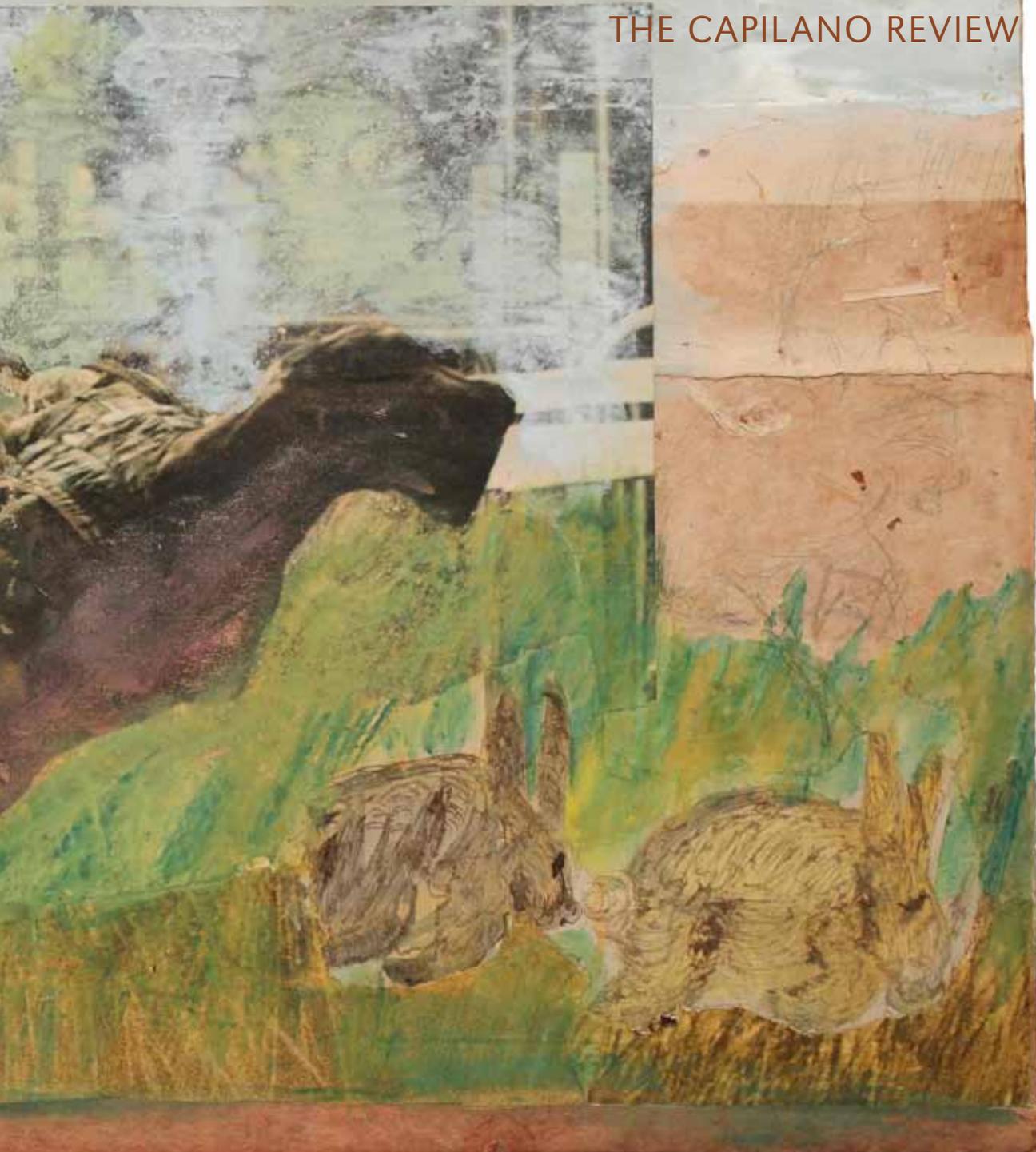


TCR

THE CAPILANO REVIEW



*what are the forms we'd like
to live in*

—DAVID BUUCK

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Cover image: Fran Herndon, *Catch Me If You Can*, 1962, collage on masonite, 39.37 x 60.33 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

JEFF DERKSEN / from The Vestiges

“all that is solid”
is solid again

gold, silver
nickel, copper, coal

“the power of the straight line”

mass produced.

