

NORTHRIDGE REVIEW



WINTER 1997

THE NORTHRIDGE REVIEW

WINTER

1997

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Send submissions to: The Northridge Review, English Department, Mail Stop 8248, California State University Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge, Ca. 91330-8261. Send work in triplicate with 3.5" disk. MS Word preferred. Submissions will not be returned unless accompanied by SASE. Send artwork in BW graphic format.

THE NORTHRIDGE REVIEW

You will ask: And where are the lilacs?
And the metaphysical blanket of poppies?
And the rain that often struck
your words filling them
with holes and birds?

Pablo Neruda



WINTER
1997

From the Editor in Chief

On the eve of her show at Cirrus, I sat with Madoka Takagi at her home in Topanga Canyon, trying to translate her thoughts on photography into an artist's statement. With every point she raised, my mind ached for a metaphor—that unlike likeness—to bring her aesthetics to the page. She explained to me that at the heart of every photograph was a conflict of desires. Each photograph is a capturing of an element both universal and unnamed, which is then left for the viewer to translate. With thoughts of magazine deadlines wandering the back of my mind, I recalled the old cliché, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” An elliptical question came ringing back at me like an echo: *how many pictures then, can the human mind produce from a thousand words?*

The relationship of language to image has been explored many times—from Aristotle, to Sidney's “speaking picture,” to Pound's “intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time”—and probably will continue to be explored for the duration of the human race. Language is a unique and powerful thing, a mysterious and musical enigma. As writers we would like to think we hold the key to this powerful puzzle, that our words on the page sing beyond the finite limit of our moments. It is a faith to believe they do.

There is an enticing limit in the naming of something. The first dilemma to be solved in the production of this issue was deciding whether or not to announce a theme for soliciting submissions. The magazine staff got together and decided *no*. Armed with a back issue of *The Santa Barbara Review*, we proceeded with an aesthetic vision instead of a definition, understanding that whatever name we assigned to our vision would be inadequate, would be too finite to encompass it, that the very attempt to encompass would limit us. So we set forth under the flag of inspiration toward undefined territory.

It was in the midst of this territory that some wonderful discoveries took place. We began “casting a wide net” in the hope of capturing our unnamed vision. Letters were sent to writing programs across the country; flyers went up all over Los Angeles; visual artists were solicited; and a new word entered our minds: resources. The segregation of our personal lives from our school lives from our work lives, disappeared. Everything, every person, every piece of equipment we individually owned or had access to, every thought, every text,

became a resource.

And so the vision roaming around our heads was born from our mouths and began to lead its own life. And the words on the page came to us, and the pages came to us, and pages of images came to us, and that original image—that aesthetic vision—began to speak. The poems began speaking to each other, the images to the poems, the stories to the images, and there was a chorus—a body of work—singing in diverse harmonies. After many a long and tedious night of magazing, words carried us when we could not carry ourselves. We experienced the power of utterance. And a miracle.

A very special thanks to Mr. Li-Young Lee, who graciously answered my request for an interview, and who brought to our campus a glimpse of the infinite through his words and his presence. For teaching us that the naming of something is a way of blessing it, our indebtedness to you can never be repaid.

With our limited experience of the eternal, our faith and appendant hope for the possible, the staff of *The Northridge Review* presents this issue.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS



"The whole universe is humming. The job of the poet is to hear that hum."

Poetry: The Practice of Infinite Inwardness

*Li-Young Lee was born in 1957 in Jakarta, Indonesia. He came to the United States in 1964 with his parents, Chinese exiles who were fleeing further persecution in Indonesia. His poetry has won numerous awards, including the Lamont Poetry Prize in 1990, a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship. His most recent book, *The Winged Seed*, explores his family's past and their possible futures.*

After hearing Li-Young Lee read his work and lecture on poetry as a way of advancing human consciousness, we met in the patio room of Mimi's Cafe in Northridge. It was very fitting that hanging on the back wall was a copy of Van Gogh's, "Irises," because during his lecture Li-Young brought up the point of many artists being considered crazy when they were in fact seeing things that the rest of humanity was not yet capable of seeing. He used Vincent Van Gogh's work as a specific example. With the din of a busy dinner crowd around us, we sat down under the visage of a single white iris in a sea of blue irises and attempted to affix language to the numinous.

NR: Before getting into larger issues, I wanted to ask you some questions about craft. I was once told during a writing workshop that young poets "suffer repetition." In your work repetition works as a lyrical element and as an accumulator. For instance, in your poem, "The Cleaving," the word *eat* is repeated, but each time it

Li-Young Lee

comes back it brings with it an added bit of meaning. Early in your career were you ever accused of or criticized for not being concise?

LYL: No. I was very lucky. I had some very good teachers who were very encouraging, Gerald Stern and Ed Ochester when I was at PITT, Anthony Piccione at SUNY, Richard Shelton and John Emerson at University of Arizona. All of them saw writing as coming to terms with interiority, how faithful you were to that, how exact you were to that, how pure you were to that. Very seldom did we ever address poems as if they were artifacts. Things have changed. I'm guessing. Of course there was the, "well we should cut a few words here," but never a sense of dissecting the poem.

Repetition for me is essential. I remember thinking I would like to write a poem using just one word. One word. How many ways could I modulate that? To my mind I was writing mantra, trying to hear that inner vibration. For me the endeavor has nothing at all to do with making culture. It has to do with something a little more immediate, a little more urgent than that.

NR: I guess the essence of this question is, "as a young writer was there anything you were criticized for?" What I'm hearing is that your teachers met your level of seriousness.

LYL: Yes, and I learned my seriousness from them. I was serious, but they were more serious. They said to me, "Are you serious? Then get to work."

I'm a beginning poet by the way. That's how I see myself, or I would quit.

NR: You have said that English seems like a mystical language to you because of its "slippery nature."

It also seems in English we sometimes trivialize something by naming it. How then do we “write from the soul” without trivializing our spirituality?

LYL: I never experienced that naming something was trivializing it. I always thought that naming something was blessing it. Could you imagine a child not having a name?

NR: I guess I’m asking about things that are labeled abstract. How do you make what you’re writing not sound like a Hallmark card, because the minute you put the word *love* on the page, people tend to gloss over it.

LYL: That has to do with our own rigors about that word and what we mean by it. Ultimately the whole poem names the value. For instance Theodore Roethke’s poem, “The Waking,” names a value. The value it names doesn’t have another name. You can’t say, “I read ‘The Waking’ and that poem names mystery.” No. It names something more complex because the whole poem is a name.

I have a poem about braiding my wife’s hair. If someone were to say, “That poem is about love,” well, that’s true, but it’s about death too. The poem names a value, but that value would not exist unless I named it. The value is something deeper, more complex, something we name because it’s beyond our grasp.

A name isn’t a word. It’s something you hear with your stomach and you say *ah ha*. In Zen they say there’s a deep *ah ha*. You hear the poem and you say, “Ah ha, I heard the name.”

Think of one of your own poems. It names a value that you can’t name in any other way except by writing that poem. Hopefully you can’t even paraphrase that poem because if you can, write the paraphrase. The value that poem names can’t exist, except that you named it with your poem. So we create value in the universe.

Li-Young Lee

NR: But it seems sometimes there's this enticing desire to define something so we can file it away, dispense with it, and I worry about that. That's why those words—love, God, family—seem to have assumptions that go with them, and I think the challenge in writing is to meet those assumptions and push the reader to go beyond.

LYL: It means for me that I push myself. In a way all poems are overheard conversations between you and your soul. I've never written poems to convince a reader of anything. Poems are dialogues. I've always tried to use the most intimate voice I could hear. The world feels infinitely intimate to me. Flowers feel intimate to me. Tea feels intimate to me. Everything feels intimate to me.

When I was a kid and I used to walk through the world, everything knew my name. A bird would call and I would look up. I may have lost that for a couple of years but it feels that way to me now, again. It's that intimacy between me and the universe that I want to hear.

When I try to hear that intimate voice, I realize I'm not talking to anyone except the most secret part of me, which happens to be the most secret part of all of us. So when I'm trying to hear that most secret part there's a rigor there because I know for me to speak convincingly about love or anything else—to speak to that most secret part—I *have* to be really rigorous. I can't allow any extra stuff.

NR: You achieve an incredible amount of intimacy in your poems, especially when you write about your wife and children. Is there no boundary between your family life, your writing life, your teaching life? Do you view this as just one whole?

LYL: I think there are boundaries but I do see that what I'm trying to do is integrate everything, so that raising

children teaches me about writing poetry, and writing poetry teaches me about raising children. After all it is one life. If I want to compartmentalize it, fracture it, fragment it, then that's what I end up with. We get who we are. That's the gift. I don't want to be that. I want to be an integrated whole.

NR: It seems in this society that we are encouraged to have separate lives. To go home at night and not have to think about the people we work with, that seems to be the goal.

LYL: That comes out of ignorance of our real identity. It's sad to me that we live in ignorance, that we've forgotten who we are. There's always more going on than we see.

In this situation here it looks like there's a person talking to a person. On one level there is. On a deeper level, all our actions and words are a dialogue with the universe. The quality of attention with which we do things, all of that is finally a dialogue we're having with our true identity, which is the universe.

If I'm cooking a meal and I think, "I'm cooking this meal for my kid," well, yes that is what I'm doing. If I think, "I need to hurry up and cook this so I can get to my writing," that's one dialogue. There's another dialogue where I say, "Wait a minute. I'm part of the universe. He's part of the universe. What am I doing?" With that thought the whole experience is different. The effects are different. The repercussions are different.

If my dialogue is constantly vertical instead of horizontal, then my actions become spacious, large, whole...

NR: Vital?

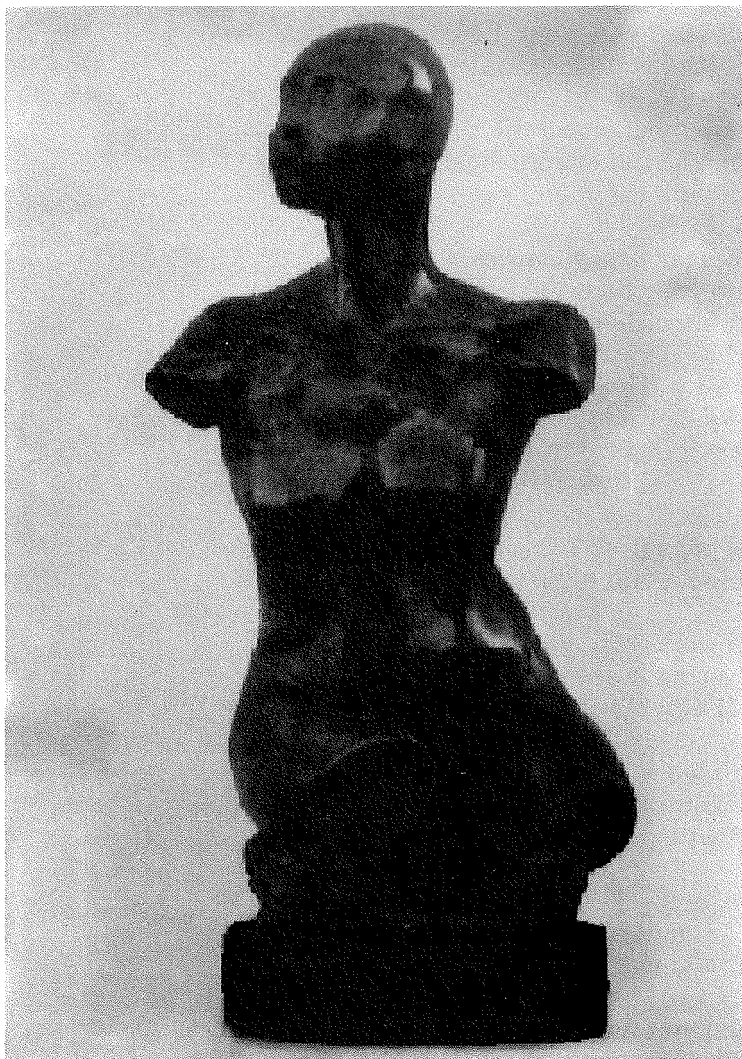
LYL: Yes, vital. See, we create value when we make poetry. If we realize that our poetry is a dialogue with the

(continued on page 82)

Bloodline

Of the half dozen times
my mother saw her father
one was just after my birth,
when he drove out from New Mexico
to my parents' apartment
in West L.A., held me briefly
and commented on my fairness:
my glassy eyes; translucence
of my bluepink skin. He was
dark himself, though his mother,
Cuca, was fair, almost blond,
with the broad facial planes of the Nordic—
the same early fairness my mother had
as a very young child,
her hair a surprise
of yellow corn *masa*,
the same early fairness
I alone among four siblings
possessed; that vein of golden ore
ran seldom but deep through the female family, but time
would mine it out. Unlike Cuca
Mom darkened as she aged,
hair and eyes
contusing purpleblack,
the color of dried blue corn,
and I wonder now just how awkward
it was, that moment
in the tiny apartment when
her unfamiliar father
held her unfamiliar newborn, her head
now gleaming dark as his, both blueblack as scabs
with mine, soft and pink,
bob-and-weaving
between them. Mom tells me she
hemorrhaged that night,
and I can see the red drops

run down her legs: bloodflower seeds
awakened by oxygen
as the blue wound reopened.



