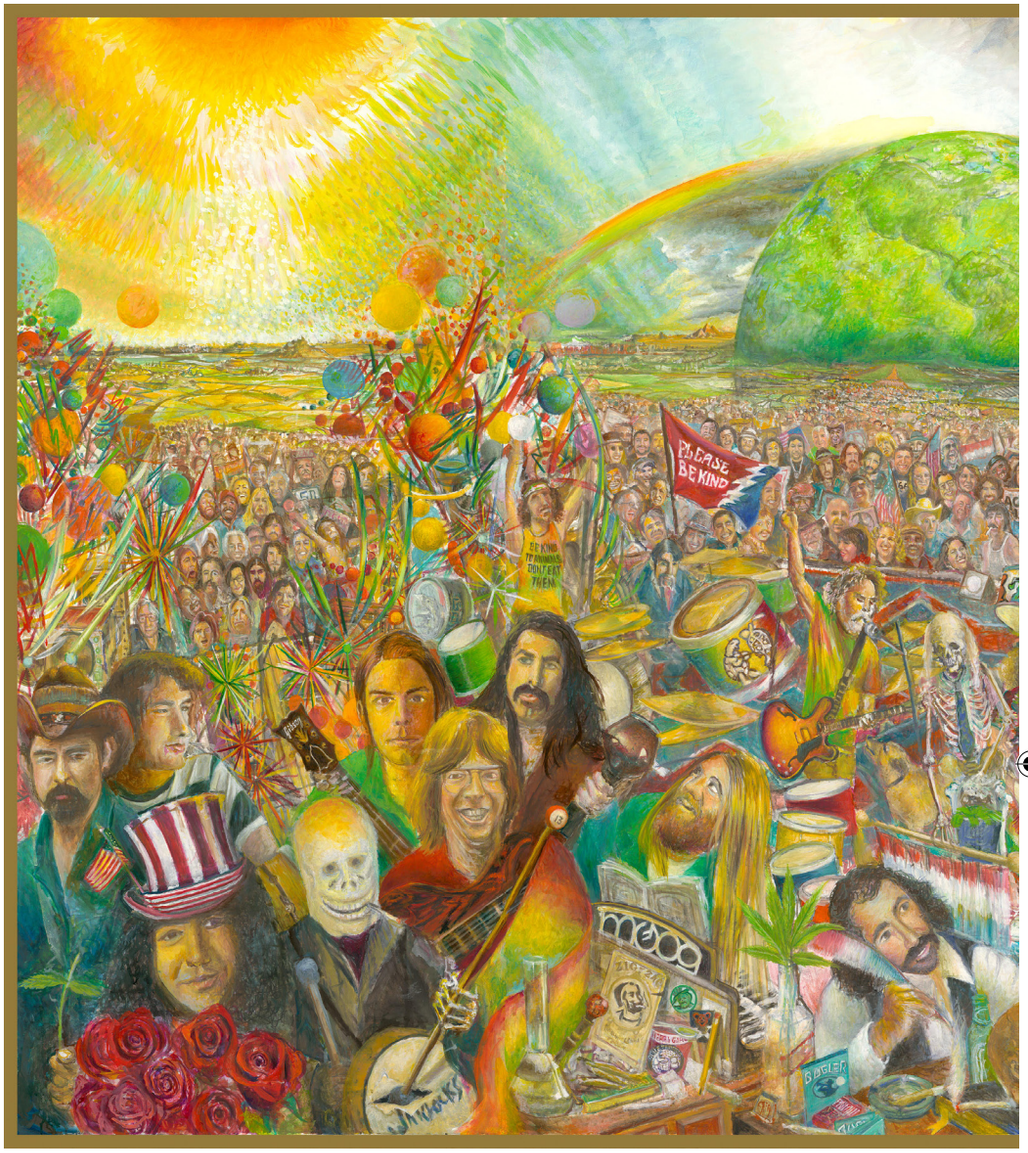
# Bob Cenedella: Outlier and Humanist




Ed McCormack and I met Robert Cenedella at a National Arts Club event. It was long ago, around 2009, but I remember the evening: lots of people in artsy dinner attire and lots of talk. When it was time for dinner, we all sat at long tables on seats which were assigned with little name cards.

Whoever planned the seating must have known that Cenedella truly belonged at the head of the table, because he grabbed your attention without even trying. A very lively man with twinkly bright eyes and an amused expression which made you wonder, "What is he thinking?" You got the feeling he was observing everyone. He gave me the impression of amazing self-assurance, of a person who is happy in his own skin, a quality that gave him a magnetic presence.

In the 1937 book *Painters and Personality*, Sam A. Lewisohn, contends that "to produce great art the artist must have a sufficiently interesting personality."

We soon learned that Bob not only possessed a rambunctious personality, but that he took delight in upsetting the art establishment. This was made clear when he reserved our full-page back cover with a very convincing facsimile of a Mark Rothko on which the word "Bullshit" was scrawled across the image. Ed and I were somewhat flummoxed since neither of us would ever have classified Mark Rothko's work as such.

Ed wrote in an article titled "Robert Cenedella, Gadfly for the Cause of Art" that "being a pain in the ass is part of Robert Cenedella's job description. The other part is being one of our most courageous, imaginative, and conscience-driven figurative painters and arguably the most charismatic and popular instructor at The Art Students League [from 1988 - 2016] since his own teacher, mentor, and artistic hero George Grosz."

Cenedella is best known for teaching the foundational skills of drawing and in particular the human

*Robert Cenedella*

by Jeannie McCormack

## *"So Many Roads Grateful Dead 1965-Forever"*

*2021, 55" x 96" Triptych, Oil on Primed Linen*

*Artist's Boots with Mahle Stick*

form. His aim is to teach the student to "think with the hand." One of his former students, Jeff Tocci says "his teaching of how to use the line, the same lessons he was taught from George Grosz, were the most influential to me. On the first day I met him, he looked at my drawings and said, 'I can see you've done this before. If you come back tomorrow I will change your life.' And he did, in one lesson on the economy and potential of a charcoal line. Then we went to the bar."

Like George Grosz who was fond of satirizing bourgeois types congregating in elegant settings, Cenedella takes delight in revealing the absurdity of certain social gatherings. A perfect example is a serigraph we own by Cenedella of an art opening titled *Gallery Opening, 1962*. Ed and I would look at this crowded scene many times and pick out certain figures. Ed would say, "You know who that looks like, don't you?" And I would agree, "Oh yeah, you are right."


*Broome Street Bar*

There are also some figures in the crowd hanging upside down in various positions from ropes! Each figure has a distinctive face, revealing the humanity of the individuals in his works. They are never generic place holders. The strong human element is apparent in his life as well as his art.

In spite of the sharp satirical nature of the work in which each of the party-goers appears to be engaged in intense dialogue about artsy matters, these are individuals that Cenedella has observed and remembered as he appeared to be doing when we first met him at the National Arts Club.

Cenedella also takes great pleasure in satirizing politics such as in his large work *The Senate: No Taxation Without Representation 2011,* as well as many other institutions which mainstream society holds dear.

*Gallery Opening, 1962*

As for the art establishment: He has painted a Heinz tomato soup image in the style of Andy Warhol, a replica of Robert Indiana's painting of the word LOVE, with the letters for SHIT in its place, and large murals for bars around New York City are included in his extensive oeuvre.

Whenever Ed wrote about Cenedella for our magazine, we were given a list of bars— which were some of his preferred exhibition spaces—for delivering the magazine.

As it turned out Ed and Bob were kindred spirits, both Outsiders at an early age. Both went to the High School of Music and Art for a very short time, Ed only attending a few days of classes before returning to his preferred "Black Board Jungle" high school, Seward Park on the Lower East Side. Bob, on the other hand, was expelled for writing an article satirizing the school's air raid drills as useless doomsday precautions.

Sam A. Lewisohn also says "the personality of the artist is key to his art." In another way it could be said that Cenedella's life is his art; his art lives through him and has always been an expression of who he is.