As for those who love
to be astonished

we

don't

do

body counts.

Mini tyranny!

From me to you

“Bring it on”

“It’s always Tuesday . . . ”.

A neighbourhood

On the verge

urban frontiers

named and renamed

new pioneers

on the skids

taste cultures

and neighbourhood shock therapy

right to the heart

heart of the city.

Rattling “Sunday morning

early dawning” and the alternative

economy

bottles and cans musical

in a cart

down the alley to the park.

Where things were once made

When an hour was material, at

hand, demands

for what you never had

“shiny shiny boots

of leather” lean against

a dumpster.

Hours add up to space

to live per square foot

“I am tired, I am weary”

Worried to kiss the boot.

Youth of Eglinton

Youth of el Vente Tres

Youth of South Surrey

Youth of Scarborough

Youth of Five Corners

Youth of La Paz

Youth of the banlieues

Youth of the plazas

Youth of the moment

“an object outside ourselves”

that petrol emotion
that market meltdown
that baton on bone

“a thing”

What’s gold doing
today?

What is copper
down to?

“At this point
I will no longer
refer to the city

but
to
the
urban.”

“I found a flaw

in the model

of how the world works”

(Greenspan)

Thought that cities
were the keg

that would reveal
what relations

what public histories
lay under
the paving stones

(which were arbitrary
for throwing

“of what gets empowered
and
 what
 gets
 contained”

the city digs itself out
as others dig
themselves in

another
use for nature

music, acoustic

that late sixties
ringing

“Where Evil Grows”

will it bring, will it
occupy
the libraries

the weak points
then the strong points

an access
to a language

“only the image of a voice”

through a soft coup

reduced to admiring his ruthlessness

so present

as to decompress

“shattered”

students shake blankets

from the library windows

taped up for the teargas canisters

to come

“Spent a week in a dusty library

Waiting for some words to jump at me”

“You do, you do . . . ”

What we need

right now is

“fresh availability

of cheap

labour”

and land

“and love sweet love”

watching history:

“did not rise like the sun

at the appointed time. It was

present at

its own making”

JEFF CARPENTER / Two Poems

plutonic love

role for igneous

—Legg Bronson

1. plutonic tectonic
skin & other alligators
2. there is safety in caves
& other "pataphors
3. the you would breed the poe
try out of the me &
alternate metonymies
4. à propos of a whole
nother falling
& voicewise
5. sher root lock prosody
couldbeen crack at
a grain Jeff &
autonotation
6. the sis
& other uns
7. ph

plutonic love

roll for igneous
—Jet Conifer

1. platonic plutonic
& other allegories
2. the safety is caves
& other metaphors
3. the I would breed
the poetry out of us
& other metonymies
4. à propos of limbing
felling & other
TIMBER!
5. the root of the hem
lock will crack
granite in time &
other prosodies
6. the six
& other puns
7. same
diff

MARIAN PENNER BANCROFT & HUGH BRODY / “within that trace”: A Conversation

HUGH BRODY: We are sitting in a small sunlit room in a house in Suffolk, England. Outside are the tidal marshes, and wide meadows thick with wild flowers. Large, ancient oak trees show where there are ancient rights of way and long-forgotten gravel pits. The skies are immense. I know this is a landscape we both love. I also know that your work is linked to landscape—even, very recently, to this Suffolk landscape. So this seems a good place to be talking to you about your work, and about the amazing show of your work that has been such a wonderful feature in the Vancouver Art Gallery over the last few months.

The Vancouver show is of work from a particular period in your life, from 1975 to 2000. But your life as a working artist goes back earlier. When you first became a photographer—where did you point the camera?

MARIAN PENNER BANCROFT: At my friends at camp, borrowing my sister Judith’s camera. Then, with my own first camera I looked at the landscape when our family travelled by car across the US to Minneapolis where my father was teaching for a summer. I photographed along the way through Yellowstone Park, Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota to Minnesota.

HB: How old were you?