Charlotte
Hydrostone Sculpture
By Laura Ann Chiodini

Gangbanger

One cold night
I will steal you from the city
And take you to Aztlan.

There, I will shave the tuft of hair
From the top of your head
And yank the metal rings from your ear.

I will tear baggy clothes
From your body
And burn them in front of you.

Then I will ball my fists
And shock the mirthless grin
From your face.

I will sink my teeth into your tattoos
And pass flesh back to you
In bloody full kisses.

And when you are naked and bleeding
Shivering in the cold,
I will bathe and bandage you.

Then we will look at the stars.
The Olmec astronomers will rise in our bones
And whisper what we once were.

I will give you clear water to drink
And play for you the Toltec flute.
And you will dance.

When you finish,
I will cleave your chest with obsidian
And pull out your Aztec heart.

I will show it to you, beating
And we will sing your death
Freeing the warrior within you.



Charlotte, View #2
Hydrostone Sculpture
By Laura Ann Chiodini

Clock Tower, Palace of Westminster

Compared to Big Ben
the sky is a bog,
a rug, a smear of cold
oatmeal. Let light
slant like sleet until point
becomes line becomes
the eye's Braille ride
down finial and spire,
the precision of cladding
preparing you for the skylights
and iron tracery, then a cornice
decorated with shields, coherence
counterpointing coherence
even as a puff of black spoors
turns into starlings dissolving
in the mist. Then you can see it,
anybody can, even I could,
even on my first peach fuzz trip
when I wore the same jeans for six weeks
and sat in front of blue watercolors
until I finally had to admit that the
Thames is the color of potato peelings.
After the fire in 1835 Mr. Barry's pencil
was itself a kind of Gothic pre-study
as he sketched out the new tetrahedral spire
which Pugin covered with dormer windows
and round arches filled with open tracery.
Architecture is a prose style:
bell chamber, small orb, ogee tracery.
It all is a monologue which is saying
"gadzooks," and "cads, be gone!"—
all of it just a heliotropic refutation
of balderdash, perfidious secularism,
and the creeping socialism of entropy,

written longhand in Charge of the Light Brigade
limestone. To design this one Pugin and Barry
used every cat in the bag and then some—
sound off, parade ground marchers:
arch filled with trefoil, orb,
balustrade, flying buttress,
pinnacle, spandrel, octahedral shaft
with billet decoration, copper
hands, the dial itself glazed
with pot opal glass, cornice,
molded corbel, star-shaped
corner buttress, panel with tracery,
slender diagonal buttress,
narrow windows and string course
with the carved panels
hinting at the hypodermis,
reminding you of hidden girder
and subspandrel, of cement,
copper wire, fireproof iron sashes,
strips of green lathing,
grated ducts, vacuum
message tubes—a hullabaloo
of goings from comings and
gones from wents and all of it
flange bolted with hexheads
for a standardized fit.
The night soil flees the W.C.'s
down vented lines that run
like organ pipes through the walls,
humming, *Rule, Britannia* all the way
to the sewage works. In the end
everything rests on wooden friction
piles; every foundation starts with
a single pile being driven under
by the weight of what rises above it.
Is that why I finally flew home
and got a job, is that why in 1852,
the year Charles Barry was knighted,
August Welby Northmore Pugin
raved mad in Bedlam, and died?

Charles Hood

Is that why soot black in the rain
Sir Barry's spires of Perpendicular Gothic
now look older than Stonehenge?
The sons of the sepoys are selling
samosas beside the tube-stop as
from the window of a passing mini
some cut from *Disraeli Gears*
is playing on oldies day.
And if acid rain or the IRA
doesn't get it first, Big Ben
will still be bonging the hours
when after the funeral my kids
are looking through a shoebox
and wondering why in the hell
I kept a sheet of toilet paper
from the Imperial War Museum
with "Government Property" on it,
all these stupid bus tickets,
the postcard of St. Paul's,
a dozen blurry brown watercolors,
or a poem about the architecture
of the Clock Tower, west end,
Houses of Parliament,
New Palace of Westminster.

(featured at the Phoenix Readings, October 1996)

Concrete

My steps sound on bleached stones
poured in squares. Some lifted. Some flat.
In black, a thin line cuts downward,
dreams my journey. It's a lazy globe,
an Islamic lord who taught me how to speak.
I pass a shop, empty windows, recollections
of yellow flurries, sunflowers burning forth
throughout the day.
This night, whole worlds have been submerged
in incandescent noise. My sky,
a dragon. I walk with him,
with her, with this bright city
and the impending stillness
on its streets.



Chamulan Man, Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico
Photograph
By Olivia Barrionuevo

(featured at the Phoenix Readings, November 1996)

Language of the Self

“True loss is for him whose days have been spent in utter ignorance of his self.”

—Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*

In the graveyard walking is not easy. There are no smooth surfaces in the highlands. In *San Cristóbal* the streets are cobbled—the stones flesh-colored like the upturned soles of feet—and the houses sag. Telephone poles lean into the wind and listen.

This is not the city. This is an early morning in the village of San Juan Chamula. Mist rises off peaks and in the graveyard of the burned out church, it rolls from waiting graves.

“The light is fantastic.” Clare snaps her camera. A man stumbles out of a cloud. “Damn. I almost missed it.”

“Where did he come from?” The air freezes my fingers into a hook around my water bottle. I’m not used to the altitude.

“I think he was sleeping in a grave,” Clare says.

His legs bow and wobble as he moves across an ocean of crosses and clumps of grass mottled with ribbons. He might have a bottle of *posh* under his poncho, or maybe he’s just rubbing his stomach.

Behind us, music—squeak of strings and the harmonious squeeze of a concertina—dissolves in the distance. It’s early. I remember reading the words of Rigoberta Menchú:

...requests for marriage usually take place at four in the morning because most Indians leave home before five, and when they come home from work at six in the evening they’re usually busy with other things. It’s done at four in the morning so as not to cause too much

Luisa Villani

*inconvenience and they leave when the dogs
start barking.*

Let me begin again. Clare stands in the sunlight looking at her hand, her fingers flexed wide. "It's incredible," she says.

I'm in the dark, in the doorway of the *talle*. A man presses his foot down in the bottom of a basket. Underneath, wet pulp flattens on the stones. He's making paper. He lifts the basket and the circular pattern of the weave remains there in a square of tan mush, flecked with the lavender of orchid petals and the small pinioned spines of leaves. Over my shoulder a wide face in a bas relief of brown paper whispers in Tzotzil: *the light, the light*. I am making a story.

Let me begin again.

Once, a small, filthy child in a cave of pepper tree branches held the black Labrador's bouncing teats—not knowing how they ached—amazed at their fullness. A squeal from the sunlight and she runs from the shade. Pails of water empty in the air—droplets streaming over her—then hit the ground with a slap, that sound only water can make as it raises puffs of dust.

We ran the vineyard rows, vines swelling around us, bees hiding under leaves. The ground was different from the gray dirt of the yard. The black mud sucked my toes down, drinking my steps. At the end of a row, I turned, saw my footprints fill with water then melt in the sunlight. The leaves held their breaths—accumulating a silence—behind them in the shade, a universe of grapes and bees humming in their orbit.

Let me begin again.

A lunar eclipse calls us. Hotel guests stand on the roof where ruffles of red tiles outline a patio. Fingers point. Lovers hug. Crack of fireworks in the air—smaller than the crack of gunfire—as Mayans launch their prayers toward God. A moth throws itself at the jelly jar of a light fixture.

I don't see the photo of the graveyard until we return to Los Angeles because I've spent the day in the streets of *San Cristóbal* chasing shades of meaning. Clare returns—exhausted, elated—finds me in the hotel room sunk in the

mattress, the flattened backs of books around me.

"Did you see the eclipse?" she asks as she removes her backpack.

I say no, even though I did.

"I watched it from the road." Film containers roll onto the bedspread. "I hitchhiked back to town, rode in the back of a pig truck," she says, her lashes wide as wings. My spine stiffens. It's dark. We're not supposed to be in the villages after dark.

"The light this morning was great. You should have come. I shot this guy in the graveyard at sunrise." She spins around the room, bumps the dresser, sends a guava tumbling under the bed.

We go to the *zocalo* for coffee and to check out another bookstore. Feather giants of clouds saunter across the dark sky, luminous and deep blue as they pass. The restaurants have come to life, breathing music and the dusty infusion of candlelight into the streets. The front door of the bookstore casts a yellow parallelogram onto the stone sidewalk.

"Here's something you can relate to," Clare says as she hands me a slim white book, *Sarcófagos* by Carlos Adolfo Gutiérrez Vidal. I'm not sure if she means I'm obsessed with death, or obsessed with verse, since this is a book of poetry. She smiles and moves on to a shelf of Mayan histories.

I open the pages and my eyes catch on a phrase, *la calle se bebe las palabras*—the street drinks words—and this is the book I must have. As we walk past the *indigenistas* asleep outside the cathedral, I hold this book in the warmth of my armpit. In the courtyard, a child wearing orange sandals kicks a skinny dog. The dog yelps. I'm agitated. In Spanish dog is *perro*. In Tzotzil it's *tzi*, pronounced with the teeth and tongue. The dog's tawny eyes look at me as it runs sideways in the dark.

Let me begin again. Many of the *indigenistas* asleep outside the cathedral are outcasts. They've been forced to leave their villages because they've upset the Mayan balance of life, usually by professing an evangelical faith. They come to the city of *San Cristóbal* to make a living selling whatever the tourists will buy, hand woven belts, wool ponchos, *zapatista* dolls. They stake out a section of sidewalk, roll out their

blankets, and live—from sun up to sun down—weaving, making, selling. At night they sleep in the *zocalo* or in the shanty town at the edge of *San Cristóbal*. Their children live with them, often roaming the block with black plastic bags on their arms, bags which are filled with tiny clay figures or macramé pens, *para uno peso*. This is a fact.

We walk by the green and blue bat design of a woven blanket, the heat of my armpit captured in the pages of my book. A family of Chamulans sleeps beneath a Coca Cola sign. Tomorrow, the sun will rise in a yellow blaze, amplified by the *flan* colored walls of the *San Nicolás Catedral*. They will have the morning light, then in the afternoon, the blessing of shade. I imagine a brown hand reaching for the rough edge of the billboard, finding it at daybreak the way I find my tongue sometimes on the edge of a just chipped tooth.

How would it be to live between the parenthesis of night in space no wider than my height? To know so perfectly the edge of the sidewalk—that silhouette of stone—as if it were my own signature? To lean against the terra cotta tiles and breastfeed, while the sidewalk is worn shiny from shoe leather and the oils of bare feet? The sparkle of a discarded gum wrapper could enfold the intimacy of a distant space, a counter over which the money was exchanged, an airport where the gum was purchased.

Now, I'm making a story.

Clare is annoyed with my lack of presence. "C'mon. Are we playing chess or what?" She waves at Julio to bring more cappuccino and tequila. The flickering light on the chess pieces stretches their shadows beyond the parquet of the board. In the far corner of the coffee house, stucco arches over a small stage where a five-man band plays American and French top forty. In that grotto the glint of electric guitars and belt buckles moves across the darkness with all the sheen of a velvet Elvis painting.

"You're in another world," Clare says as she takes my knight.

In the eclipse of memory I am in a cave with the small applause of leaves swimming the air above me, raining down shafts of light on my outstretched hand.

"You should have been with me this morning," Clare says, looking down at her chess pieces.

"You and I approach things differently."

"You don't approach them at all," she says as the band leaves the stage. In their baseball hats and surf T-shirts, they are indistinguishable from the tourists in the coffee house.

"That's not true." I rub the sweat from the side of her tequila glass. "There's an intimacy you know, an intimacy to space, no matter where you go." Clare focuses on my mouth as I speak. "I don't have a camera to capture what I want. I have words. My words already have things attached to them. Spaces." At a table far to the right, a woman laughs as she touches her husband's knee. "You want me to run out and find a story, but I've already got one. I remember every space of my home, every corner I ever hid in. Things keep doubling back for me. There's an elliptical quality to experience and memory."

"I disagree," she says. "I can't remember all those spaces. My parents moved a lot when I was small. We lived in more than thirty different houses."

"But perhaps that's why I write," I say. "I do remember."

"Perhaps that's why I photograph," she says, "I don't." Clare finishes her drink. A small drop of tequila leaves a yellow hyphen in the bottom of her glass. In the coffee house mingled laughter and conversations come to an end as the band takes the stage.

Let me begin again.