One of his more recent works is a 55" x 96" triptych titled *So Many Roads, Grateful Dead 1965-Forever*. As with most of his works, it is packed with a multitude of humanity, this time congregated before a mystical skyline which includes a bright sun in one section: a rainbow over the earth with lightning bolts in the middle. In the upper right of the third section, instead of bright sky, a moon shines above mysterious shadowy faces. The word "Forever" in the title adds a layer of mystery to Cenedella's enigmatic Grateful Dead painting, bringing an era of long ago back to life again. *G&S*

RobertCenedella.com

# AI Art, The Future is Now

by Marina Hadley

New ideas often develop without public consensus or legal framework. AI (Artificial Intelligence) art is a field which is growing at a great pace and is already mainstream. The recent 2023 Grammy award ceremony featured the works of Turkish-American artist Refik Anadol on the backdrop screens of the stage. Anadol is also currently exhibiting *Unsupervised* at MoMA. His art, which is constantly changing, is created by inputting 200 years of publicly available art shown by MoMA (Museum of Modern Art) into his machine learning software and incorporating it with current input from the changing light, movement, and sound within the building and the outside weather. AI art is already winning art competitions and the improvements in the software are making it harder and harder for people to differentiate between human and AI art.

This is causing consternation for visual artists and licensing companies such as Getty, who accuse software companies of using data sources created by "scraping" the internet to mine copyrighted and licensed images to generate AI art. Three artists last year filed a joint lawsuit against Stability AI Ltd., MidJourney Inc., and DeviantArt Inc., while Getty Images have filed lawsuits in both the United Kingdom and the USA against Stability AI Ltd. The US Getty lawsuit claims Intellectual Property infringement under the 1976 Copyright Act. There are many other software apps that are involved in AI art generation currently such as DALL-E2, Dream and Craiyon.

At present many of the images that are scraped from the internet are collated into datasets, LAION being one of the most well-known.


It is owned by a German research non-profit agency. The datasets are mathematical representations of the designs found in the images which are encoded, compressed, and then decoded, and so do not resemble the original images. Much of the current generation of AI art generating software does not hold the images itself, but trains on these data sets, mainly because they do not have the memory capacity to hold the volume of images and attached texts which can number in the billions. These companies explain that their apps are not using existing art and recombining them as digital collages, therefore do not infringe on the law.

However, these apps can sometime recreate good copies of existing images or create images in the style of individual artists and photographers, as shown recently by industry and academic researchers. The question is, does the scraping of the internet of copyrighted and licensed art infringe on current laws?

The determining factor will be whether it is "fair use." The copying of images is allowed only for a limited and transformative purpose; to comment upon, criticize, or parody. The term 'transformative' is nebulous and vague, requiring juries to determine the validity on a case-by-case basis. This would take a very long time to resolve these questions in an industry that is evolving very quickly.

It is also worth noting that the US Copyright Office (USCO) states currently that copyright protection extends only to human authorship. So art solely generated by AI is not covered, but there are no guidelines on human-AI combined art.

One possible solution is to follow the music world, where royalties are collected when copyrighted material is used. Visual artists could receive royalties for their artwork being included in datasets. Or there is a potential for software to determine if their images were used to create another image. There are already many problems that have evolved with the accuracy of streaming music data in distributing royalties fairly to artists and labels, which would have to be addressed.

Let's also not forget that AI generated text is also proliferating with Microsoft's ChatGPT and Google's Bard, but that's for another day.

In the meantime, it is important for artists to educate themselves on this subject as it evolves and make their voices heard. The technology firms have been allowed to develop their software without enough input from the arts community. It is time to take your place at the table to discuss the future of technology and art, because the future is already here. *G&S*

1976 Copyright Act
www.copyright.gov/title17

# The Art of Recycling for the Planet

by Julia Szabo

*"Becoming," installation with 4Heads on Governors Island, 2022 (photo credit: Argenis Apolinario)*

Have you honored your New Year's resolution thus far? A commitment to sustainability—the resolution that ultimately benefits us all—was high on many end-of-year intention checklists. But a very special group of artists plans to keep this important resolution year-round, and for many years to come: those who actively, energetically seek alternatives to the solvents and other chemicals raising clouds of ecotoxicity; those who repurpose others' "trash" to make powerful statements about how creativity impacts our home planet, for better and for worse.

At the vanguard of this green and growing movement is the Brooklyn-based Christina Massey, an artist and independent curator for whom sustainability is an authentic way of creative life. Not only has she perfected a practice of elegantly repurposing surprising materials, notably aluminum cans; she's also dedicated herself to sustaining her fellow women artists with the excellent WoArtBlog. "I will always push the definition of what is a painting," Massey says.

As the earth and seas are big, so artwork aiming to help save them tends to be large-scale and deep. Exhibit M: Massey's "mattress-size" (her phrase) sculptural paintings, currently on view through December 2023 in the lobby of 750 Seventh Avenue in Manhattan, curated by Brooklyn's Court Tree Collective (visitors welcome during business hours, Monday-Friday, 9-5).

Whereas the mattresses we sleep on are environmental menaces (some 18 million of them end up in landfills annually), Massey's painterly, queen-size wall sculptures celebrate responsible recycling, imbuing it with multiple dreamy layers of meaning. Contemplating a Massey mattress on the wall "feels comforting, it's something we all know, a safe space—but there are other aspects to it too: that space can also be a violent space, or a frustrating space, if you have insomnia." For history buffs, it might conjure a bed of nails or similar torture device. "It's a very complex, really individualized space that is unique and personal to everyone." Massey makes complex, individualized work to match, down to the decorative details so many of us lavish on mattresses with, say, patterned bedding (yet another significant culprit of landfill waste, with 1.4 billion pounds of textiles tossed in New York alone).

"There's so much pattern, texture, color... a lot going on in my work, all emblematic of that complexity."

Their branding and barcodes proudly intact, the metal cans Massey works with, offer far more than a cheap-shot critique of consumerism: they are poetry

***Massey's painterly, queen-size wall sculptures celebrate responsible recycling, imbuing it with multiple dreamy layers of meaning.***

with repurpose. Her aluminum assemblages achieve an imaginative alchemy, offering wide-open, queen-size picture windows on a future where everyone cares about what becomes of the items we consume. "So much of our consumer choices are the influence behind my work," Massey says. "When we choose to be conscious consumers, that stimulates the market and it's better for the environment."

As a consumer of artist's materials, Massey is admirably conscious about sourcing aluminum cans to create with: "I try to get mostly local cans," she says. "Sometimes, the breweries in Brooklyn let me go pick up cans after a special event; and whenever I'm doing a show, I try to get cans that are local to that place. So when I was part of a show on Governor's Island, I would get cans from there. I usually stay away from major brands, as I like the idea of supporting small business."

*Creative Collusion 4 (courtesy of the artist)*

*Creative Collaboration 1 (courtesy of the artist)*

Thinking global while recycling local has many benefits, for planet and artist. The Wisconsin beverage brand Green Canvas (drinkgreencanvas.com) discovered Massey's work online, and approached her about a collaboration; Massey created beautiful can artwork, with a gorgeous green palette, for the first flavor in their new range of beverages, Lemonade Tea. With surrealist panache, the can features the Green Canvas logo framed within a white rectangle reminiscent of... a queen-size mattress. Green Canvas is also commissioning new Massey works for each forthcoming flavor. "As the flavors are released, I'm excited to include the Green Canvas cans in future work," Massey concludes. Reduce, reuse, recycle, reciprocate: the new four-point formula for successful sustainability. *G&S*

IG: @cmasseyart
IG: WoArtBlog

# Jewish Museums

by Norman A. Ross

Jews give great importance to recording and preserving their history, starting with the Bible. Museums are an obvious extension. Today there are Jewish museums all over the world. Some are adjacent to synagogues, for instance in Cape Town and Buenos Aires, or are installed in deconsecrated synagogues, e.g. in Amsterdam, but most are stand-alone structures with curators, docents and other staff.