MPB: Just turned 13.

HB: Did you have a feeling as you were taking those photographs, as a 13-year-old travelling across the landscape, that you were discovering yourself as well as the place you were looking at? Do you have a memory of that?

MPB: I think I have a memory of being amazed by what I was seeing and wanting to record it. I remember the disappointment of seeing my black-and-white prints after I had photographed some chipmunks; they had disappeared against the gravel. That was one of my first lessons in understanding how limited the camera is in being able to see, realising that a two-dimensional picture depends on a certain kind of light, certain kinds of scale, in order for something to be perceivable.

HB: So then you went to art school . . .

MPB: First of all I went to UBC. I was hungry for anything after high school. I had one remarkable art teacher while in high school, Gordon Adaskin. His openness and inquiring mind were an inspiration. At UBC, I studied everything that I could. They didn't have a studio art program, but I studied art history, theatre, philosophy, biology, German, English. I took as many courses as I could.

HB: When did you then do photography as an adult?

MPB: I started to do photography seriously when I was in my second year at the University, and I started to use my father's camera. My first husband had a darkroom and I made my first prints there. I got very excited about making pictures.

HB: What were you wanting to photograph?

MPB: My first photographs were more of people in their surrounds, which would include the landscape. But I was also interested in photographing that which you couldn't see, which was the space between people, really wanting to conjure up something of the energy that exists amongst people when they are relating to each other, with my camera and me being part of it, not separate from it. I wasn't wanting to remove myself from the process so much as I was wanting to create a set of coordinates that would allow a viewer to think about a mental state. I really wanted the camera's presence to be inside the shared experience, and not simply an onlooker.

HB: Can you talk about the work you did in the first years after university, the years between then and the first work in the recent Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition?

MPB: From 1967 to 1969, I was at the Vancouver School of Art studying with Jim Breukelman. I got my first job as a museum photographer at the Planetarium/Museum in Vancouver, and then moved to Toronto where I worked at the Royal Ontario Museum as a photographer. I then studied at Ryerson Polytechnic where they had a new program that was not oriented towards commercial photography. I did a graduate diploma year at Ryerson, with seven photographers and seven film-

makers in one class, working with Dave Heath and Gail Dexter. So I was studying still and working as a photographer.

HB: Did you exhibit at that time?

MPB: My first solo exhibition was in 1972 at the Baldwin Street Gallery of Photography in Toronto and was called “Vancouver, Toronto and in Between.” These were black-and-white photographs that I had made in those cities and while travelling between the two.

HB: So already your first show is about your relationship to the landscape. Were you already thinking about landscape, memory, the relationship to these?

MPB: Absolutely. And place.

HB: Perhaps we should go back to your becoming an artist. Do you have a sense of yourself emerging as an artist and as a photographer as separate personal developments?

MPB: Yes and no. I always wanted to be an artist and started out drawing and painting. And when I became a photographer I was conscious that I was functioning in a slightly parallel world to that of contemporary art, which was a little distressing to me: my concerns were not always consistent with traditional photography even though that was my medium. So it wasn't until the mid-to-late 70s when I realized that I didn't have to be constrained by the conventions and orthodoxies of conventional photography.

HB: What would you say those conventional orthodoxies were?

MPB: Primarily formal considerations, the way one “should” make prints and frame and present them, along with a perceived need for the work to show a certain kind of social consciousness that was rooted in certain traditions, mostly American and European, as seen in the photos of Henri Cartier Bresson, Robert Frank, Diane Arbus: all photographers whose projects were just as much journalistic as they were embedded in an art discourse.

I wanted to be in both arenas and I wasn't quite sure how to negotiate the space in between. I certainly depended on my colleagues to help me orient myself

within my practice. So I spent time with people whose ideas I found interesting, enabling me to expand my practice rather than stay on the straight and narrow path of conventional photography.

HB: Did you always know you were going to be an artist? And did you come from a background that gave value to that choice?

MPB: Yes, absolutely. My mother and father encouraged me and my sisters, always, to be creative, whether it was with music, writing, or with drawing and painting. As a young woman my mother had aspired to being an artist, but was unable to for all those economic reasons of the 1930s. She became a nurse. They paid her to train. But on her summer holidays she would go to Emma Lake in Saskatchewan, which is an artists' colony, and paint. And then she had four daughters. She painted us.