My cup makes a brown ring on the table. Clare stays to hear the band play and to wait for Julio's "last call," so she can photograph the lead singer. On the stage Spanish songs now swirl the air, stirring the cigarette smoke. The drummer yawns. On the *Calle Diego De Mazariegos* a dog raises its head from its paws and looks at the sky, waiting for the darkness to go gray. I stay in the street for a long time, drinking in the past, the way a long distance swimmer can't help but swallow a gasp of water.

Marguerite, Please Hold Me

Oh, Majestic.

I saw you riding among the stars
and I wondered if you knew you
were the only Asian there,
and of course, Yoko Ono.

You claimed my romance was in such
a flaccid state

when I stated I was a homosexual
in denial of being straight.

And you, Marguerite, asked me in that red dress,
how I felt loving someone who didn't love me back.

I gave you my mouth to kiss
but you pushed it away saying
I had nothing worthy to say.

I was a pimple in the smooth
skin of your life and you said,

"I have to go, I have to go,"

feeling the claws of time grabbing at your balls.

Marguerite, will you hold me no more?

Olive trees are growing in my backyard where
you kissed me one last time before
the soldiers took you away,

Judas in a red dress.

You said someday I'll understand when I grow old.

Like fungus on dead bread,

my love for you,

a burp to your ears.

And up to now, I can still hear your macho laughter
flowing through my fingers like sand;

the salty water from my tears

I feel between the crevices of my toes.

Marguerite—you virtuous slut,

emerging from that table—

your manly arms around me are lost

and you have smoother skin than I.



Untitled
Print
By Pauline Hoffman

A Dream of Sunflowers

For years she dreams
this particular road,
some half-remembered route,
the stop sign with no one to warn,
the black blaze of tarmac—
sunflowers growing everywhere.
Sunflowers instead of houses.
Sunflowers rising
from the windshields
of junkyard cars
and the skulls of struck animals.
Sunflowers so blatantly golden
a child could've ignited them
with a crayon.
Sunflowers without limit,
and the road ahead
straight as a needle
stitched through barren land.
It goes on like this,
she keeps walking,
hands in pockets
disclose no trembling,
because she sees
sunflowers are breakable
spines, some lean forward
like sunstroke victims,
some lie shattered on the ground.
Somewhere they must end,
just beyond perhaps,
at the edge of a body
of water she cannot yet see,
or a small house posted
near the cemetery
where town begins.

Night Swimming

All night the Atlantic washes up warnings:
suitcases from the famed plane wreck,
gun-metal clouds that mean approaching storms.
Time to step into this territory
black as the places we touch.
Time to cram bitter metallic berries
in our mouths. Time to excite the argument
with the undertow latched around our ankles.
Time to strip without threat of sunburn,
vandalize the dunes with our limbs
then walk apart among the wet bladed edges
which break us again into separate beings,
pour salt into wherever we bleed.

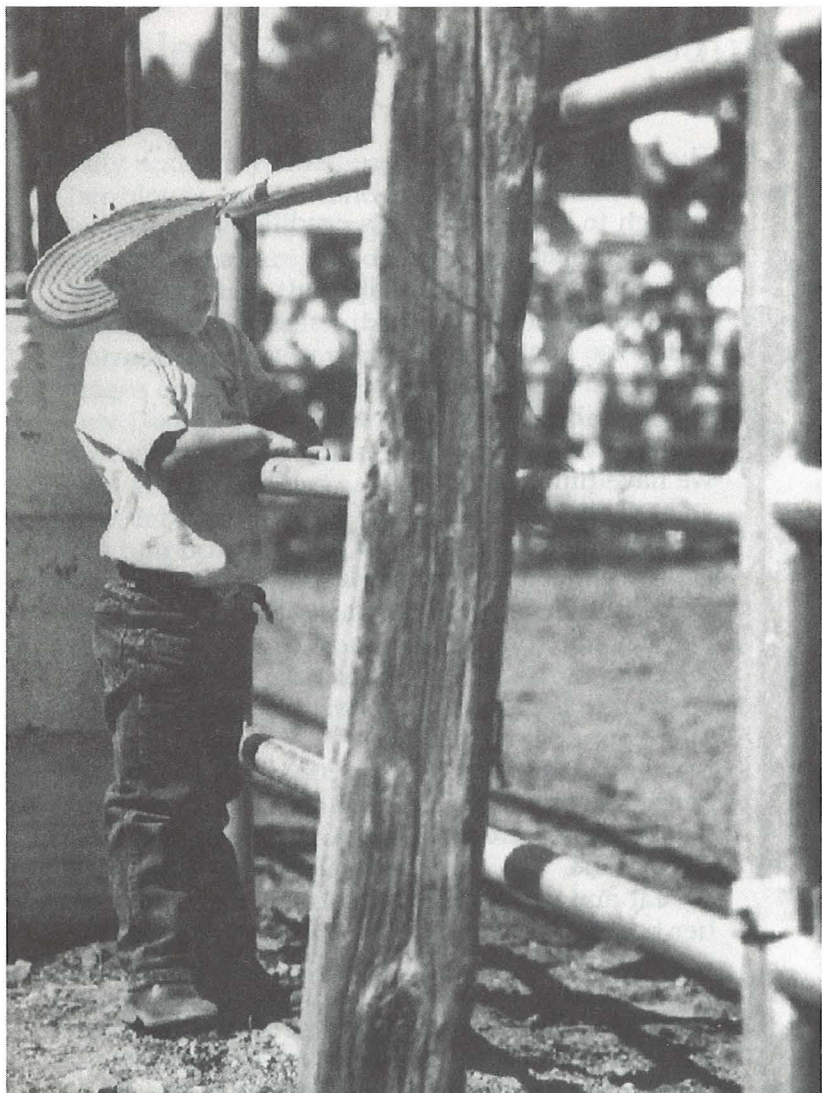
Fable of the Fountain of Youth

Fifty and feisty, she tore off
her blouse in a bar one evening, the man,
bearded, backing up against the booth,
crying, "What are you doing?" couldn't
look away from those plum, peri-
menopausal breasts, the flush of
hormones rising in youthful
tinges of rose upon her neck:
"my Goddess when she goes goes on the ground,"
he murmured, to himself, for she would laugh.
She always laughed.
She did laugh for she heard him,
felt him up,
found him hard, knew
she had him, and dropped him then and there
though he begged, threatened.
She arched, "I can't know you like this."
He wailed, "We'll travel. My folks live in Trondheim."

She danced beneath prairie blue moons,
wore spiked heels and a mini for the weekend,
shocking everyone but him, already shocked:
*I am the path of your fate,
your faux-guru, and in loving me
you burn off karma,
you receive insight,
you accelerate enlightenment...*
Now where was I going with this?
Ah, they danced all night as if
(but only as if, for they both had grown kids)
they'd stopped maturing at sixteen.
She looked beatific when he swept her
back into a dip, her hair
reaching the floor,
showing a distinguished
salt-and-pepper at the temples.

This June And Next

The mother of my father
is old
enough to know her body's erudition
and its crimes,
shrinking as her mother did
into folds of cloth
which the light passes on.
Merged to a new form
she must be helped
into a chair.
We have time,
she tells me,
though she cannot account for verbs.
On her clipped and proper lawns
we gather for reunion
her way of tethering old
to young
a concrete recognition of her blood.
There are so many children
crawling at her legs
her smile is touched
by some private construction
hers, alone.
We eat and drink, together,
her bread
her wine-
this is what she leaves us.
Still there is no holding back the afternoon
the moment melding the next and beyond.
We too clasp what we remember
hold it to an inner light
as shadows elongate in time.



The Rodeo



The Rodeo

Hermanos II

Here I am, naked.
Pimples and blackheads on
my back, hair springing
from nose, ears and
testicles, one smaller.
Arms spread to salted breath,
muscle heavy legs
carry my bike on trails
of dirt, pavement, prayer.
I stutter.
press down the phone ten
times, making sure...
check the car door to
see if I locked it, once,
three times.
I fall for women
needing only friends.
I'm tired of remembering my ex's
fingers cuddling my penis, her
breasts wetted down over
my tongue, my ear wrapped
in her mouth. Her blue lingerie,
red lingerie. Push-ups over her
after she pinned me in
a wrestling match.
I want to be jagged, reckless,
a woman's downfall,
a vampire not incognito.
I am guilty of being Catholic,
dysfunctioned at birth
when I slipped out
of mother's sorrowful Uterus.
Nude to either I
write today, ride today.
Or keep these parts of a
poem on the 4th of July.



Man on Barrel
Sketch
By Eric Devlin



No Parking Any Time
Photograph
By Ian Maclean

PACHUCO

Pachuco,
a rich word!
not like “macho,” which stays in the front
of your mouth,

shallow, sharp,
with no rhythm, no romance, just spat out
through your teeth;

Pachuco
comes from deep
in the depth of your belly, rumbling up
through your chest

Pachuco
shoots up
up through your throat and out of your mouth
pah-CHU-coh!

like an explosion,
an express train,
like young muscles and strong backs, and songs
del corazon,

pachuco;
and then you
laugh and eat and dance
with your girl and polish your car,
and who cares,

Pachuco!
Who knows
how it is to be neither this nor that, to belong
nowhere, no time;

Ah, *Pachuco*,
you only wanted

Lynn Root

to be yourself, a little of Mexico here
in America

and no one
to bother you
or mock your tradition or sneer at your
girlfriend,

Pachuco;
they better
know better than that, eh amigo?
Hay te watcho,

Pachuco...

Journey #1

He bought love from a dime store
and a ghost of a woman
she'd smile and offer him red hots
but he always took the lemon
heads on a rack in the back
low to the ground behind the sugar
to watch her bend over
to a thirteen year brain
it was heaven

at fifteen he was in a truck
with luck and fate to Colorado
snowy white with peaks of real
color browning the steps of slush
he forsook for a lodge
and hot bath in the back of patrol
cars whistling up a highway
back east to refuge and smiling
skyward at a night filled

with laughter at seventeen stealing
cars blue black and red needle
drawn taught across pinched skin
for the drop from highway
to apple wine crash site
a winter night dark and shining
stars piercing cracked shell
of car and silence musical
in its musk of blood and heroine

twenty-two times they cut him
open on the table
stripped flesh from the hidden places
to replicate the smoothness of health
and happiness seized the scars
with the help of honed silver blades

and a mother of fire
made him whole

to let him go.

Treasure (Journey #2)

At the age of twenty-five
he carried with him
three shells at all times.
They kept a rhythm,
when he walked, against
his left breast. Sometimes
he'd show them to close
friends—always shocked
by the first one. A tin
Christ, sans cross and arms,
crucified all the same,
about five inches high
he'd lay carefully face
up on a table. He'd never
show without proper space,
a table—preferably carved
with initials. When Christ
was dead center, he'd pull
the second from his pocket.
A wedding band, highly polished,
bright shining, cresting the tin
head. He'd balance it,
like a nickel on edge,
and make sure the shadow
cut under Christ's chin.
Then, and only when
it was right—a rarity—
he'd reveal the third.
Slipped from a dime-store star
scroll tube, a rolled photo
torn in half, only
the white back showing,
he'd arrange as arms.
Straight out, ragged edges
toward the broken torso.

Jazzed

I 'm
lis'nen to Parker's
squeal strike squeal mellow
tap touch tap
haoough and back
croon on every stereoscopic
burst
thinking of ways
to write
rhythm to page
finding only leaps
small suffice
to
while losing grip
and dancing
back
to propriety's
place.



Magic Club
Photograph
By Madoka Takagi

Jazzman

(For Paul Desmond)

Last I heard you Jazzman,
You was cutting some bad licks on your Ax,
Alto sax, Man.

Old Tunes
That have been round longer,
Than us slow walking Old cats,
Long before we were young lungs and guts,
Filled with hash smoke and booze

Didn't know fast flying Quick Time
Cause we couldn't read it on the charts,
But it was there,
Pulling sidemen under
Same as it painted our hair

Thought you mighta beat it,
Cause you still had the chops,
Wailing through the changes,
With those fingers working the Golden Sax,
Man, you were out there, tying it up like a pretty bow,
Twisting in and out of the line anyone can sing.

But later you had to sit down,
When your thin legs started to shake,
And some of those bows came undone.
Quick Time had come stealing in,
Looking for the Sweet Sound.