In the summer of 1938, as tens of thousands of Jews were fleeing Nazi Germany and Austria, delegates from 32 countries met in the French resort of Evian on the edge of Lake Léman (Lake Geneva) to discuss the plight of the Jews. At the conference, only Rafael Trujillo, dictatorial President of the Dominican Republic, offered to accept any refugees. Representatives of all of the other countries, including the United States, refused, only going so far as to say, in effect, "what a shame." President Roosevelt demonstrated his lack of concern by sending a businessman friend of his instead of a government official.

Trujillo offered to accept up to 100,000 Jewish refugees. In the end only about 800 arrived. They settled in a village known as Sosúa, where they created farms and factories and had a positive impact on the economy. Some descendants of the original settlers are still there. They remain an important part of the community and maintain a synagogue and a small museum about their community.

Most Jewish museums focus on the history of the Jews in the specific country, secondarily on the history of Jews worldwide. Some have sections focused on the Holocaust while some are specifically Holocaust Museums. Jewish Museums are not religious

*Synagogue in Rome that houses a Jewish Museum in its basement.*

institutions. However, virtually every Jewish museum displays some religious artifacts because they are essential to the culture. As someone who has visited a plethora of historic sites and museums around the world, I don't think there's a parallel of any kind to the array of Jewish museums.

Many Christian churches have a vestry or sacristy where vestments (liturgical garments), reliquaries and other religious articles are stored and often are displayed. Some sacristies serve as small museums, even to the extent of charging admission fees. But they are fundamentally religious institutions, not museums.

Prior to World War II Jews comprised approximately one third of the population of Lithuania. In 1812 Napoleon called Vilnius, the capital city, "the Jerusalem of the North." However, during World War II the Germans killed 90% of the Lithuanian Jews.

In Vilnius there's a small Jewish Museum as well as a separate Holocaust Museum. Sadly, when I visited about 22 years ago, the Jewish Museum had almost nothing to display. During the war the local population, including friends and neighbors of deported and murdered Jews, had done everything they could to eradicate the community, burning their books and melting ceremonial objects such as Torah Crowns, Menorahs, Kiddush cups and Shabbat candle holders.

In the many Jewish museums I have visited I have often been astounded by the beauty of the exhibits, religious as well as secular. Secular collections often include images or mock-ups of old houses, with original personal items and clothing that shed light on life in earlier times. They often present shows about Jewish artists, for example Camille Pissarro, Marc Chagall, Chaïm Soutine, Amedeo Modigliani, Diane Arbus and the photographer Robert Capa, among many others.

As a (secular) Jew I'm always interested in visiting Jewish museums when I'm traveling. They are always edifying. Also, as a publisher of microfilms I have worked with Jewish museums, preserving Jewish documents, newspapers and books in ten countries. In Warsaw, at the Jewish Historical Institute, I filmed the only Jewish newspaper published in the Ghetto during World War II. Nearby today is the huge Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which did not exist when I was last in Warsaw.

There are Jewish museums in almost every major country in Europe, and others elsewhere around the world, for instance, in China, Morocco and Guatemala. At least 40 countries have Jewish museums. Clearly, one of the reasons there are so many Jewish museums around the world is

because there were (and are) Jewish communities all over the world. Adjacent to the Jewish Museum in Cochin, India is a store run by a Mrs. Cohen, who told us that the community there dates back 2,000 years. Sadly, shortly after we visited the Jewish Museum in Mumbai, several Jews were murdered by the same terrorists who attacked the famous Taj Hotel nearby.

In Moscow, in the late 19th century, the Jewish community was given permission to build a large stone synagogue, known today as The Moscow Choral Synagogue. This building is quite different from the myriad small wooden synagogues that were burned down during the many pogroms over the centuries. However, shortly after it was built, a Russian official alighted from his carriage in front of the building thinking it was a church; he knelt and said a prayer. Upon learning that the building was a synagogue, he demanded the demolition of its dome, which wasn't replaced for 100 years.

There are now two Jewish museums in Moscow. The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center is in a huge, former garage and is dedicated to the history of Russian Jewry, with a section on the Holocaust. Ultra-modern and technologically sophisticated, it was created with money from Russian Jewish oligarchs. Also in Moscow is the tiny Museum of Jewish History in Russia, which survives in several rooms in an apartment house and is hard to find. The Russian Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg has a large exhibit of Judaica, including some of the famous Ansky Ethnographic Collection. Many other museums around the world

*A Hebrew typewriter in the Jewish Museum in Buenos Aires.*

*The Jewish Museum in Amsterdam. The Anne Frank Museum is nearby.*

*An outdoor plaque commemorating The Holocaust in the middle of the old Ghetto in Venice, where several former synagogues constitute a Jewish Museum. The word "Ghetto" originated here.*

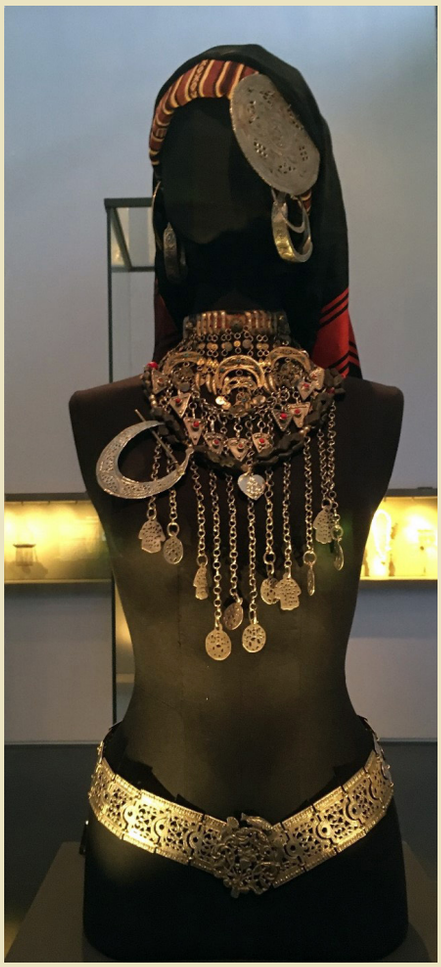
*A re-creation of a dining room in a Jewish home in the Jewish Museum in Cape Town.*

*A Jewish bride in the Jewish Museum in Fes, Morocco.*

*A modern statue of three old Jewish musicians in The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow.*


*Part of the maze in the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Note the crooked walls.*

*A model of 19th-century Vienna highlighting the Judenplatz neighborhood, in the Jewish Museum in Vienna.*



*Jewish brides in Djerba (Tunisia) were covered in layers of jewelry, including gold discs that resembled coins, and which could be used as currency in times of stress. Jews first settled in Tunisia nearly 2,500 years ago. Israel Museum in Jerusalem.*

*Synagogue and Museum in Mumbai.*

*The old Jewish Cemetery in Prague.*

*Photo of an old Greek Jewish couple in the Jewish Museum in Rhodes.*

*18th-century Jewish clothing and candlestick in the Jewish Museum in Toledo, Spain, where several synagogues were converted to mosques, which were converted to churches, and which are now Jewish museums.*

*The Jewish Museum in Athens. Historic clothing worn by Jewish men.*

## "As a (secular) Jew I'm always interested in visiting Jewish museums when I'm traveling."

have Judaica collections.

The architect Daniel Libeskind designed the Jewish Museum Berlin to convey to visitors a sense of confusion and disorientation, similar to what one experiences in the Holocaust Memorial near the Brandenburg Gate and in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. The museum first opened in 2001. It is primarily a museum about German Jews.

Cologne (Köln) formerly home of one of the oldest and most prominent Jewish communities in Germany. The Museum Ludwig, which has a small Judaica collection, hovers over an archaeological site of a medieval community, which will eventually become an underground Jewish Museum.