HB: So she was wishing you to be an artist. And did your family have an idea of what art must be, such as my family would have had—what you might call “bourgeois high art”? Paintings in galleries; originals in elegant frames on the drawing room walls?

MPB: I don't remember them being particularly restrictive in what they considered to be art. A couple of my uncles were artists, not well known, but some of my father's colleagues at UBC were better known, like Gordon Smith. There was a sense that this was a possible future. And I don't think the kind of art that my parents had in our home was conservative at all. It was made by their friends, who were their contemporaries.

HB: It was modern, in the general sense of the word.

MPB: Yes, it was.

HB: You come from part-Mennonite and part-Scottish ancestry. Can you say something about the relationship between this background and your art?

MPB: I didn't really grow up as a Mennonite. My father came from a Mennonite family, but he had left the faith, as it were, at 21, so I grew up with cultural references to the Mennonites in terms of music and food. Mennonites and art-

making—I didn't really have a clear sense of that. Nor did I have it in relation to the Scots-Presbyterians. I think it was my parents, as products of their own immigrant and settler backgrounds, with their desire to learn and their love of music, art, and language, who influenced me more.

HB: Something in your work that has always struck me is the complexity of your relationship to landscape. Landscape is something with which you have an intense, multi-level relationship. And landscape for you is something vast. Does that connect to the fact that your family comes from Scotland and Russia?

MPB: It's absolutely central to my project, and I think that I've been involved in the same project as far back as I can remember.

HB: Could you define the project?

MPB: The project, I suppose, is to reconcile the experience of growing up in one place physically, with the phenomenon of an imagination that is culturally occupied territory. An imagination fed by British, Scottish, German, Russian literature, music, art and poetry. Most of what I grew up with had almost nothing to do with British Columbia.

HB: Does that mean you felt alienated in British Columbia?

MPB: Well, I felt both completely at home and yet always puzzled. That puzzlement would be the source of my moving into making pictures and having a very pictorial way of dealing with the world. I love maps. I like to know where north and south and east and west are, to be able to find my way to places I've lived in in the past, to be able to go there again and recognize landmarks. I've done this from a very early age.

HB: That's so significant, isn't it? Your need to orient yourself. Would you say this was linked to being disoriented, or something more positive than that?

MPB: I suppose you could look at a question like that from many perspectives; I wouldn't have been conscious as a child of any disorientation on a large social scale. But there would have been forces at work given my parents' anxieties and discontent in terms of their own dislocations. My father was thousands and thousands of miles from where he lived until he was nine, near the Black Sea. And my mother grew up in Manitoba, a wide, flat, open landscape. I don't think it was easy for either of them,

coming to the coast where they were hemmed in by mountains, rain and darkness, but those anxieties existed beyond my consciousness. Who knows why I've always felt the need to orient myself visually? Maybe the need was always to be able to find my own way home.

HB: For many artists, there's a moment in their lives when they realize that art is not just something that they like doing, or something that they happen to be good at doing, but is something existential that transcends any of those. Realizing it's what they are. When did that moment strike you?

MPB: The only single moment I remember was when looking at an issue of *Creative Camera*, which was a British photography magazine in the 70s. It showed photos that weren't of the camera club variety. They were, to my mind, more serious, more beautiful, more purposeful, more provocative, all of that. And I remember thinking, "Oh, yes, THIS is what I want to be doing." And feeling a certain kind of hunger to be engaged with this medium at a very, very deep level. That was about 1970.

HB: Then you found yourself in a community of artists?

MPB: No, I didn't actually, except when I was at school in Toronto; it was when I came back to Vancouver in 1971 that I became involved with a group of artists. This was also a time when there was money available from the federal government in the form of Local Initiative Project grants and Opportunities for Youth. There were ways that one could actually be involved with others in projects of our own devising and earn a living. \$100 a week. It seemed huge at the time. The first group that I was involved with was called "See Site." This was a group of five women and a couple of guys. We taught photography, we had poetry readings—but all of us were involved in photography as artists. The women were the core of the group.