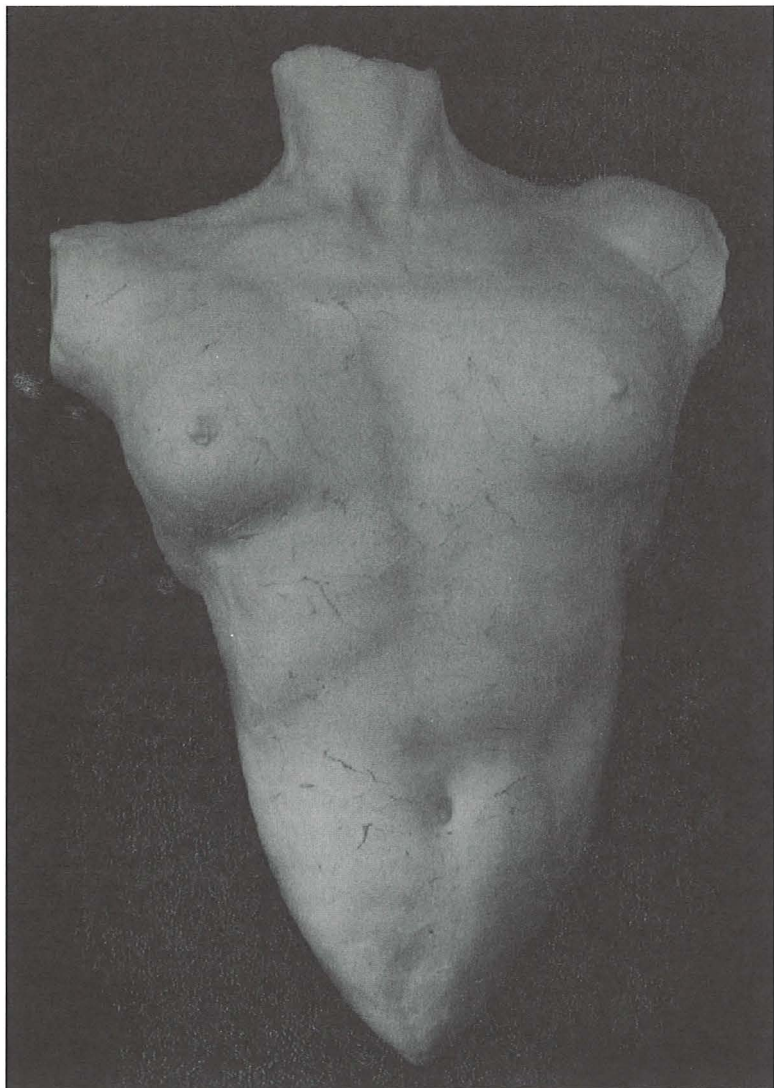
And it found you,
Crying rifs through the tube,
Wailing and heaving heavy breath,
Choking on spit thick in your throat,
Backstage you bent over hacking,

While the piano soloed pretty,
We saw you were broken,
Like a needle skipping jukebox,
But it wasn't just you.

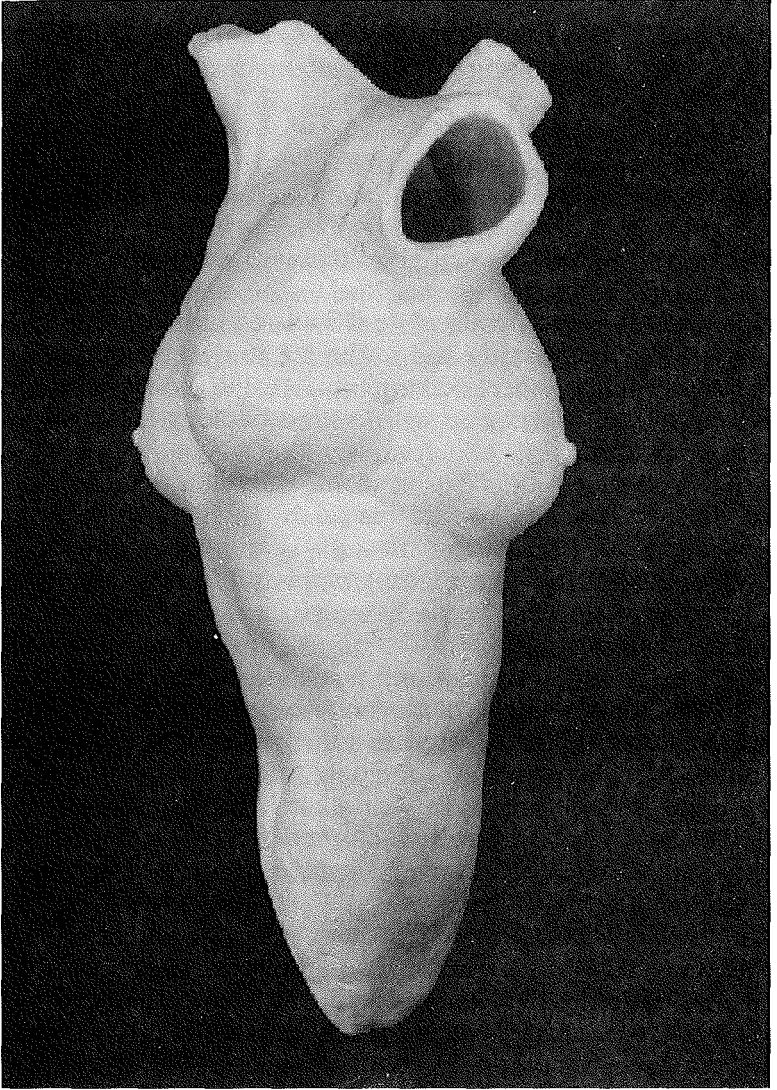
Old Cats near the end of the set
Heard the Cold One's Mean Screech:

Jazzman is no more than rusty Ax,
Some short tunes get played through.

Oh, jazzman
Quick Time picked the Man's pocket now,
God has no more nickels for you.



Soul Skin
Ceramic Sculpture
By Kathy Waggoner



Soul Skin, View #2
Ceramic Sculpture
By Kathy Waggoner

the unwanted guest

i guess this is how the story should start: Joaquin has walked a million kilometers north, smiling to the sun dropping like a giant fruit through clouds of dust and red as hell. Far to his right are tiny mountains and to the left, but beyond his sight, the ocean that the sun is diving into. Walking north of course through a field of dirt and with a tired back with his life in a piece of cloth over his shoulder, hanging.

Butterflies are floating in his stomach from anticipation and a smile cracks into his face. Right now he doesn't mind so much the tearing through searchlights and search dogs, guns and barbed wire, and rivers and fences. He decides to keep walking into the dark tonight. He feels his journey coming to an end soon.

Joaquin has the gift and passion of a great artisan and in the dark of the day, when everyone else is quietly sleeping, he makes clay figurines that in his tired and bruised hands come to life. Figurines of the past: his dead daughters and sons, his wife dying while giving birth to a dead nameless miniature boy. The small unpainted figurines of clay have wings and smile and can't remember better days because there probably were none.

He left his village with tears down his face. A small handmade village whose houses of tin are rolling onto each other on the side of a hill. It's a small frightened village made of glass bottles and plastic tarps that are tripping over themselves. Houses falling and grasping each other's frozen veins as if they were huddling in from a blizzard. The stench of an angry sewage system that never worked visits every cloth door. Skeleton dogs parade the streets and play with children. Activity is heard from every narrow, crooked, banged-up dirt road. Seen from far above, the city turns into a speck at the base of a mountain, and off to the north a bigger city buried in pollution can be seen. On the road between the two Joaquin is walking, crying.

One billion tons of concrete built on water. The buildings are giant and decrepit and they hide their tops in the cloud of exhaust that engulfs the tremendous city. Tired cars made of string congest the cracking streets, like a puzzle, honking. And Joaquin, walking through the disaster of human multitudes buzzing through the streets or lying drunk or hungry beneath the million feet that didn't stop that day, stops for a while to listen. The music of horns and familiar commotion, like concealed complaints, hums so loud that it almost shakes apart the crowded cars and plywood trucks. The hum shakes the city, and the crooked buildings sway like drunks; and if the city was quiet maybe their chuckles of misery could be heard. Unlike those who traveled here for a chance at a chance at a chance, Joaquin keeps walking north.

in the day somebody sleeps in the walls. The house is completely at peace and sometimes you can hear them stir to distribute blood and snore.

Transparent men own the house. Absorbed inside themselves they walk in and out of the house at similar times. At night they sink through the door and into the television set and make no noise until they go to sleep.

In the night the walls are quiet, the snores are gone. The transparent men are lost in their giant beds stuffed with clouds, sleeping in their feet pajamas.

In the morning the Men wake up to find a table full of grapes and corn and strawberries and peanuts, and clean toilets and sparkling driveways, and their yards with grass like green carpet and animal shaped bushes. The Men never think of the offerings of the breakfast table made by the hands of architects and surgeons and pilots and dancers. They eat until they almost crack their fat stomachs. They leave the house in suits and impossibly colored ties, already on their phones conducting important business. They leave to the city in their cars made of gold, and already money begins to fall from their mouths. They hide from the sun inside their offices, 300 stories high with windows made of water, and so, like

Alex Frixione

deep ocean fish they turn transparent.

Two cats, a clumsy black one and the devil who is white, live in the house. Its ceilings reach over heaven and its architecture is stolen from a genius. It's deserted except for the two felines that roam around for hours and still haven't been in every room. The dark one rests in the shadows of the house and falls from room to room, sleeping. The white one, always asleep in the sunlight of the giant windows, sleeps with its eyes open. The cats are hunters and don't think about blood and the soul; and so, like mice, the people asleep in the walls occasionally come out for less than a few seconds. They tiptoe on the walls so as not to disturb the napping cats and then submerge back into the walls. The tiny cats know everything. They know they own the still and silent air-conditioned house and they sleep in quiet.

when the night honestly dropped, he saw some motion in the fields ahead and they took him in like family.

"But no," he argued "I have these hands." And even though they didn't look up he showed them his hands as if they didn't believe him. "These are my hands!" he screamed shaking his hands at the crowded field of people bent over their work.

The only man that had stopped to look at Joaquin went back to work under the burning moon that was hotter than eight suns.

They wake up at one o'clock in the night and work like oxen, sweating dust, up to their knees in pesticides. With handkerchiefs hiding their faces and heads from the enraged moon, they look more like machine-gunned warriors hiding in the fields than agricultural workers. Handkerchiefs covering their mouths as if they were cursing through their hidden smiles in a tongue those fields don't recognize. Handkerchiefs tied over their heads as if they had been holding loaded weapons and are furious enough to kill the burning moon that scorches their heads. The stench of the pesticides keeps them moving too slow for guns and all they can think of is how blessed they are for not being where they once were and still

resentful that they had to lose so much to be here working until their hands bleed and blister in the moonlight. Working until their own spirits have to drag their exhausted bodies and baskets from the field back to the giant house to hose them off in the driveway. Their spirits look down at the wet pile of bodies that are drying in the darkness of a sunrise, coughing up toxins and dust.

the transparent men are beginning to die off. And leave it up to the one with the diamond colored tie to accredit all this to the snores in the walls. Leave it to the one with teeth of gold to suggest calling in an exterminator to destroy the giant rats that tumble around in the walls every once in a while in their sleep to distribute the blood with a machine-gun in their hands and a handkerchief over their mouths. Leave it to them to blame the girl next door.

Thanks Mark

So here I am
With my first cigar,
And I like it.

And here I am
With my first poem.
I think
I like it, too.

And here you are,
Reading my first poem
About my first cigar,

My first poem
Of baseball,
Communism,
Fidel,

Of lucky soil.



Man on Sofa
Sketch
By Eric Devlin

Little Man

He bounces—
his natural state—
flying from the top
of the couch, landing
seated in the center cushion.
Balanced on an arm,
searching the coffee table
for a foot hold,
he plans to cross the room
without assistance
from the floor.
I stop him.
He proudly shows me
his penis;
I've seen it everyday
for four years.
I say put it away,
shaking my head in awe
at the power of nature.

Scissors, Needle, Thread

My sister loved to work with needle and thread.
When she was eight,
she made hand puppets for me.
Each stitched together with fur, feather
and blind faith,
their animal faces misshapen like a stone cherub
with part of the cheek missing.

One night, when she was showing me how to
sew arms to a baby doll,
our father walked in and stared, silent.
There is no money in crafts, he finally said
and slammed the door.
We could hear him in the living room,
snapping on the radio,
pouring himself a shot of whiskey,
mumbling about how our mother was dead,
two kids, all alone.

I remember

my sister walked to her mirror,
wings folded, infant doll in hand
and began touching her own body,
sensing the way the fibers of her skin
connected. Then she picked up the needle and thread
and began to stitch.
I winced with each passing of the needle,
witnessing only the thinness of her elbows,
stroking the air.
Stitch and loop, stitch and loop.
I could feel each one draw through the fabric,
through the remnants of our mother's cotton.

She pulled the seams tighter together.

A transformation was taking place,
a pattern forming.

Then she turned towards me
and ran her hands across the flesh of the doll,
the flesh which has been stitched to the
belly of her dress.
And she began to sob as she stroked its head,
humming a lullaby as she searched
for the fabric of our mother's unfinished work.



Ceramic Instrument
Sculpture
By Greg Bernath

The Seams of My Life Little League, 1969

When I hold my baseball glove up to the light,
its swollen fingers rayed out like
the edge of the world, glistening fearlessly,
I think of it as my protector.