There are several Jewish museums in Vienna. At Judenplatz, in the heart of a former Jewish community, there's a small museum and a memorial to the Holocaust. Vienna is also home to the Austrian Jewish Museum.

The Kindertransport was an effort begun prior to the outbreak of Wold War II to rescue Jewish children by transporting them to England from Nazi-controlled territory. The Jewish Museum in London organized a show about this some years ago. I was fortunate to meet a man in Italy named Durst, who was one of the rescued survivors, who told me his life story.

During World War II Hitler was planning to build a museum and library in Prague after the war to preserve the history of the Jews he had annihilated. During the war his armies collected Jewish books all over Europe and transported them to Prague. Thus there are more Jewish books in Prague today than before the war. The Jewish Museum in Prague includes the library and the famous old Jewish Cemetery with its mélange of ancient tombstones, and has exhibits in five former synagogues.

Greece is among the many European countries with historical Jewish communities. Thus there is a Jewish Museum in the heart of Athens, and another in Rhodes. Both are attached to ancient synagogues. The Jewish Museum in Budapest is inside the beautiful Dohany Synagogue, and includes a memorial to the Holocaust.

In Bucharest the also beautiful, much smaller synagogue, is now a museum. In Pitesti, Romania, where my grandfather was born, there is no museum, but his synagogue remains intact and in use. In Brest-Litovsk, near where my grandmother was born, the nascent Jewish community, none of whom are local survivors, but rather are Russian immigrants, has begun creating a museum.

In many parts of Europe there are former concentration and death camps. However, the extent to which the former barracks and killing places, for instance at Auschwitz, are made to resemble museums, is disturbing. Nearby, Birkenau, sitting mostly as it was when the Germans fled, is far more moving. Many years ago, finding ourselves alone and seemingly locked in a former gas chamber at closing time in Mauthausen, did not convey to us a sense that we were in a museum. Ergo, I don't consider any of the former concentration camps to be museums.

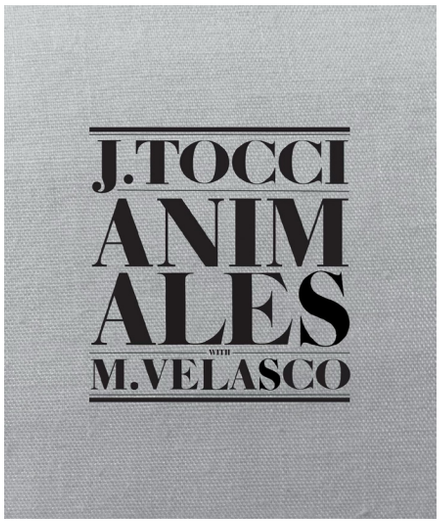
To visit the Jewish Museum in Buenos Aires it was necessary to reserve in advance and to present proper credentials. While we much enjoyed our visit in 2019, we were very saddened to learn that the director had been attacked in his own home the previous night. Fortunately, he survived.

There are many museums in Israel, including the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, with extensive holdings and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The relatively new ANU Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv is perhaps the most comprehensive Jewish museum in the world. Finally, because it stands as a memorial to the six million who died, Yad Vashem in Jerusalem is the most important Holocaust museum in the world.

There are at least 50 Jewish Museums around the United States. Perhaps half are nested in synagogues or Jewish Centers. Here in New York City we have two: The Jewish Museum, founded in 1904, was the first to showcase contemporary art by Jews; The Museum of Jewish Heritage is largely focused on the Holocaust, but years ago had a show about Sosúa, which served as my introduction to the story. There is also the Center for Jewish History, which houses several of the most important Jewish research organizations in the United States. According to my observations, Jewish travelers tend to visit museums of all types, but tend to go out of their way to visit Jewish museums. At the same time, Jewish museums are partly an effort by their creators to present Jewish history and culture in a positive light in hopes that doing so will help in the fight against antisemitism. Seeing so many Jewish museums (and old synagogues) around the world has brought home to me the extent and history of the Jewish diaspora and has constituted an incredible learning experience, reinforcing my appreciation of being Jewish and part of a culture, and of "culture" itself, which we all share.

*G&S*

All photographs
by Norman A. Ross




# Jeff Tocci with Gravitas and Humor

by Marina Hadley

There is gravitas to Jeffrey Tocci's work, but it is underpinned with humor, sometimes you cannot help but chuckle. *The Heap* is a portrait of a monkey sat atop of pile of rubble, holding a hefty crowbar, with flies and scavenger birds off in the distance. It has the feel of a renaissance portrait of a king on his throne, with courtiers fawning in the background. The monkey is strong and comfortable in his role, and wisdom shines through his eyes. He has a canny understanding of the irony and the capricious nature of his situation. He knows that he may be challenged at any moment and he needs to keep his underlings in check. He is a boss comfortable in his power, but always alert for treachery and betrayal. A passing youth, looked at the image, shook his head and said, "What a badass!"

Tocci is a dedicated artist. He has been drawing and painting since he was a young child, growing up in the Adirondacks along the Hudson River, in a paper mill town called Glen Falls. He recounts that the area has "lots of indigenous people's history, ugly battles, rocky soil up in the mountains so growing crops was a joke." The area was originally inhabited by the indigenous Iroquois, who... "called the area Chepontuc, difficult to get around... some existential wit from the original inhabitants." He appears to have absorbed this wry sense of humor through the ages of those who have gone before him.

When asked why he is an artist, he quotes Kurt Vonnegut's words, "It's a very human way to make life more bearable. It may sound bleak or dramatic, but in reality, we are constantly confronted with good, bad and ugly forms of chaos every time our feet hit the floor in the morning. Everything comes in through the senses and then where does it go? So, creating a daily sense of order from scratch, and presenting it in an attractive way has always felt like a very good use of my attention."

The Arts Students League of New York was where Tocci grew up as an artist under the mentorship of Robert Cenedella, the renowned artist of satirical, social commentary, who himself was taught and mentored by George Grosz , the artist known for his caricature of bourgeois citizens in Berlin in the 1920s—another example of his connection to those who came before him, specializing in humor.

He is a keen observer of life, both

*"The Heap," etching and aquatint*

*"Fish & Bird," etching and aquatint*

human and animal, and he is very talented at reproducing their form. His personal expertise is in imbuing these characters and the landscape in which they exist with political, social and emotional resonance. His humor is subtle and nuanced. It isn't about making a joke, but providing a reminder of the ironies of life. *Gallery&Studio*'s own founder, Ed McCormack, called Tocci's work Social Realism. Tocci himself has created a new genre just to explain what he does. He calls himself a "Nounist"—someone motivated and inspired by nouns. "People, places, things, ideas and actions inspire me to no end."

Over the last few years, Tocci has been splitting his time between New York City and the printmaking capital of Latin America, Oaxaca, Mexico. It is a city full of likeminded working artists, creating a wonderfully collaborative and supportive artistic environment. It is a more expansive, relaxed and nurturing version of the cafés and salons of Paris in the 1920s, or the 10th Street Galleries and Max's Kansas City of New York in the 1950s-60s.

In conjunction with Print Master Marco Velasco, of Espacio Pino Suárez, Tocci has been working on a collection of etchings and aquatint prints which are being put together as a book called Animales, to be published later in 2023. It is his version of the origins of life starting with a sea sponge. As the title suggests, the images are of both animals and humans, all evoking humanistic emotions and situations, with Tocci's brand of wit and satire. He hopes that by making his art available as a book, he will be able to reach a broader audience.

Jeff Tocci's work shows his exceptional talents as an artist and his humanity makes his art live. His is modest but very dedicated in his pursuit of "being busy" in the arts. The passing youth said,

"He's a cool dude." *G&S*

*"Crime Scene," etching and aquatint*

*Jeff Tocci in his studio*

Animales Limited Edition hardcover may be pre-ordered, jefftocci.com

# Stop and Look for Replenishment

by Marina Hadley

*"Dusk," oil on canvas, 11" x 14"*

The world today is a complicated and challenging place. There are many uncertainties, unexpected surprises and stresses that we all have to navigate. Somehow, we have to find ways to replenish our souls if we are to survive and continually move forward. Karen Gentile's works are a quick shortcut to remind us of the beauty and joys of life.