HB: Is this at the moment of feminist consciousness that seemed of such vital importance in the early 1970s?

MPB: Yes, it was. The group included Cheryl Sourkes, amongst others. There was a very lively scene of artists and architects at the time. There were various groups like Intermedia and there were many overlaps. Later on in the 70s, I worked with

a women's media collective called Isis, and also with a group of photographers who produced an artists' book called *13 Cameras*, a project initiated by Michael de Courcy.

HB: Did Vancouver in 1972 seem quite far away from places that thought they were the centres of art?

MPB: Not really. We were far enough away that we also knew what we had was unique.

HB: So you were your own centre.

MPB: That's true. Vancouver was a destination for many people. It was a time when there were a lot of Americans coming to Vancouver.

HB: The Vietnam War.

MPB: Yes, draft dodgers and war resisters added a huge amount to the culture. Plus there were many immigrants coming from all over, but primarily English-speaking countries at that time as well as Toronto, Montreal, and other parts of Canada. The city felt lively, fresh.

HB: . . . and confident . . .

MPB: Right. We didn't have a sense of "Oh, we're just a little village over here on the coast"—which is really what we were.

HB: But you were among a community of people who had found a place they wanted to be, in which they could be very expressive and free. It's a wonderful combination of factors.

MPB: There were many lively conversations going on at the time, with a very spirited contemporary arts scene that is still talked about. Important American artists were spending time in Vancouver—people like Robert Smithson and the art critic Lucy Lippard from New York. So there were conversations going on between New York and Vancouver, Toronto and Vancouver, Halifax and Vancouver that don't exist now in quite the same way. The Western Front was a hub for some of

this, contributing to a sense of confidence among Vancouver artists that enabled them to locate themselves in larger arenas than just this city.

HB: There's also a sense that British Columbia, was—and still is, of course—a well-spring of wonderful and amazing and troubling landscape and history.

MB: True

HB: 1975 marks the beginning of the work in the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition: twenty-five years of your working life. Would you say the work we see in this exhibition represents the first phase of your mature work? Would you think there's a body of work that precedes this?

MPB: There is a body of work that precedes it. But I would say this marks a certain moment—when my work became part of a larger conversation and when I felt more certain about the shifts that were occurring in it. In 1976, I became associated with the Nova Gallery in Vancouver, run by Claudia Beck and Andrew Gruft. It was one of the first serious photography galleries in the country. Andrew was from South Africa, Claudia was an American. They had both come to UBC, he to teach architecture and she to teach art history. So they came with wide perspectives, and they wanted something to happen in Vancouver. Their gallery was a kind of nexus for a certain kind of serious appreciation of a full range of photographic practices, historical and contemporary. Everyone from Alfred Stieglitz to Ed Ruscha. Jeff Wall showed his first back-lit transparency at Nova, the format for which he's best known. The earliest work in this recent exhibition of mine was first shown at the Nova Gallery in 1977.

HB: Which is that?

MPB: “For Dennis and Susan: Running Arms to a Civil War.” Dennis Wheeler, my sister Susan Penner's husband, was a filmmaker and writer and an important person to me especially in terms of the conversations that we had around art and photography. And he was family. He was also very inclusive in his engagement with contemporary art and artists, and valued highly the work of women artists.

HB: So your photographing the circumstances around his illness is full of meaning, and poignancy.

MPB: It was a cooperative effort. He wanted me to make the photos and I wanted to do them. It was a privilege to share that time with him and with Susan.

HB: Did he know he was dying?

MPB: He certainly knew he was possibly terminally ill. But the photographs were not about dying; they were about living with a certain awareness of mortality. At the time I was making the photographs we had every hope that Dennis would survive the leukemia: he was having a bone marrow transplant, in 1977 a new procedure that offered great hope. When we realized that he wasn't going to survive I didn't make any more photographs.

HB: That series of images is an extraordinary encounter with the sense of mortality. It's intensely and powerfully disturbing in wonderful ways. Of course it's about death, but it's also about youth, and it's also about looking back at youth, isn't it? In 2012, you see photographs taken in the 1970s and we are all young and beautiful. There is a sense of extraordinary life and youth, which comes from the photographs being looked at across a large span of time.