The center of the glove is smoky and
blue as the stain of a bruise, soft as the
pulp from a heart flapped back,
forgiving when smacked into. And the web
a careful crisscrossing of aged tendons
sutured to a masculine hardness
supplying order from within. The aroma of
sweat, leather and oil follows, bringing my
tongue to its grass-stained hide; it tastes
like beef jerky. All night
my glove plays catch with the ceiling's shadows,
its massive size shielding hand and forearm,
like a father standing watch over his son.
And when the lights go off, my hand
dangles over the side of the bed knowing my
glove will protect it, lay its body over it,
love it until the end of summer sets in.

Gloves Are For Boxing

After the concert,
I touch Mel Torme's hand.
A musician's hand,
smooth as his velvet tone.
I want to grab him
the way his voice grabs me.
Stop.
Fingers—crooked from holding a pen—
covered with pineapple skin shame me.
Pull them back. Hide the monkey paws.
Remember the license clerk
trying to print fingertips worn smooth.
What have you done to your hands?
Gloves won't let you feel warm suds,
damp earth, a child's feverish cheek.
These fingers plant trees and other things,
drive a car, hold the tiller of a boat,
the reins of a horse,
stir soup, change diapers, and reach out
for Mel's musical touch.

Photo Essay



The Mitikus, a family of Ethiopian Jews, began their life in Israel in Givat Hamatos, a “village” of caravans. Two families live separately in each caravan, which is a type of duplex mobile home. Their living space is limited to two rooms: the bedroom and kitchen/living room.

Givat Hamatos is located in the southeastern corner of Jerusalem. A local bus, which runs regularly, allows the immigrants easy access to the main market, the city hospitals, and the center of town. In Givat Hamatos itself the residents have three synagogues, a preschool, a small food store, and a day care center.

A photo essay is a group of images that evoke a narrative response from the viewer.



Givat Hamatos, Israel

The Outcast: Montreal, 1988

*"Ghetto of the elect. A wall, a ditch.
Expect no mercy. In this most Christian
of worlds, the poet is the outcast Jew."*

—Marina Tsvetayeva

The exploding gas carried his bride
of fire across the hotel's fifth floor,
tossed a glass bouquet to the street below
and showered the wedding guests
with rice and rain and crystal night.

We dressed by rote, collecting
credit cards, passports, one another
and started down the concrete stairs.
And within that smoke of dreadful dreams
with death and danger imminent,

I became the musician who played
for time in Dachau and the poet
wordless from the fumes that churned
in perfect German ovens. And she
became Hanna Senesh¹ dancing
with torn feet, while corroding
into yellow billowing soot.

And our vision transmuted: expatriot
snowbirds washed up on a foreign beach,
still burning with music and holocaust,
now belching retsina and feta cheese,
reading Leonard Cohen in his golden years
because he is an old/poet/Jew.

And in the last, the streetlamps
on the boulevard showed
the ash had run wet and cold,
so we gathered our remnants
together, and returned our outcast

selves to that Montreal room, where
we prayed and swayed, until morning
also ignited and left us consumed: two
old/poet/Jews.

Hanna Senesh (1921-44): poet & Haganah fighter, parachuted
into Nazi Command to rescue Allied P.O.W.'s. Later captured,
tortured & executed by a German firing squad.

What I Assume

Everyday
he wakens with the sun.
He lives in Poor Richard's world
where the early bird
never went hungry,
where worms squirmed frantic with fear.
He waits for the maize
natural light to rouse his soul
and his onion-skin lids from sleep.
Everyday.
He learned to make Cream of Wheat
three years ago.
He has an age spot that looks like
Maine.
He doesn't even know that
when I drive by in my dirty white car,
I see him staring up the sycamore
like he does everyday.
There used to be a bird there,
who never sang, flew too low, lost a claw.
Now, a nest that never leaves the autumn
clings by a flossy twig, but never falls.
Birdseed, bread,
broken by gnarled hands, tossed
shaking and tired, float to the ground
and I think of the first dirt that covers
the shiny mahogany as it sinks underground.
The worms once the eaten,
become the eaters.
Now nothing seems fair.
The light turns green
and I drive home through the blur.

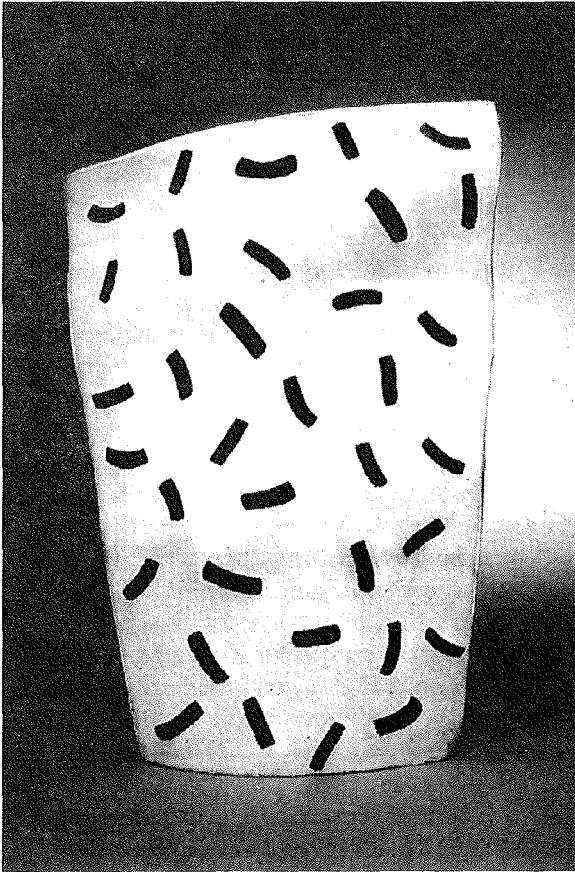
Sequined Carnivore

-Of two evils, choose the prettier.
Carolyn Wells

My stomach is growling.
It gets a splash of eau de parfum
to soothe the ravenous rumble.
This silence lets gartered silk slink up
in filmy jet,
where my nouveau manicure in frost lingers
impatient,
surgeon-steady above the petaled mouth.
Undulate in satin,
straddle the vanity seat to wield that magic wand
that coats and coats in ebony smolder.
Creamy, inhaled, sniff of a laugh,
golden spikes clicking on the marble squares,
marking my grand opening.
Pink splattering bubbly popped
to launch a steaming vessel
armed
with weapons that spook asexual feminists.
Laughter graduates from a blip
to a belly-flattening roar
as my spangled boa chokes
all the worn out, Perma-Press, bon-bon poppers.
Catch my wind-swept stride
in a trail of fragrant moondust floating.
My blood-swollen breasts move hypnotically
with each step.
Sizzling in glamorous swish, satin singing,
the heavy pendulums taking countless prisoners.
Blot my shimmering lips and blot them all out.
Giggle to the tempo as I tango
buoyant, on the world's luscious crust.
What about the casualties? Between laughs,

Heather Rhodes

I catch a quick breath to say:
beware the formal
primp
and
gloss.



Dancing With Death
Ceramic Sculpture
By Barbara Freeman

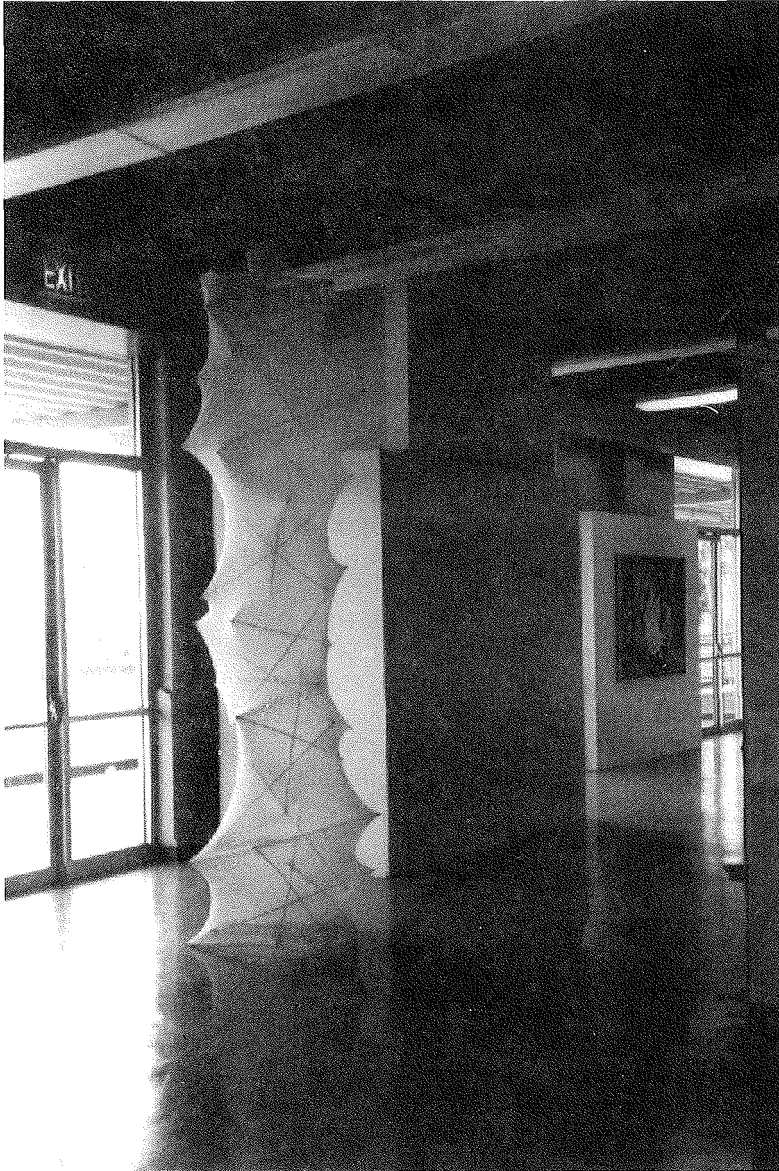
Bombay, 1969

They carried mud-filled baskets on their heads.
I watched them from my third-floor hotel room,
protected from the humid air, the dread
of monsoon rains that daily added gloom.

I watched them from my third-floor hotel room
take off their saris, wash them in the pool
of monsoon rain, that daily added gloom
and filled the hole they dug with simple tools.

Took off their saris, washed them in the pool.
The rain washed through their hair till it ran clear,
and filled the hole they dug with simple tools,
for three dollars a day, or very near.

The rain washed through their hair till it ran clear
and then, so they could keep their families fed,
for three dollars a day, or very near,
they carried mud-filled baskets on their heads.



Revolving Tensile Network
Fabric Sculpture
By Mary Korst

Late Summer Sonnets

I. Dinner

A baked potato cooling on my plate.
 Outside, cricketsongs and birdsongs running.
 In August it is difficult to eat
 With taste already full of summer's honey.
 I push up from the table towards the screen
 Door and walk through to the green-floored porch
 To wonder what the end of summer means
 When I am still nineteen in a striped shirt.
 Just short of the dining room lamp's soft reach,
 The old black walnut tree ruffles and cracks
 With hanging wet; this evening it will rain
 On the gypsy moths' webbed triangular sacs.
 My mother calls me in for desert: blackberries
 In a white bowl, freshly washed and glistening.

II. Sheets

The clothesline—tied from porch-post to porch-post
 To blunt nail in the brick wall of my house—
 Is punctuated every couple of feet
 By clothespins like primitive wooden beaks
 Of sharp and foreign birds, sequined, extinct.
 When my mother walks her hands along the line,
 Hanging sheets, she bites these pins between her teeth.
 The linens are my sisters', hers, and mine.
 Sometimes she whines that we don't hold our own.
 But housework is her province; we disdain
 Meticulousness, order, gloss and shine.
 If it were up to us, we'd let it go,
 All of it. Weeds would overtake the yard,
 And sheets, draped in the living room to dry.

Datura Dreams

Green hairs of grass nestle my iced tea,
the straw, a ghost tunnel down.
I turn over a rock and red veins
of ants drain into the turf
as a shadow comes across my glass.
There are always these lunging moments
blooming in unreality
like poppies with their black seeds
—so much like the kernels of dirt
beneath my fingernails—
or the burst of the datura trumpets
zeroing down to us on the lawn.
My brother stood atop my shoulders
shaking his knees and reaching out
picking flowers in his fists,
then we ran around the yard
blowing blossoms and biting hard
as if we were angels gone mad.
Inside a cloud I sweated and cried
“The long man is coming,
he wants my cheeks!” as
hands held my face
in a flesh anthurium
stamen to my lips
icy hot. My mother
pressed ice to my lips
for days, and my brother’s too,
as I asked her senseless questions
in the narcotic of my youth.
Why do men have penises?
Why do some flowers have them too?
Why are calla lilies white
when they should be pink?
Why do I have a flower between my legs?