Standing in front of her landscapes, whatever the season, there is an immediate sense of gentleness and calm that draws you deep into the scene. It feels safe. Yet there is a frission of energy that is ready to whisk you away on a wonderful journey, if you could only move in deeper, and stay a little longer. You know instinctively that it's all happening just around the corner or hidden behind the hills and trees.

*"Jugglers"*

Many of these landscapes are painted on small canvases, some as small as four by six inches, and yet she is able to create a whole universe within them. It is not uncommon to watch viewers standing in front of her works stepping in even closer to discover the secrets within.

Gentile also creates many still-lifes which are overflowing expressions of emotions. Some are elegant and classic, while others are vibrant and vivacious. The term "still" life seems to be a misnomer because she appears to capture an instant, split-second scene within an intricate storyline that is traveling with dynamic energy within these paintings.

Her artistic media encompass a broad range; working in oils, acrylics, watercolor, pastels, graphite, print-making, digital art, collage and mixed media on paper, and metalwork depending on her project and mood. In her enviable Pennsylvania studio, that she built in 2016, she has separate stations so that she is able to move from one medium to another with ease. It is an Aladdin's cave of art, both her own, as well as other artists, art supplies and equipment.

Karen Gentile has always been an artist. Encouraged by an artistic Italian father and a supportive Irish/Germanic mother, she remembers creating art as a small child with her own table for working with clay and drawings. Her youth was full of well-known art schools, which eventually led to

*"Red Lilies," oil on canvas, 38" x 38"*

her becoming a professor at FIT, where she graduated. She taught traditional and experimental painting and drawing techniques for design, as well as digital graphic design software in the Art & Design department and chairing the Texture Surface Design department.

Her mixed media, digital, and collage works in particular, show off her willingness to work with experimental techniques. Many are bold and colorful, allowing juxtapositions of styles and ideas.

Inspiration for her next work is intuitively driven, drawing on her extensive world travels, and her life both in the heart of New York City and the wilds of Pennsylvania. Her whole life of creating, studying and teaching art, in art institutions, surrounded by many artist friends, and her husband, Richard Pitts, to whom she has been married for 35 years, has given her a tremendous wealth of artistic experience and knowledge. It is a deep database that fuels her own very personal and individual styles and allows her to compose her next piece. She does wonder each time if she has another standout piece within her, hoping that she never loses that creative enthusiasm allowing her to continue to develop her art.

"I am driven to paint. I love painting. It is meaningful, and when people appreciate my art, it keeps me going."

She admits that not every piece is necessarily appreciated, and over the years she has painted over a lot of her work, which she now sometimes regrets, although she knows that she learnt a lot. Today, when a piece is not developing as she would like, she takes a break, working on other projects, giving herself time to adjust her connection with the work, often resulting in an entirely different piece.

"I need to live to be at least 100 years old to get to where I want to go. I've painted all my life and yet I feel as if I've only just scratched the surface; I've only just started."

Karen Gentile is a vastly skilled, hardworking artist with a passion for the arts that is infectious. She has a wonderful sense of humor and a great love for life. It all finds its way into her artwork, whether they be paintings, collage, digital work, or metal work. Her work is very personal. Each new piece is her emotional reaction to a new experience or thought, each piece a surprise. Each piece is a gift to the viewer who takes the time to look and replenish their soul. *G&S*

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# A Vibrant Travel Diary: Friederike Oeser

by Bobbie Leigh

*"Zurich at a Glance"*

"Everything I create is deliberately ambiguous," says Friederike Oeser, whose *Travel Diary*, a ten-work series of art–oil, pastels on paper—was on view at the Montserrat Contemporary Art Gallery.

"I want to guide you to look carefully, attentively, fully," says this gifted artist. "First at everything in the world I have created for myself, and then, at everything in yours," she says. "My goal is to inspire you to look not just at all that is, but all that can be."

Born in Nuremberg, Germany in 1959, Oeser studied graphic design and art in Munich, London, and

beyond. In recent years she has traveled extensively and worked in Europe, Asia, Africa and the United States. Now, she is once again based in Munich creating personal, intimate vibrant new work that she exhibits in galleries and museums around the world. Her work is featured in public collections and museums internationally, and private collections in China, Italy, Korea, and the United States.

Oeser is best known for drawings, silkscreens, and aluminum sculptures designed to create a meeting of the conscious and subconscious. Oeser started her career with oil pastels and pencil drawings. Over time, her oil pastel paintings have become more abstract and three dimensional. Her goal is to challenge you to seek personal meaning in these abstract paintings. She seems to be telling you not to seek clues or a hidden narrative. Her shapes and colors do not pretend to represent the places where she paints. With color, tone, and line she evokes a landscape, a city market, a group of workers on their lunch break, but she does not reproduce them, except in her mind and she hopes, in your mind as well.

In the *Travel Diary* series Oeser's pastel entitled *The Music of Fall and Winter* was inspired by numerous visits to the musical instruments collection in a Munich museum. "I draw them knowing that as they were played they told stories..." she says.

Another work in the *Travel Diary* series is called *Zurich at a Glance*. Here her pastel reflects the city's purity and stillness that she says is hard to match anywhere in the world. "I was there not as a painter, but a translator —a kind of interpreter, transforming dozens of messages being whispered through the windows and everything around me into shapes and forms by

*"The Colors of Happiness"*

which I was able to see, even more intensely, the warmth and beauty of the city."

Oeser's observations are acute. As an artist who is a committed traveler, she is always searching for locations across Europe and Asia where she can soak up the culture. Every sound and sight helps her to absorb the essence of what she observes. There are no figurative aspects to her work. She reveals an inner vision as she captures her surroundings through shape, line, and color.

You might be tempted to call her way of working small gestural expressionism. Jackson Pollock used huge gestural expressionism with energetic sweeping movements across the canvas. Oeser's work is small scale but like Pollock, it is also characterized by this type of energetic gesture where each non-biomorphic form is imbued with meaning.

What strikes you looking at her pastels is how bright and sunny they are. Each is a vibrantly colored, crisp and compelling composition, infused with optimism. There is a bright-eyed happiness in Oeser's work. She wants to share her happy places with you where life is meant to be savored and enjoyed. Her art is a celebration. *G&S*

Montserrat Contemporary Art Gallery, 547 West 27th Street
Her work may also be seen in the year-round salon monserrat.us

# Unmute Yourself

## C.C. Arshagra at The Buttonwood Tree

by Kathleen Hulser

*Funk Physics at the Buttonwood Tree. Arshagra, Belliveau, Bosse, McEwen (r to l)*

Art is a way of speaking about the world which penetrates the veil of customary assumptions. Born in sound and cradled in listening, C.C. Arshagra's poetry and song performance paid homage to the open mic, a subject of his poetry and inspiration for his poetry art band, Funk Physics. The trio played in front of a painting and pastel exhibition of Arshagra's art work, which also called into question the straitjacket culture imposes on thought, a visual conversation with the edges of free speech. The longing to be heard is at the center of the human encounter. And the fragility of the open mic context favors that voice. The Buttonwood Tree in Middletown, CT embraces the full range of human expression, showcasing words, song, movement, art and the connections that creativity forges between us.

The art exhibit *Unmute Yourself*, spoke to that atmosphere where *words about art* are also *art about words,* as one painting was titled. Beginning with the exhibit's centerpiece *The Blank Canvas of the Mind*, sometimes the invisible became legible in these questioning and questing spaces of aesthetics and feeling. Arshagra prefers to wrap his messages in layers that ask the viewer to look longer and harder to "be at your edge of being." His words spoke to "the deciphering ones, hungry for belonging."