MPB: It's one of the things that I love about the medium. Something photographed last week looks pretty normal but twenty-five years later seems completely different. Whether it's the cars or clothing or streetscapes that have changed, or your memories of what has been. For example, when I made "spiritland / Octopus Books," I was thinking about the loss of a particular bookstore, and had no idea that twenty-four years later many bookstores would be gone. Now, one can also look at 4th Avenue and see how completely and utterly it has changed.

HB: The way in which photographs accumulate meaning over time—no other art form does that.

MPB: Not the same way.

HB: It's that accumulation of meaning that makes photography magical, I think. It's especially true of your work, the Dennis Wheeler piece, the bookstore; and then you take another step in your work, don't you? You don't just take photographs that accumulate meaning, you look for the meaning that might be accumulatable, if there is such a word.

MPB: That's true. There also came a certain point when I realized that text was absolutely necessary. With the series of Dennis and Susan I realized that I couldn't stand by these photos all the time to explain them. I would have to write. In the photographs from Ukraine and from Scotland I'm very, very conscious that you may not have much sense at all of all that has taken place in those locations, without the accompanying texts.

HB: You have a very powerful feeling for words and love of words, so writing presumably doesn't feel at all awkward to you.

MPB: It's not easy for me, but it does feel natural. I've never really been of the mind that a photo should be able to exist without any kind of text. I just don't think that photographs can always do all the work themselves.

HB: With text you can make them do another kind of work.

MPB: Yes. You can locate them, you can contextualize them. I think about both Allan Sekula and John Berger, and their writings about photography. They have influenced me greatly in terms of their advocating for—in Berger's term—a “radial system” around the photograph which includes the everyday, the historic, and the economic. And Sekula's idea that photographs are not like words, that there is no dictionary where there are agreed-upon meanings. Each person looking at a photograph will want to create their own meaning. So if you want to be able to communicate something particular then you have to provide tethers.

HB: Perhaps you can talk about the kind of relationship you have to family, and how you think it connects to your work.

MPB: I suppose I see the family as the most intimate unit of the organism of which we are all a part. It's the most recognizable constellation of characters and people that one can comprehend in contemplating the larger sphere in which we exist. I feel that those people, those bonds, are the most understandable aspects of the mystery of what it means to be a human being on planet earth.

HB: Many people might be aware of this concentration of meaning in their family but would not want to immerse themselves in it.

MPB: I suppose not, but I'm curious about it all because it's so infinitely variable and yet patterns do exist.

HB: In your own life, or across other lives?

MPB: Oh, I think they exist across many people's lives. For example, you will find patterns in the stories of migration, the stories of movements of groups of people or individuals from one place to another as a result of wars, or their owning or not owning land. That proprietary relationship to land, I think, is a pivotal one in terms of determining movement of families around the planet. Certainly both of my parents' families came from very far away from where I was born, whether it's the north of Scotland or Holland, or Europe down near the Black Sea. Movement from these places was also driven by religious strife, political upheavals, and economic pressures.

HB: Do you think some of the intensity in your family had to do with the immigrant syndrome, as it's sometimes referred to? The family of the newcomer to a strange land looks very much to itself as the core of protection and economic hope.

MPB: I haven't thought about it that way.

HB: I wanted to explore your relationship to family because it seems so intense. Your sisters, your parents, your ancestors are all present in your work. Your family seems to be embedded deeply in the project.

MPB: I certainly see myself as distinct from them but also of them at the same time. For me to examine the family is to be examining my own psyche, just in a larger way. I'll refer once again to the idea of the organism of which I am a part. There are distinctions, but there are also similarities. I don't know if that makes sense.

HB: I remember I did a group discussion once with a group of psychotherapists, describing the integrity and the nature of the bond in the Inuit family. And a woman there said, "It sounds terrible to me, exactly what I've always wanted to run away from." That's the opposite of you, isn't it?

MPB: Yes, it is. The family sustains me in a certain way and I am interested in its structures. I think we all derive a certain sense of who we are from being able to locate ourselves within a larger group such that we feel at once both connected and independent. My daughter and husband are part of me / not part of me, central and at my edges, as I'm sure I am for them.