Between Two Thieves

The membrane tore into a rage
of red stars. The synapses tingled
with one great *pow*
then began to blink at random.

She fell backwards from the stroke,
an overexposed negative
gone white with shadow.
I try not to see this in her bath:

the weight of leaded bones
and the skin anchored there
like wet, twisted, sheets.
This is not the body I remember.

I remember the round, powdered cleavage,
how it made me think of the silver dust
clinging to the cleft of a dark plum.
I remember the smoothed pompadour,

the pumps, and the black patent
handbag that anchored her elbow
as her handkerchief rose to the nape
of her neck. That was my aunt—

alternate mother—walking me to the bus
in 1971. She could've just stepped off
a Max Factor ad, circa 1943.
She waved that hanky good-bye,

and even then I saw Brooklyn,
apartment houses smudging the sky
with exhalations of burning coal.
The day they left, Uncle Mike

parked the Packard on 73rd,
back doors open and trailer attached,
all signs pointing west.

Handkerchief in hand, she must

have ascended that tufted leather
as if she were a queen. That
was my aunt. Scepter of rolling pins.
Bestower of cannolis. Six days later,

they stopped at the edge of the Mojave.
Uncle Mike checked his maps,
bought a case of cantaloupes
and an air conditioner that he hung

over the front passenger window.
I see my grandfather in the back seat
slicing melons, and my aunt's sovereign
fingers, pushing orange half moons

over my father's shoulder. Grandpa
says, "Vinnie, pump, pump, *pumpa*,"
—more to let my Uncle Mike know
the air conditioner was a bad purchase—

and my father, eager to please, starts
pumping the device two-handed, a melon
rind clenched between his teeth
in one green, innocent, grin.

In this scene my aunt
holds down right angles
between my little father in the
front seat—winging his way

toward approval—and my widowed
grandfather in the back seat,
who's trying to divine from a melon
whatever sweetness life has left.

Her eyebrows are arched over
all this, her superiority claimed
upon leaving PS 176. She never
told me if she felt trapped

running a household at thirteen,
and I never thought to question
her rule. All I have are my father's
stories: Grandpa yelling,

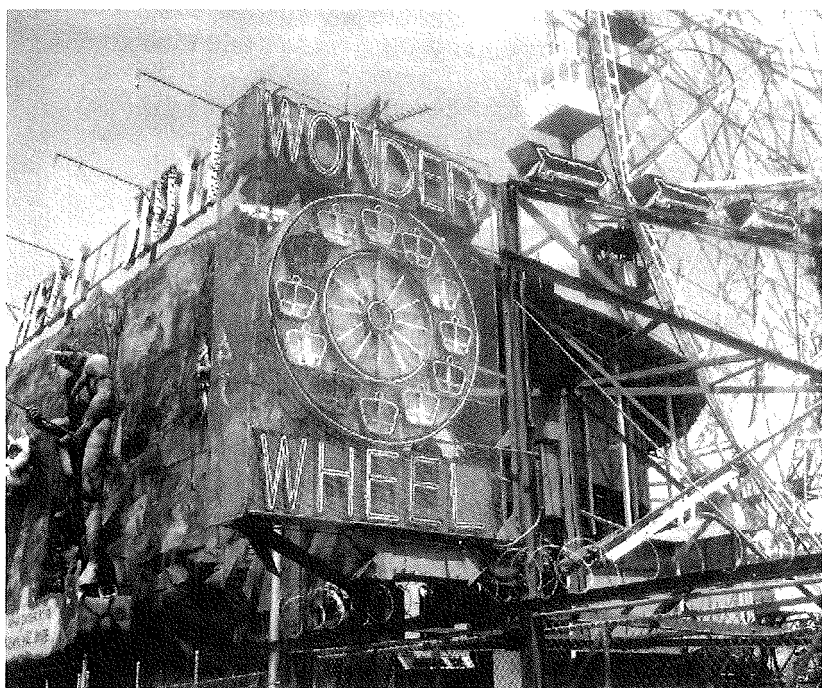
"Vinnie, *pumpa, pumpa, pumpa*,"
and the one about the air conditioner
that went super nova in the middle
of the Mojave. I can see the wet sparkles

flying across my father's lips,
over his Brylcreemed hair, and Grandpa
spitting a mouthful of seeds,
coming to tears with laughter.

That is how I see my aunt,
anchored in the back seat
of a blue sedan, dripping with seeds,
holding that handkerchief amidst

the uncertain as if she had the power
to wave it aside. I have to see her that way
before my father grabs her ankles,
and her unmoored eye wanders past

fate's occluding blow. Freedom
never felt such unforgiving laxity.
As I embrace her from the bath water,
we lift her back into her chair.



Wonder Wheel
Photograph
By Madoka Takagi

(featured at the Phoenix Readings, September 1996)

On Twisted Weirdness and the Making of the Smart Bomb

Sometimes, late at night, I have dreams that Igor and I are huge monsters living in our own rival territories. We pee on the trees, draw lines in the earth with our fingers and flip each other off behind these lines. Funny thing is, I usually end up trying to tear his head off for whatever annoying thing he does within the dreamscape. Last time he pinched his face up into a huge monster “cat pee” face. I’m sick of that face. The bastard comes in while I’m cooking dinner—could be gourmet cuisine, could be Top Ramen—and he screws his face all up, and then lets out a sigh before asking me for some. I tell him to “shut up and take a bong rip,” diverting him from criticism with his marijuana placebo. Sometimes I hate him, but most of the time he’s of use to me.

“Dude quit narrating and talk to me,” Igor says with pot smoke still in his mouth.

“I didn’t say anything. Hey, what were you talking about earlier? Something on the road?” I generously attempt to focus his attention away from his fantasies of duality.

“Twisted weirdness all over the fucking road. Why don’t they clean that shit up?” I-g-o-r, pronounced “eager.” He’s always storming into our studio apartment with a proclamation for change.

“Yes. Well...,” whenever he has an audience he does this dramatic pause at the very beginning, an excellent storyteller: “I was driving home on interstate five toward our pad and I look over and see this fine chick in the car next to me. I’m thinking, ‘Hello there. Lookin’ good.’ All of a sudden she just looks over at me and Smack! Her eyes lock on mine. I can’t look away.” Another pause, this time for a bong hit.

Leonard Finch

“So I just look at her. She starts talking to me with her eyes. She tells me a bit about herself—phone number, name, where she’s from—that kind of shit.”

“Umm. This all sounds kind of far fetched, an Igorism if you will. Did you drop a lid again? Is this story like the night you came back from that party in the abandoned warehouse and you told me to hurry back with you because you saw the Easter Bunny, and I should meet him? Well, when we got there, it turned out to be just a banker in a white suit who had a grinning disorder.” It’s my job to keep Igor’s stories in line before they get away from him.

“No way man. It ain’t like that at all, man! That’s not even a fair comparison, cause when I asked the guy if he was the E Bunny, he turned to me with that big bucked tooth grin and said in this really nice voice—almost apologetic—‘C’mon buddy, I’m off duty.’ “

“So this other story, if you will pardon yourself for the rude interruption...”

“I start noticing this weird twisted telepathy thing happening to all the other drivers. We’re connected with a series of blue and red zigzagging lines which form a large shifting plane. I was expecting a Vulcan mind meld or some shit, but it was as if I’d said, ‘hey, how’s it going. So where ya from?’ But the thing was, everyone was closed off. We were all trying of get information, but no one was willing to give any. It reminded me of that time I got hypnotized by that side-show guy who came to our school and made me pee my pants.”

“Oh, yeah. The hypnotist didn’t make you pee, he just stuck your hand in warm water and...”

Appolonia walks in at that moment and gives me a hug. “Hey Marvin. Hey Igor. How’s the smart bomb coming?”

Igor pipes up with some nonsense, “Hey Marvin, what the hell are we gonna do with a third character? People are generally too stupid to get to know three people in such a short time, and since there is a male narrator and a female character, they’ll know the woman because she’s in the gender minority of the story’s socio-political milieu, and they’ll obviously know the narrator. But where the fuck do I fit in? Just tell me that you selfish bastard!”

"Wait, what?" I have no idea what Igor is alluding to here.

"Nothin' man, nothin'. Hi Appol, how's it going? Blah blah blah," Igor is in a pissy mood today.

Appolonia takes off her clothes behind the silk, upright partition. She puts on her red and blue plaid pajamas which complement the geeky, crazy-cool grandma glasses she wears. You know, the ones with the thick black rims, that Buddy Holly look? On her though, look out. Her hair is up in one of those space age deals that women with beautiful blonde hair can pull off.

"Hey, Sugar?" she asks Igor who has fallen into some sort of trance. Drool hangs from one side of his mouth as he stares blankly at Appolonia's funky pajamas.

"I think he's been sucked into your pj's," I say off-handedly with one of those grins existing somewhere between innocence and mischief.

Appolonia, with the care and precision of a surgeon, strides over to Igor and begins pushing his face experimentally. His chin moves all around in her examination. She holds her breath for the duration of the scrutiny and concludes, "Hmm. I've got it. Igor is on pause. Somehow all the attention in the room was focused on me and he probably felt frozen in time as if nothing could possibly happen for him until I was fully described." After saying her riddle she gently reaches her hand into his loose jeans and grasps his thingie, squeezing it five times while saying, "motivation, motivation, motivation..."

"Amazing!" Igor says as he snaps back into the time loop. "Excellent! So all I have to do is stare blankly and some chick will come jerk me off. I just think that's the greatest thing I've ever heard of."

There is a moment of silent communication between Appol and I where absolutely nothing is said or meant.

"You guys are weird. So you never answered my question about the smart bomb, Babushka. Have you guys finished it?" Appol often checks our progress on what could be the culminating evolutionary step of our time.

I address her question because Igor is busy smoking more pot. "Here's the thing. There seems to be a problem of semantics here. We can program the computer to build

Leonard Finch

the bomb now—we have the technology—but to do so, we would have to enter the definition of ‘intelligence’ into the computer. Anybody smart enough to engage in discourse on the nature of intelligence would necessarily have to learn that definitions aren’t natural and objective, but rather subjective. If we could only define the word, we would have our bomb.” I looked around at the possibility of failure, at the futility of all our hard work. All the test tubes, the dictionaries, the cute little lights that you can strap around your forehead, the empty bowl of smart food popcorn, not to mention the chess set, the vial of LSD...

“But you guys have all this cool stuff,” Appolonia begins a tour of our studio apartment as Igor and I follow her, worrying she’ll touch our equipment, but silently hoping she will. She could bring it to life, make it work better than we ever imagined it could. She shows us the beakers, the little television set where we play Mario Karts on our Super Nintendo, the deck of cards, and the ...

“There’s a problem here,” Igor states a hypothesis, “these people won’t know what a smart bomb is. We must plainly state the premise which launched this idea: the level of intelligence on the planet remains constant, and the population is growing. Now, the smart bomb will eliminate those individuals who lack intelligence, or smarts. In conclusion...”

“Wait, I have an idea,” she’s on a rampage; I can see it in her coiled posture. “I heard somewhere that the biggest idiots possible are the people who think they’re smart, but are really foolish.”

Igor looks worriedly at me until I squint back at him and shake my head.

“What?” Appolonia asks, thinking we’re messing with her.

“Igor just thinks you mean us,” I, the voice of reason, explain.

“Mean us, what?” She pursues.

“Umm. Hmm. What were we talking about? What people did you mean earlier, Igor?”

“Fuck it!” Igor says taking another hit, drawing in half his breath with the green marijuana, and then the other half

from the blue sky which has seeped indoors.

"No, Appolonia. That sounds good. Let's go with that definition. Go ahead and enter it into our super computer," I say, rushing my words.

"Super computer, my ass. You guys have a Commodore 64. I had that when I was seven years old," she scolds us. We look around uncomfortably as if she were talking to somebody else, anybody. The computer whirrs in the background adding a very mechanistic quality to the room...