The collaboration between poet, guitarist Matt Belliveau and multi-instrumentalist Derrik Bosse was uncanny. Bosse gently tapped his large conga in subdued patterns that supplied a pulse for the improvised composition, sometimes adding a bass guitar line. Belliveau intuited when to build, when to subside and how to interlace silence and isolated notes with Arshagra's resonant words. "Survival captures only its ruins," apocalyptic words, yet performed in a resonant quiet founded on how "love can see you with its blindness." For the finale, Mike McEwen, inventor of the Vibrational Awareness Chamber, joined the trio with his Tibetan singing bowl, adding even more spiritual bandwidth to the event.

Arshagra read poetry from his new book "the open


*"Words about art, art about words." Soil. Rot. Bacteria Communicating Freely Arshagra. 2022*

*Drawing by C.C. Ashagra*

microphone: poems," on free speech, human rights and the word, pausing to reflect on the origins of live poetry performance where trembling neophytes and veterans gathered in small Boston and Cambridge cafés to share their words and expose their souls. His deeply empathetic chronicle of how faltering individuals find their voices and understand themselves through those open mic sessions has lasting value for anyone eager to unlock the gates of creativity. As he chanted during the Funk Physics set, "How can you believe the world ends here?" *G&S*

ccarshagra.com
YouTube: @funkphysics5679
FB: @funkphysics

# Do You Know Hiroshige?

by Dr. Bill Thierfelder

Oregon's Portland Art Museum possesses one of the most comprehensive permanent collections of Asian Art on the West Coast, boasting many masterpieces. From December of 2022 through early May of 2023, the Museum has on display 67 of its greatest woodblock prints in a show called HUMAN/NATURE. These superb works represent a genre of Japanese art called Ukiyo-e that flourished from the 17th through the 19th centuries.

Twenty of the prints are the product of the fertile imagination of Utagawa Hiroshige. Born with the name Ando Tokutaro, the young man came into a family with a samurai lineage. After his parents died in 1809, he took up painting and by 14 began his studies with teachers at the Utagawa school in Edo, which was the main workshop of Ukiyo-e. While kabuki actors and women were often subjects, the masters and students at the school also created remarkable prints that introduced the deep perspectives found in Western landscape art. By the time he was 15 in 1812, his masters permitted the young man to sign his work with his art name Hiroshige, a tradition known as a go—something akin to a writer's pen name or pseudonym. He also used the surname Utagawa after the founder of the school Utagawa Toyoharu (c. 1735 – 1814)

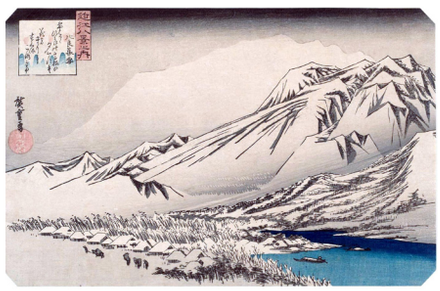
Hiroshige's primary work was in the field of landscape art, and by the early 1830s he was starting to produce his greatest pieces, including multi-print collections like *Eight Views of the Edo Environs* and *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido*. Yet, despite the brilliance of his work, he never seemed to receive the lucrative commissions that some other artists did. In fact, before his first wife died in 1838, she often helped finance his trips to sketch outdoor locations by selling some of her clothing and ornamental combs. During the last decade of his life, he created thousands of prints to meet the demand for his work, yet never seemed to be financially comfortable.

*"Shono, Driving Rain" from the series "Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido," 1833, color woodblock print on paper, 8 7/8" x 13 11/16" The Mary Andrews Ladd Collection*

In 1856, he decided to "retire from the world" and became a Buddhist monk. It was during this final period of his life that he created what many consider to be his masterwork: *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*. Sadly, this prolific artist—he left behind over 8000 prints—died in 1858 at the age of 62 as a probable victim of a cholera epidemic that was sweeping through the country.

At least two of his students went on to have reasonably successful careers, and both had the distinction of being his sons-in-law. Hiroshige's daughter Otatsu married the man who would assume the art name Hiroshige II. And after they divorced, she married Hiroshige III. Yet neither man achieved anything near the fame of their father-in-law teacher.

And that fame spread from East to West rapidly, especially influencing French Impressionists like Monet and artists like Cézanne and Whistler. Probably the greatest homage to Hiroshige came from Vincent Van Gogh who meticulously copied two of the *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* that were among Vincent's personal collection of Ukiyo-e prints.



*"Twilight Snow at Mount Hira" from the series "Eight Views of Omi," c. 1834, color woodblock print on paper, 8 7/8" x 13 3/4" The Mary Andrews Ladd Collection*

One of the astonishing prints from his early career is *Shono, Driving Rain*. This 9" x 14" horizontal image—dating from 1833—is from his series *Fifty-Three Stations of the*

*"Atagoshita and Yabukoji Lane" from "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo," 1857, color woodblock print on paper, 13 1/4" x 8 5/8"*
*Bequest of Mary Emily Wortman*

*Tokaido* and is generally regarded among Hiroshige's masterpieces. Here travelers and two porters carrying a client in a traveling chair are forced to run through a sudden and heavy rainstorm near the town of Shono in Ise Province. The thatched roofs of houses are visible on the right through the torrential diagonal rain. Further adding to the sense of drama are the dark rows of trees bent low by the wind across the background. Hiroshige is giving us an evocative, theatrical depiction of humanity's vulnerability and stimulates our imagination so that we, too, can hear and feel the rain and wind on our own bodies.

From the same period is *Twilight Snow at Mount Hira*, part of the series titled *Eight Views of Omi*. It's another brilliant print that reduces the mountain landscape to its severe bleakness with only a few minimal strokes without losing any depth perception. The blue bay (the only significant use of color in an otherwise black and grey world), the small village, and nearly Lilliputian travelers on the roadway at the very bottom are juxtaposed with the overwhelming mountaintops; this depiction helps to create a sense of the monumental, despite the image measuring only 9" x 14". The poem in the top left cartouche adds to the beauty. It has been translated by Matthi Forrer and Peter Mason in *Hiroshige: Prints and Drawings* (London, 1997):

> *When it clears after snow fall*
> *the tops of Mount Hira at dusk*
> *surely surpass the beauty*
> *of cherry trees in bloom*

Keeping with the winter theme, we move forward nearly 25 years to 1857, and discover two prints from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*. The 15" x 10" vertical print called *Atagoshita and Yabukoji Lane* uses only three colors (a brilliant blue especially) that perfectly captures the stillness of a snowy scene. In the distance is the district known as Atagoshita, after its location "beneath Mount Atago," the hill rising to the right. The towering bamboo grove—also shown on the right—was an established landmark recognizable to Edo residents. It lay just outside the northeast corner of the mansion owned by the powerful landowner in the feudal domain of Minakuchi and served to protect the site from the "dangerous" northeast, where the Kimon—the "devil's gate"—lay. The bamboo gave its name to Yabu ("Thicket") Lane, an alley that ran along the back of the wall of the mansion. Although mentioned in the title, Yabukoji Lane is out of sight in this view, behind to the right.

Even more dramatic is *Fukagawa Susaki and Jumantsubo*. Measuring 14" x 9," this vertical print presents a view that looks northwest from Fukagawa Susaki, a spit of land along Edo Bay, toward Jūmantsubo, a tract of land named after its approximate area of one hundred thousand tsubo (which is about eighty acres). Certainly it remains one of the most dramatic designs of

*"Fukagawa Susaki and Jumantsubo" from the series "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo," 1857,color woodblock print on paper, 13 1/4" x 8 3/4"*
*The Mary Andrews Ladd Collection*

the entire series. Its brilliance lies in the contrast between the powerful eagle as it prepares to dive for prey and the bleak wintry marshes below. Despite there being no people visible in the scene, there is still the sense of a human presence. There is, for example, a suggestion of rooftops to the left along with what appear to be poles in a lumber-yard beyond. Yet perhaps the most prominent "human touch," is the lone wooden bucket floating at the edge of the bay, surrounded by water birds upon whom the eagle seems to have set its hungry eye.