HB: Family is also tied to landscape, isn't it?

MPB: Somehow, yes. And I think part of my original impulse to visit places of origin came from my desire to have a physical experience of those places related to my forbears, to know how the air they breathed smelled, how the winds that continually blow felt, what the weather was like, the soil. I wondered what had actually come out of those physical properties of a place, and whether there was anything at all that had persisted in the body, in my body. I did experience something in Scotland of a very intense kind, a sense which I found very moving. One could reduce it to something as simple as the strong winds, which I don't normally experience in a place like Vancouver. But I won't. Time seemed to have a different shape there. In Ukraine it was very, very different. When I think about it, the Mennonites had only been there for 200 years, so it wasn't really their place. They were not indigenous. But in Holland, which is not unlike Suffolk, where I am right now, there is something else. Something I feel drawn to for reasons that I can't quite figure out—the skies, the light. It's all very sustaining.

HB: Perhaps you could describe going to Scotland or Ukraine—what you expected when you went there.

MPB: Along with physically being in those places I also really wanted to make pictures of them and see what they looked like in that flattened form. In Scotland I don't know what I expected other than to actually see the place where my grandfather had come from, and which was very much a part of my mother's culture. To see where my grandfather had been born and lived as a boy. But it was stirring, and I had a sense of humans having been there for a very long time, even though it's quite empty of people now. They were cleared out for sheep farms. And to go there with a camera seemed almost like trying to kill an elephant with a stick. There was a kind of disproportion between the instrument of expression and

the actual experience of the place. Which is why I felt the need to add the text and language to that installation.

HB: The elephant that you are trying to take with a stick is made up of things that are not to be seen?

MPB: In a way, yes. There's so much of it that exists in the imagination and the photograph itself is such a small trace. What I really wanted to be able to do was to create, within that trace, enough coordinates for a viewer to be able to "add water and reconstitute."

HB: When I stood in that extraordinary room of yours, with the photographs of Ukraine on one side and Scotland on the other, I felt quite surprising kinds of grief. I wonder if that comes as a surprise to you, or do you feel able to explain why I might feel grief standing there?

MPB: [Long pause] I think for me those images are mixtures, huge mixtures of beauty and sadness at the same time.

HB: What is the sadness?

MB: I think it's partly in the emptiness. There are hardly any people in the photos. The poetic texts on the wall are the more material references to human life. In both cases the words refer to a young boy's leaving one place and arriving in another: one, my father coming from Ukraine to Saskatchewan and the other, my mother's father coming from Scotland to Manitoba. Both experienced the excitement of leaving one place that was familiar and arriving in another that was unknown. But I think also it might be the image in Kiev of Babi Yar, the site of the massacre—almost two hundred thousand people, including thirty-three thousand Jews. It looks so verdant and dark. I think of the anguish—there was anguish all around—and I know it is embedded in those landscapes.

HB: I think that's what it is to me. Of course, you set the tone with the text about migration. There's something very poignant about the map of Europe that you have, because it's German. The Eastern European place names in German evoke the murderous occupation of those landscapes. Was that all in your mind?

MPB: Yes.

HB: And then Scotland, the Highland Clearances came into my mind.

MPB: Yes, certainly, yes. I included the photos of the faces of ancestors who came over and some descendents, in an attempt to create a possibility of overlaying those faces on those landscapes, inviting you to pull them into each other within the space of the gallery.

HB: I had many thoughts about the similarities between those two sets of ancestors, thoughts about the convergence of type. They look severe and patriarchal on both sides, as though they came from the same stock and yet they came from opposite ends of Europe.

MPB: Well, they were both Protestant groups, so they had that in common. The Scottish-Presbyterians and the German-speaking Russian Mennonites in my family had very, very similar values—they loved music, thriftiness, unfussy living, and education. Both my grandfathers played the violin, were teachers; both my grandmothers were named Catherine/Katherine and their mothers were named Catherine/Katherine too. They all loved poetry. Those seem like small things and yet beyond the names, they indicate a certain capacity for making their own pleasure.