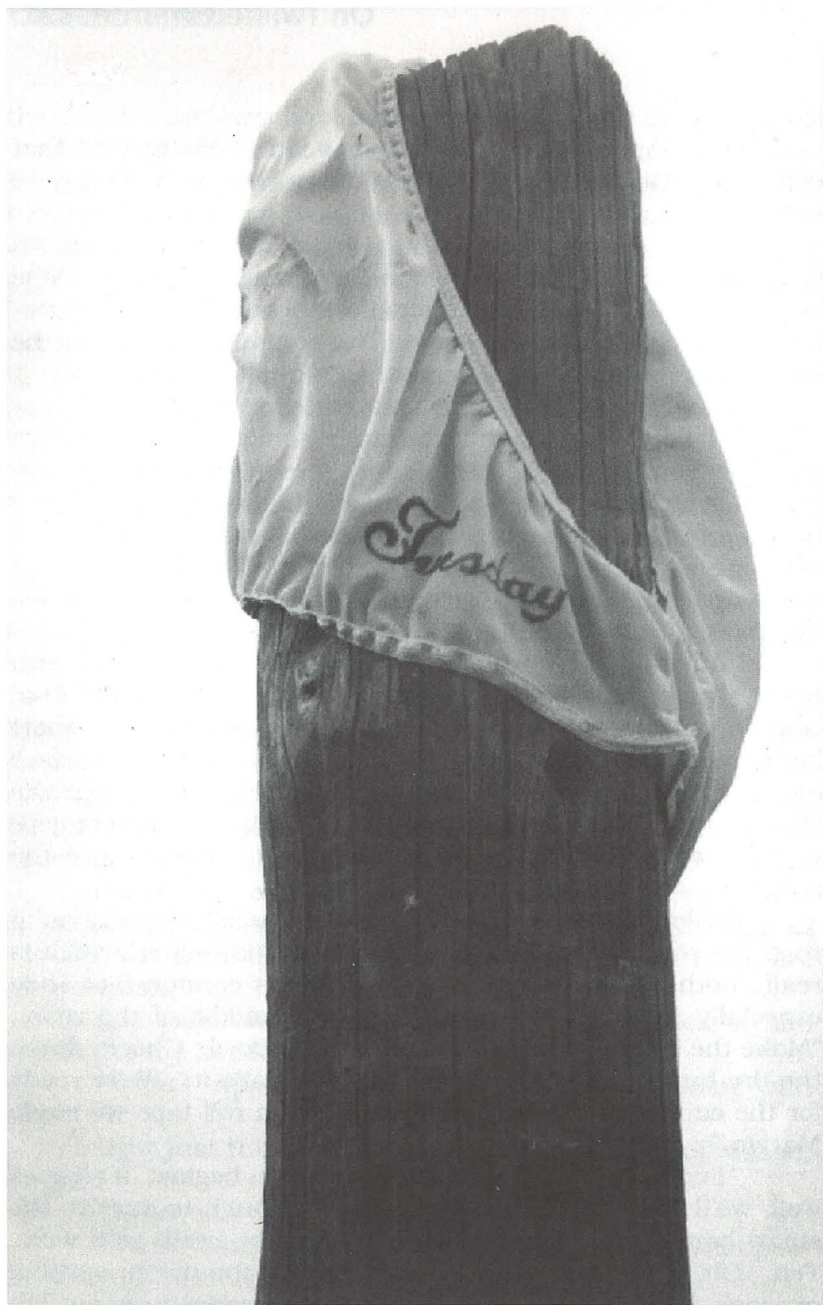
"And the scene?" Appolonia adds to my sentence.

"I don't understand you guys sometimes. First Igor and now you Appol. You talk as if there is some greater significance to our actions as if someone is listening or hearing us. Is our bedroom tapped? Is anyone listening to us?" In my moment of paranoia, I turned the room upside down without really upsetting any of the scientific equipment, safety glasses, Twinkies, Scrabble, Yahtzee...

After the necessary looks of, "no, you're weird," with her eyebrows raised in the center, Appolonia clicked the final command and a perfectly formed circle comes out of the smart bomb machine. It's red and blue with a shiny metal surface and a lightweight middle. I, Marvin Yetsee, have taken the time to record this day in my journal just in case future generations wish to study it. After the test, I plan to give the results in a longwinded and thorough way.

"Okay," Igor, the results analysis supervisor, begins to read the countdown checklist aloud. Our launcher, which is really nothing more than a gigantic circus cannon Igor stole especially for this invention, lies in the middle of the room. "Make the smart bomb. Check. Smoke a bowl. Check. Push the fire button. Check. Okay, I guess that's it. We're ready for the countdown folks. Put on the drum roll tape we made Marvin."

I continue to write as the countdown begins. If all goes well, we'll find out if we're truly smart enough to survive the smart bomb, the weapon which will thin the herd, as it were. Ten. Oh, Glory be. I feel like dancing on the moon, spitting on each and every pigeon who has ever pooped on my lab coats. Nine. What exhilaration! The expectation, the drama. Oh, say can you see? Eight. I won't get patriotic on my



Tuesday
Photograph
By Ian Maclean

friends though. What is Igor doing? Seven. It seems as if he's been looking back and forth between Appolonia and me. I have—six—never seen that look in his eye before. Is that anticipation? He has pulled out a straw and is loading what looks like a miniature smart bomb into the end. Five. He wants a battle, huh? Well he's picked the wrong guy to fight with, let me tell you. I just won't give him the satisfaction. Four. My mom told me the secret was to not let the bully get a reaction from you. So fuck it. I'm not going to even—three—acknowledge him anymore. Ah! it worked. He's frozen again. I knew it would work out well for me, because Mom's advice always pans out. Two.

"What are you writing, Marvin?" Appolonia is distracting me from my story. They probably suspect that I won't survive the smart bomb, but I know I'll be the one to survive! One.

Hi, this is the writer. I just wanted to let the readers know that all of these people are highly disturbed. I walked in and unplugged the Commodore before they could launch the smart bomb. I've taken them to a fictional rest home for a while so they can think about what they did wrong, and figure out how to assimilate into the story environment. Igor eventually called the number he thought he received telepathically, but it ended up being Domino's Pizza. The twisted weirdness surrealism is an attempt to teach the characters the concept of unity with an abstract point of commonality, diminishing their desire to categorize, classify, and eliminate the otherness in the fictional world. Their affirmations of normalcy in the act of creating a smart bomb was undermined by disharmony within the judging group, the signification of the word "intelligence," and the difference between Marvin's articulation and his friends' awareness of fictionality.

(continued from page 13)

great universe then we're creating a different value than when we're writing to be published or to vent anger. Not that any of those things are bad, but they just don't create as much value in the world.

NR: That's interesting because in a lot of the writing workshops I've been to people talk about writing as release. My inclination is to say, "Release what?"

LYL: It might be true that it's release, but it's dangerous because what are they releasing?

NR: Well, that's what I wonder because if you've got yourself all bundled up in these separate compartments and you feel like you're going to explode, why are you going to come to the page and do it all over me?

LYL: Exactly. I think a lot of times we forget that when we write, we're reproducing consciousness in a reader. What we write another person reads and it gets recorded into their head.

Artists are the most vital people in the world. I believe that. What we do is vital. So when we reproduce consciousness we have to examine the consciousness we're accessing. The consciousness Emily Dickinson reproduced on the page was a very high, evolved form of consciousness. When she reproduced that she created a lot of value, even though she was never read in her lifetime, never recognized. What she did for the human race was incredible. I think she and Walt Whitman are more important than Abe Lincoln. He functioned in the horizontal realm, the realm of things that have already passed. They were functioning in the future. They were speaking vertically. They did more for this country than Abraham Lincoln because if we could just agree that there is one mind, then they forwarded that one mind much farther than Lincoln.

NR: It seems to get the collective body of humanity to come to that agreement is a long road.

LYL: Earth itself is teaching us there is one mind. All of this garbage we're putting out called culture, the stuff our kids are looking at, we're gonna get the bill for that. The earth is already giving us a bill by saying, "Look, whatever you put into me, you eat. What made you think you were separate?" People are dying from viruses, mad cow disease. Whatever we put into the cow we eat. What made us think we could get away with this stuff? You can't point to the planet and say, "That's not my body."

So too, whatever we put out as consciousness is out there. It comes back.

NR: Is this where the infinite kicks in because if I step back and look at humanity as a whole that I'm part of, then I can step back and look at the planet as a whole that I'm part of, and from that point I can keep stepping back into a larger and larger realm?

LYL: Precisely. Things get very large.

NR: Would you like to keep discussing this or should we tackle something like metaphor?

LYL: What is metaphor? The Greeks used to think metaphor is actually the presence of gods. Metaphor is an instance in which we are seeing two things together that are unlike.

NR: An unlike likeness?

LYL: Yes. The Greeks said there's the presence of a god there because we're seeing those two things wed. We see

Li-Young Lee

it as a literary device. It's not. What is it, a bag of tricks we practice?

NR: I think sometimes as a student we learn about writing as if we were dealing with a bunch of tricks or tools. Here's a hammer, here's some nails, go build a house.

LYL: No, don't think of it that way.

NR: You have spoken of your mistrust of narrative, of the "historical" aspect assigned to it, yet you wrote *The Winged Seed* with great detail. Did you use the format of a prose poem (interior monologue) because you did not mean for the reader to take the specific details as factual?

LYL: What I was trying to do in that book was find a form that was spacious. We usually think in a lyric poem that the lyric is small, as opposed to narrative which is large. I was trying to find a lyric form that was big enough to contain the narrative. By lyric I mean something that is manifold because it doesn't just have the trajectory of a story. I wanted to find a lyric form that was large enough to contain all kinds of things.

I was trying to hear a story that was larger than my personal story.

NR: Is this an example where you were looking for a format to match the infinite nature of what you were writing about?

LYL: Right, and the infinite nature of our existence. You know, in Hawaii you can go see those big lava flows that

give birth to the islands. They look like a huge mouths with hot lava pouring out. A mile down the road from that you can see where the lava has hardened into patterns. That mouth where that lava is coming out, that's poetry. The reason it's intimate is because it's speaking about you. It's talking about the specific details of you, but in this huge voice. It's talking about things that are specific to me too, but still in this huge voice. When it gets out to where it's hardened into these swirls and patterns, that's religion. That's culture. To me, culture and religion are fossilized poetry. I don't care about culture, about the canon. I just want to hear the voice.

NR: It's interesting that you mention religion and culture together. I have thought that religion was the practical application of faith, a sort of "how to" which sometimes falls short because instructions are only good for the time at which they're written.

LYL: I should say formal religion, because the practice of art is religion. It's *religio*, "linked," to our first nature, our first identity, which is God. That's who we are. Art reminds us of who we are. Art reminds us that we are infinite.

NR: In a way that religion doesn't?

LYL: Well, the problem with formal religion is it externalizes God. It makes God out there, separate from you. In art—for instance when you read Whitman—that huge voice is the voice of the universe. That's universe/mind. When you read Whitman, you're hearing universe/mind. That means we are God. It doesn't externalize. It says God is here, in us. We are one.

NR: Your father though, was a minister. He had a formal religious background. Was there a conflict?

LYL: Oh yes, of course. He would say that what I'm saying is sacrilegious. However, how can anything be outside of me? The only reality is an interior reality. All of this, this body, is a late report of what was first in me.

NR: In previous interviews you've talked about reading your father's Bible and seeing his footnotes—particularly in the Song of Songs—about his struggle to find connectedness.

LYL: It was hand to hand combat for him with what God was, who God was, where God was hiding. He never rested. It was a constant search for him, as it is for me. The minute I feel an ease, the minute I think I experience my true identity, I suddenly experience God as an other.

NR: You wrote in *The Winged Seed* about spending Saturdays helping your father transcribe his sermons for Sundays. Did you experience his conflict then, first hand?

LYL: Yes, it was a little scary to be that close to his mind.

NR: You wrote that it made you dream of him.

LYL: He was kind of a scary person to be around sometimes.

NR: Fathers are that way. I've got one. Your initial sense of the divine though, was handed down from your father.

Poetry: The Practice of Infinite Inwardness

LYL: Part of me, the Asian in me, wants to say that I was his son because we both had the same concerns. A Taoist would believe that I was born to the man who was my father because his concerns were my concerns. In a way that would be easy to explain who I am. It feels older to me though. I remember when I was a kid, a really young kid, walking around and feeling that the world was just charged with numinousness, and that I was an integral part of it. I don't think I only got that from him. I think I also got that from something inside of me that is genuinely me.

NR: Let's back up a little bit so we can talk about the subject of prayer. In light of what you said about poetry and religion, would you go so far as to say that writing is prayer?

LYL: Yes. Writing is prayer because the orientation of writing is not toward an outside audience. For me, writing enhances or strengthens the connection with an interior audience. The orientation of prayer is not out, but in, infinitely in. It's communion. I think we're too obsessed with the idea of an exterior audience. I'm writing for an interior audience.

NR: There is a contemplative spirit that comes through when you read to an audience. When you're writing the poem though, you say you're not considering the audience you might some day stand in front of.

LYL: No, I don't.

NR: Sometimes we hear of the "influences" on a writer's work. You speak of the influence of Chinese heritage and of the desire to write universally, or free from

gender, race and ethnicity. Do you feel a conflict?

LYL: I only feel a conflict because I inhabit this body which happens to be male and Asian, and I end up running into things like racism. More and more though I feel like I keep saying the same thing, because there is only one thing to say. Who are we? Where can we find out who we are? If you look at Christianity, we're sinners. That's not who we are. When you read Whitman, that's closer to who we are. When you read Dickinson, that's closer to who we are. All that spaciousness in Dickinson's poems, all that room, that's who we are. We are that spaciousness. The expansiveness, the passion in Whitman, that's who we are. The passion in Van Gogh, that's who we are. The fervor in Beethoven, that's who we are.