So—for those unfamiliar with Hiroshige, do yourself a favor and explore his work online or—better yet—if you live in a town or city with a museum that has holdings of Asian Art like those in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Houston, or Portland—to name just a few—be awed in person. Hiroshige never disappoints. *G&S*

portlandmuseum.org

# The Island Ghosts

by Anne Rudder

'Stone-cut survivors of ancient dimensions...the holy star singing thy will be done' are lyrics by Kris Kristofferson from his song, "Easter Island." The silent monoliths he sings of tell of a culture lost to time on the isolated Polynesian Easter Island. Stone sculptures, monolithic humanoid figures created between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries by the Rapa Nui people, the island's mysterious historical inhabitants, grace the island's perimeter, with silent countenances turned toward the vast surrounding sea. Called "moai," these sculptures were moved from a volcanic quarry on the island, set on stone platforms, ("ahu," in the Rapa Nui language), and are said to represent ancestors, temporary spirit vessels, chieftains descended from gods tasked with humanity's protection.

On Easter Sunday in the year 1722, Europeans first came to the island as colonists from other parts of the Polynesian archipelago, though the Rapa Nui were living there since 1000 CE. According to Van Tilburg, the sculptures, carved from volcanic tuff, were only partly visible in the topography as much of the statues' bulk was concealed under the soil. By the time Westerners arrived on the island, deforestation had taken place, ultimately creating the nineteenth century culture collapse from slave trading, colonizing and disease outbreaks, according to Mulrooney. Today, what can be seen are anthropomorphic abstracted forms, eerie protrusions from land, now bereft of arboreal palms, statues precariously maintained at the mercy of political vagaries and environmental battering.

World traveler and artist, Margo Mead, has visited Easter Island, climbing its hills, creating sobering paintings underscoring

*"Birdman of Easter Island ll," acrylic, oil crayon on canvas, 36" x 24"*

the atoll's tenuous existence. A mythological motif significant to the Rapa Nui is the "birdman," half man and half bird connected to the island's sacred site, Orongo. Mead, intrigued by this therianthropic figure, exemplifies it in her pieces, *Memory Unheard* and *The Birdman of Easter Island* limited color canvases of blue and ochre, imagery segmented, referencing the annual seabird egg hunt, a contest to realize high social status among the islanders. Descending

perilous cliffs, contestants swim to Motu Nui, an offshore islet, awaiting the arrival of seabirds to obtain the season's first egg from the nest. Precious prize secured, the successful competitor swims back to Easter Island, egg in tow, to become the annual chieftain possessing formidable spiritual powers instilled from the dangerous procurement effort.

In Mead's pieces, birds and humans are forceful, man and woman pleading and isolated from each other, the seabird, unlike humanity, mobile and unbound. The central motif of the birdman, a design both avian and human, is the unifying spiritual element depicted and inferred by the artist's brush. Mead implies the disjointed modern relationships among humans and the planet which is conveyed by urgent and dramatic figuration within her compositions. The lyrical passage of the soaring seabird sweeps over a geometric gridwork juxtaposing nature's freedom with humanity's harmful constructs.

For the Rapa Nui, the birdman's genesis was mysterious, but as the esoteric culture devolved, a warrior class, the Matatoà, took power and warfare's detrimental effects superseded ancestor worship contributing to the demise of statue creation. No longer are there safe spiritual harbors protecting the living through their forebears. The moai, some thirteen feet high and weighing ten tons, are compared by Kristofferson to "carcasses," now 'keeping the secret the rest have forgotten...staring in silence from sockets of stone... no good to nothing, not even their own.' The sculptures are enigmatic cultural remnants, with the island population now negligible and the land denuded, standing perilously at the island's perimeter, the stones damaged by recent fires and threatened by rising seas.

*"Memory Unheard," acrylic, oil crayon on canvas, 36" x 36"*

Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Rapa Nui National Park is located on Easter Island, the area is under Chilean government control; an attempt to preserve the island's history. Current day Rapa Nui people are moai preservationists trying to safeguard their past in the face of financial shortfalls and poor climate stewardship by the world's largest nations. The resultant global warming from the follies of human induced climate change threatens the viability of all low-lying islands worldwide, particularly in Polynesia. Mead and Kristofferson have chosen to publicize this dire plight in paint and song, the artworks testifying to earth's monumental dangers threatening mass extinction. *G&S*

Author's Note: *The New York Times, National Geographic, The Bradshaw Foundation, Wikipedia* and Margo Mead were consulted for this article by Anne Rudder.

vsacny.org/margo-mead

# From Ed McCormack's Grab Bag: 1963 at the Brata Gallery

People who know that I once wrote regularly for *Rolling Stone* for over a decade and spent a lot of time hanging out with rock stars, hardly believe me when I tell them that the period I remember most fondly, and would most like to be transported back to, if time travel were possible, was the mid-sixties, when I belonged to a community of obscure young artists showing their work in funky storefront galleries on East Tenth Street.

At that time, my new bride Jeannie and I had created our own little bohemian fantasy pad in my parents' attic in working-class Staten Island. We would pore over books such as the profusely illustrated paperback, published in 1961, called *The Artist's World in Pictures* by the Village Voice staff photographer Fred W. McDarrah. A year earlier, McDarrah had published another book called *The Beat Scene*, an anthology of poetry illustrated with his own pictures. (A slick operator, McDarrah had also cashed in on the Beat craze by starting a "Rent a Beatnik" service, supplying poets to enliven square suburban parties.) However, as we perused these books, it gave me a feeling of being on the outside, looking in.

Eventually however, with Jeannie continuing to work as a receptionist even during her pregnancy, our combined salaries meant that I could now afford the $15 monthly membership of an artist-run gallery.

Among the ten or more artist cooperatives that made up the Tenth Street scene, I chose the Brata, which was on Third Avenue, right around the corner from Tenth Street, because my earliest literary hero Jack Kerouac had once given a poetry reading there.

Jack was the first real Beat poet I ever met. I had known Jack since the late 1950s, when I dropped out of high school because I was bored with it and knew you didn't need a diploma to beatnik anyway. I met Jack reciting his rhythmic hophead city poems in

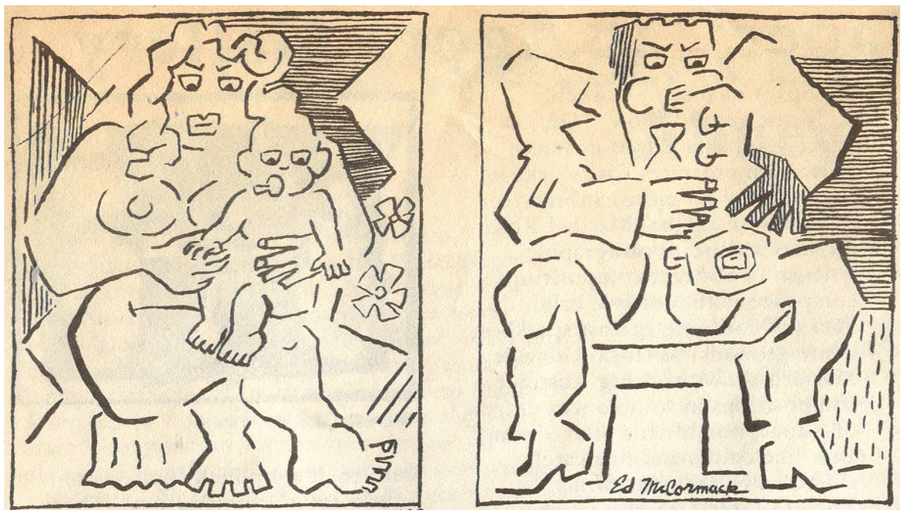

*Brata opening*

*Ed and Jeannie in 1963*

Washington Square Park. I already knew who he was. Kerouac had won a poetry competition at the Village Gate judged by Charles Mingus, jazz critic Nat Hentoff, and hipster radio monologuist Gene Shepherd.