When people were hearing Beethoven's late work—his contemporaries—they were saying he'd gone mad. Beethoven was deaf, so what was he listening to? He must have been listening to an inner vibration. His contemporaries said he went mad. He did go mad, but that's his greatest work, when he heard that inner vibration and not the music other people were writing. He wasn't synthesizing the canon anymore. His conversation, his dialogue, wasn't with the culture anymore. It was totally interior. That's who we are.

NR: If you had a time machine and you went ahead a hundred years from today, and you went into a bookstore and found yourself in an anthology under "Chinese-American Poets," would you shake your head and say, "They didn't get it yet?"

LYL: Yes, for many reasons. Not mainly because they didn't get it about me, but because people would still be thinking in those terms.

—Luisa Villani

Poetry: The Practice of Infinite Inwardness

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The James Steel Smith Humanities Lecture Series brings outstanding academicians and artists to California State University Northridge, in memory of James Steel Smith, professor, artist and humanitarian.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

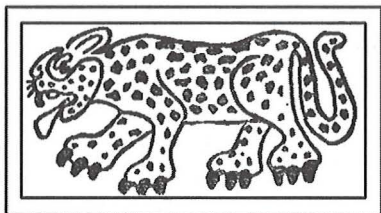
Oliva Barrionuevo was born in Nogales, Mexico. She received a B.A. in Communications at the Universidad de Guadalajara Autónoma, an A.A. in Photography from Santa Monica College, and she studied languages at the Sorbonne and art while in Europe. She has worked with the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Associated Press*. Currently she is the Los Angeles photo correspondent for *Reforma* in their special projects edition. **Greg Bernath** received his B.A. in Art, and is currently a graduate student at CSUN. He works in ceramics, mainly in sculptural percussion instruments, which he also performs music on. *I combine instruments to create original musical works of art.* **Sonia Biscuccia** has been photographing for two to three years. After leaving the military she decided to major in Art at CSUN. **Laura Ann Chiodini** is a CSUN undergraduate. *This work represents my continuing fascination with the human body and nature's organic form. My learning experience and growth in the sculpting medium derives from an ongoing exploration of traditional and nontraditional materials and methods.* **A. Coronell** was born in the Philippines and will graduate with a B.A. in Creative Writing in December 1996. **Eric Devlin** traveled to New York to study fashion then returned to Los Angeles to major in Illustration. He is an undergraduate currently taking a semester off from CSUN so he can gather the resources to continue his education. **Rebecca Figueroa** is a graduate student at CSUN and an English teacher at the Oakwood School in North Hollywood. She is a Los Angeles native, the daughter of a Russian Jewish empiricist and a Mexican Catholic spiritualist. *I do my best to transmute these conflicting paradigms—as well as the double dose of cultural guilt—into poems and other acts of love.* **Leonard Finch** is a graduate student in the Creative Writing option at CSUN, and was recently featured in the Phoenix readings. He is striving to pioneer a new genre of writing: the funk genre. **Barbara Freeman** received her B.A. in Art and is currently a graduate student in ceramics at CSUN. *My work deals with the relationship we have with television images. I'm fascinated by the easy acceptance of a superficial depiction of life.* Her work often includes contradicting words and phrases snatched from the airwaves and scrawled on tablet-like forms, as if they were cock-eyed messages from God. **Karen Frischmann** furthered her sense of visual imagery while studying drawing and photography at the Rhode Island School of Design. She graduated in 1985 with a BFA in photography. Currently, she is an assistant director in the Los Angeles film industry. **Alex Frixione** is an undergraduate at CSUN. He was born in Argentina and grew up in various parts of Spain. *I arrived here when it was my turn to go to the fourth grade and even then I thought school here was some sort of comedy.* **Mario Garcia** is a graduate student at CSUN. He was an engineer for fifteen years and now teaches science at Northridge Middle School. His story "Pool Man" appeared in the July issue of *Kaleidoscope*. His work has also appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, and he has done commentaries for National Public Radio. **Pauline Hoffman** is a CSUN student

working on a Master of Arts degree with a concentration in print-making. After working for many years as an analyst in the engineering department of a large company, she enrolled at CSUN to fulfill her lifelong dream of being an artist. **Cynthia Hogue** has published two collections of poetry, *The Woman in Red* (1990), *Where the Parallels Cross* (1984), and a critical book on American women's poetry, *Scheming Women: Poetry, Privilege, and the Politics of Subjectivity* (1995). For her work she has received NEA, NEH, and Fullbright-Hayes Fellowships. She is incoming director of the Stadler Center for Poetry at Bucknell University. **Charles Hood** is a CSUN graduate and works in the Department of English at Antelope Valley College. **Julie Kornblum** worked for fifteen years as a sample sewer and pattern maker in the fashion industry in Los Angeles and currently teaches at Otis College of Art and Design. She is pursuing a B.A. in English at CSUN, with a minor in Art, specializing in fiber and fabric art. She lives with her husband and two children in Woodland Hills. **Mary Korst** earned her B.A. in fabric design and is currently a graduate student in fiber and fabric art at CSUN. *My work examines sculptural tension with fabric, including its linear and dimensional aspects.* Her exhibitions include: Century Gallery, Sylmar, Ca.; CSUN commencement exhibition and juried student exhibitions. **Ian Maclean** is an actor, photographer, native Californian, and former rodeo bull-rider. His photos have appeared in numerous publications. **Donna Marsh** was born in Pennsylvania and moved to California after living in several other states where she was involved in the theater. She has a B.A. in English from CSUN and currently teaches writing while working on her Masters thesis. **Pamela Mayers** is from Cincinnati but now calls Los Angeles her home. In 1995 she was awarded a grant to do a photographic essay of Ethiopian Jews. *I am grateful to NA'AMAT (a worldwide women's Labor Zionist Organization), the Jewish Federation of the Greater East Bay, and the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati, Ohio for providing me with this opportunity.* **Jose Mendivil** was raised in Boyle Heights by his Mexican mother and Yaqui/Pima-Papago Father. *The material in my poetry comes from the oral traditions of my parents and grandparents, and my personal experiences as interpreted through my east Los Angeles river eyes.* His work has appeared in *On Target, Caffeine, LaLa Land, The Red Nations Movement, and La Gente.* **Alan Mills** is a graduate student at CSUN. He is currently the editor of two magazines and has just finished his first book of queer poetry, a collection called *Building Interiors.* **Alicia Rabins** works at the Baltimore Coffee and Tea Company. In 1996 she was awarded a fellowship to the Bucknell Seminar for Younger Poets. **Heather Rhodes** graduated CSUN in the spring of 1996. **Lynn Root** has lived in Los Angeles for the past six years. She attended Sarah Lawrence College and is currently a graduate student at CSUN. **Wanda VanHoy Smith** lives in Hermosa Beach, California. Her work has appeared in *Poetry In The Garden (Monterey Pines and Poetry Seedlings).* She is married and has two children. She attends the UCLA Writer's Extension. **Scott Alejandro Sonders** is completing his Masters in English at CSUN while working

part-time as a writing instructor at the University of Judaism in Del Air. He is the current recipient of the Masters Literary Award for short fiction, and has been featured in *Poets & Writers* and the *AWP Chronicle*. He has published a guest editorial in *The Small Press Review*, and his novel-in-progress excerpt from *The Orange Messiah* will be appearing in an anthology from Center Press. Sonders was recently an invited guest speaker at the Asilomar Writers Conference in California. **Dan Sullivan** is an undergraduate at CSUN. **Madoka Takagi** is a photographer and Los Angeles resident. Her work has been collected by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C., the Museum of Modern Art in New York, The New York Public Library, The Museum of Fine arts in Houston and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. *There is a conflict of desires in my photography...I am at the moment in time where dominance is uncertain.* Her most recent show was at Cirrus in Los Angeles. **Michael Tyrell** is currently a Research Assistant and M.A. candidate at New York University, where he won the Thomas Wolfe Award for Poetry and the Mazzeo Scholarship in the Humanities. As an undergraduate, he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. His poems have appeared in *The Minetta Review*. **Michael A. Torok** was born in New Jersey. He began his college career at Kent State University. During his search for freer artistic expression, he found the philosophy of Kant, Nietzsche, and Camus and rekindled his passion for writing. He has received his Creative Writing M.A. from the University of Southwestern Louisiana and is pursuing a Ph. D. **Luisa Villani** is completing a B.A. in Creative Writing. In 1996 she was awarded a fellowship to the Bucknell Seminar for Younger Poets and honorable mention in the Academy of American Poets competition. She is president of the CSUN chapter of Amnesty International and is currently organizing a student trip to Chiapas, Mexico. Her short story "Degrees of Freedom" was a finalist in the 1996 *Lullwater Review* Fiction Contest at Emory University. **David Walter** is a graduate student at CSUN. His poetry and short stories have appeared in numerous publications. He teaches elementary and junior high school in the Los Angeles area and is currently working on his first novel, *The Secrets of Christopher Luck*. **Kathy Waggoner** attended Indiana University, Northern Virginia University, and Moorpark College before receiving her B.A. from CSUN. She is currently working toward a Masters degree in Art with an emphasis on sculpture and ceramics. *These figurative pieces are part of an autobiographical series.* **Ian Randall Wilson** attended CSUN in 1990-1992 on concurrent enrollment. His poetry has appeared in *The Alaska Quarterly Review* and *Poetry East*.



Patriarchy is a Curable Disease
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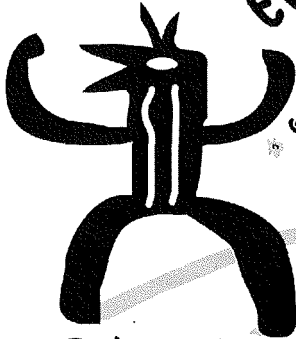
Deadline: March 1, 1997

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Northridge, Ca. 91330-8261

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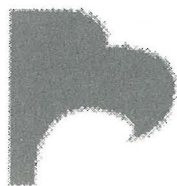
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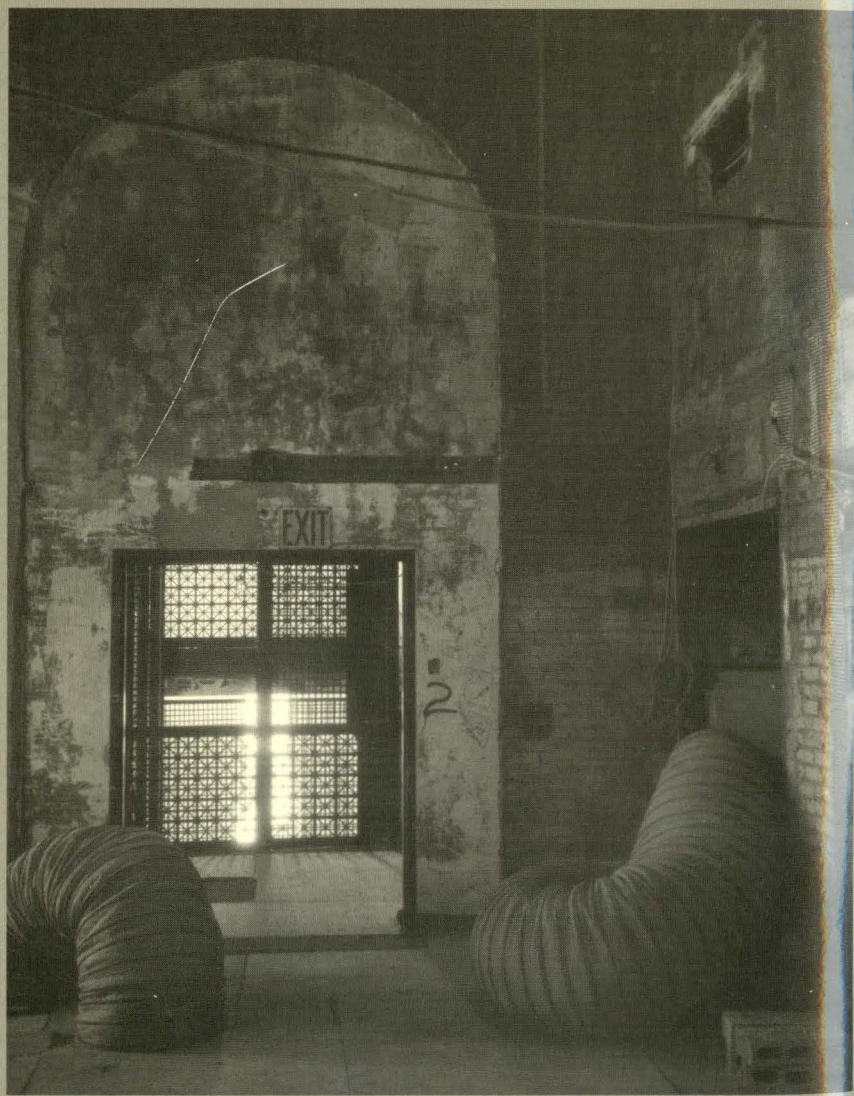
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