First however, I had to be voted in by the current members of the Brata Gallery. So, Jeannie and I both took off from our jobs one day and carried two of my paintings over to Manhattan for them to look at. Since the Abstract Expressionist aesthetic of Bigger Is Better still prevailed on 10th Street, we chose two six-foot-square canvases that I had painted, spread out on the attic floor. One was of a stylized jazz musician; the other was of a mother and child locked together like the pieces in a puzzle — the latter probably inspired by my subconscious anxiety about becoming a father. We rolled them up and carried them across the bay on the ferry like rug merchants; Jeannie insisting on carrying one herself despite her pregnancy.

Waiting nervously in its dank cellar waiting for the members upstairs in the gallery looking at my paintings to arrive at a verdict, I called Jeannie's attention to an army cot piled with notebooks and paperback books in the corner near the furnace. Since the books were all thin chapbooks that I recognized and a few articles of clothing, such as ancient suit-vests that were invariably




*Ed's Brata opening*

wore over t-shirts or frayed, un-ironed dress shirts as sort of a sartorial trademark, I was sure they belonged to Jack Micheline, one of San Francisco Bay Area's first Beat poets and painters.

I don't think I ever felt as anxious about anything I had to do later as a feature writer for *Rolling Stone*, (the publication that according to the Columbia Journalism Review, "spoke to an entire generation,") as I was that day waiting with Jeannie to see if I would be accepted as a member.

Thankfully we were thrilled to learn that I was voted into the Brata Gallery and told my paintings would be included in an upcoming group exhibition. We waited with great anticipation for the start of the show.

But, on the night of the opening, when we traveled in from Staten Island we went into a panic. It was just an hour or so before the reception started, the gallery was locked, and while we could see through the big plate glass windows that, while all the other paintings were already on the walls, my two big canvases were still unstretched and spread out in the middle of the floor. I had hired John Krushenick, who ran the frame shop in the back of the gallery, to mount them on stretchers for the show, but he was nowhere in sight.

*John Krushenick*

John Krushenick had started the gallery several years earlier with his brother Nick, soon after they both got out of the service and decided to go to art school on the G.I. Bill of Rights. Nicholas, as he called himself professionally, had since become well-known as a hard-edge abstractionist and moved on to more posh uptown galleries, along with other former Brata members who had made good, such as Al Held, Ronald Bladen, David Seccombe and Yayoi Kusama. But John, who painted baseball game battle scenes and other oddball subjects in a less fashionable neo-primitive figurative style, was left behind to eke out a living in the frame shop. Painfully shy and polite when sober, he underwent a Dr. Jekyll-to-Mr. Hyde transformation into a wild man when he drank, challenging men to fist fights and chasing woman customers around the gallery like a satyr in one of those classical paintings he sometimes liked to crudely parody in his own primitive style.

While Jeannie and I were standing on the sidewalk staring forlornly into the closed gallery, an artist who knew John came along, shook his head when we told him our problem, and mentioned a couple of places where John sometimes hung out. When we didn't find him at the Cedar Tavern on University, we rushed over to a bar on Saint Mark's Place called The Dom, downstairs in the same building as a former Polish meeting hall that had been painted Dayglo blue and turned into the Electric Circus, a trendy discotheque where Andy Warhol staged his first mixed media events, "The Exploding Plastic Inevitable," starring The Velvet Underground.

"Tell her he isn't here," Kruchenick was yelling to the bartender, who had just told him his wife was on the phone as we rushed in the door. Taking his change off the bar and shoving it into his pockets, we pulled him off the stool and dragged him back to the Brata, where he banged two sets of stretchers together and managed to get my paintings up on the wall, however lopsidedly, with just minutes to spare before the opening reception was scheduled to begin.

Then, with his knit seaman's cap falling over his eyes, and a Marlboro burned down to the filter in his mouth, John Krushenick stretched out his arms to my pregnant wife and me, saying, "give me your hands," and linked like the figures in Matisse's famous painting, we danced triumphantly all around the gallery. *G&S*

Ed's Grab Bag is a storage folder of his memoir notes and stories.

# Bad Radio Review

by D. T. Alexander

*Photo by D. T. Alexander*

"Each song is winter in the sense that it's a dying of some sort," Felly explained in a recent interview promoting his latest project. The album, *Bad Radio*, follows the artist/producer's prolific body of work since his ambitious 2014 mixtape, *Waking up to Sirens*. The project is Felly's first independent record since parting ways with 300 Entertainment and was released on his own label, 2273 Records.

Born Christian Felner in Trumbull, Connecticut, Felly began pursuing his passion for making music at an early age, releasing music while still attending high school. He continued that pursuit at the University of Southern California (USC), where he studied music and founded 2273 Records with fellow USC scholars Jake Standley and continued collaborator, Gyyps.

*Bad Radio* is a noticeable departure from most of the artist's previous efforts. On this opus, Felly trades in the bombastic braggadocio of 2014's "Milk & Sugar" and the laid-back confidence that oozes from 2015's "This Shit Comes in Waves," for a more restrained approach—folksy, pared-down arrangements and introspective lines. Felly not only produced all eleven tracks on the record, but he also played most of the instrumentation.

On intro, the chatter of a detuned radio trails the discordant sounds of boots in the snow, wind gusts, and a car's ignition stuttering before it starts. Felly describes the mood of the album as "a man leaving the comfort of a relationship and going out on his own into solitude—into the cold of the world". The intro segues into the jaunty, alt-rock title-track and lead single. The song chronicles Felly's winter journey, 'Long ways to go/ Daylight low/ I wonder if I'll get there,' the artist ponders in his self-imposed isolation. The chorus provides little clarity, 'There's nowhere to run now, that you're all by yourself/ What a feeling.' All the while the song is a non-stop bop.

'Oh, how I'd love to get you

*‘Oh, how I’d love to get you high and take a look inside’*

*Photo by D. T. Alexander*

high and take a look inside,’ Felly ruminates wistfully on the beautifully arranged “Nothing Ordinary.” Without missing a beat, the up-tempo, no tears left to cry sits atop a lo-fi, folk-pop beat, with the artist recalling sipping whiskey by the fire, where tall trees were his choir and ‘where it’s quiet enough to hear my hearts desires’ but concludes, ‘nothing hurts anymore/ And my eyes are dry.’

This detour from his definitive Mac Miller-esque flows and the return to the basics is laudable, but at times the project falters where Felly usually shines - in his versatility and range. Felly has a natural knack for merging different genres into something fresh and unique, like on the transcendental single “Fresh Water,” from *Bad Radio*’s most recent predecessor, *Young Fel 2*.

After a mere twenty-four minutes, the wintery drive screeches to a halt with “Son of a Gun,” a foot-stomping folk track in the style of The Lumineers, with an invitation, ‘Dance with me...Put your hands on me.’ The song fades out and into the spooky official closer, “In the meantime (outro),” where Felly laments, ‘I can’t get you off my mind/ Stuck in the meantime.’ *G&S*

fellymusic.com

# CORONA COLLAGE
## Spring 2020

by Christine Graf

I call it skin hunger.
In this no-touch time
I place my fingertip to paper
press a brayer on the margins of history
into layer upon layer of new memories
in this skin hunger
of no-touch time.

I break
an old book cover in half
of an unread life of dystopian
times a century ago.

I snip
strips of vintage script,
glue my skin hunger into the surface
in this no-touch, high-touch time.
Will this art work remember me
the same way I put my arms around a friend?
Will it remember my embrace
before our touching time is erased?

I peel
away the pelt of rippled cardboard,
reveal the stratum of yesterday's life,
before skin hunger
in this no-touch time.
Now I build a new rind
for my hungering hull
I paste paper into the pastiche of a different life
and lose the masterpiece of my past.

Paper is my new lover's skin
thin casing, ragbag husk,
I cut, rip, tear it up
before it turns to dust.

*Christine's art work can be seen at etsy.com/shop/ChristineGraf*

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