HB: I wanted to move to the other kind of history that your work evokes, perhaps less directly and less often. Under your feet in British Columbia there are two realities. There are the immigrants, people like your family, yet beneath that is something that has been disappeared. Can you speak about how this other history has figured in your projects?

MPB: I'm very conscious that I'm sitting on land that burbles with conflicted histories. I can't ignore that fact. I feel that I have no choice but to examine what it really means that all the non-aboriginal cultures have come and occupied this land as if it were their own.

HB: In your work, where do you acknowledge it?

MPB: “The Lost Streams of Kitsilano” was an attempt to conjure up an image of the city before all the building of houses occurred; “XA: YTEM,” the piece about Hatzic Rock, was made at a time when the remains of an 8,000-year-old dwelling had been discovered in the Sto:lo territory of the Fraser Valley. I was so excited about that fact. I thought about the old argument for reserves and residential schools—that the First Nations people moved around and were nomadic and that they didn’t really attach themselves to any particular place. And here was proof that they had. Of course they had. It was just expedient for the colonisers to speak and act as if it were not true. So that piece was an attempt to acknowledge the depth of the history that existed before we non-First Nations even got here. And the same with “Transfigured Wood.” I did attempt to make photos where you would get a sense of how things looked before contact, and to think about that, and to think about a time longer than our own lives.

HB: When you’re working on a piece like that, are you thinking about colonial history, reading about it, or is it more intuitive? Could you say a bit about your process?

MPB: I think about history a lot, I read a lot, I intuit, all of the above. Lots of research. Also, in “Transfigured Wood” I wanted the actual process of photography to be apparent in the physical presentation of the work. The big prints were meant to be something present in the room rather than seamless windows into another world.

HB: This brings us to what seems to be your great joy in and fascination with the actual making of prints.

MPB: Well, it’s just one of the aspects of it that I take pleasure in. It’s a very contemplative and solitary activity; it allows me to have quite an intimate relationship with the image. I can handle it, smell it, feel it. I’m not sitting in front of a computer moving things around with my finger. I’m not saying I will never take pleasure in that sort of process as well, but right now I still do enjoy making analogue prints. I like looking at them too.

HB: When you think about the Vancouver Art Gallery show, and as you look at it now rather than when you were hanging it, what do you think is the work that

is most important for you in it? Is there any way in which the show has surprised you?

MPB: I think the experience of seeing all of the work within a space where I could experience a kind of arc has been really thrilling for me. To be able to see how certain ideas progressed and changed—with a certain kind of infrastructure of my thinking and my life percolating through them all.

HB: What would you say were the main architectural features of that internal infrastructure?

MPB: It's always been important for me to have a thorough mix of both the formal and the emotional, so that it never falls strictly into one arena where I'm just dealing with formal issues. Looking at the actual material as a place of meaning has been a concern for me in terms of photography; the apparatus of the camera and the film are very much a part of the conversation that I'm having with the world. That mix of registers has always been extremely important—the structure and content of the work overlapping, so one can't really pull them apart.

HB: I am again and again struck by the incredibly intense interplay between history and memory in your work. Does it seem to you, as you embark upon a piece of work, that history and memory are core preoccupations—for the work itself, and of yourself?

MPB: When I'm making the work I'm not always thinking about memory. But after the fact it becomes about memory. Which is one of the curious things about photography—that like all of us it has a life: it is made up of the present, the past and the future, and where they all meet is in the imagination. So I think the work for me is about the construction of the imagination and how we are affected by a range of inputs into our actual experience, our imagined experience, or vaguely-remembered, mis-remembered experiences, that which is told to us that happened to us; that which we read about happening two hundred years ago; that which we might intuit we are experiencing of the past when we are in a particular landscape. And that's one of the things that drives me to particular places—that odd hope that something will have persisted from the past so that I can feel myself to be in this continuum. Does that make sense?

HB: Absolutely. And do you think you're placing yourself in the continuum, placing yourself in a flow from the past into the future? Are the things in your photographs opposed to, or apart from, things in your consciousness?

MPB: I guess I don't separate them so much. While the work will always have a life independent of me, it will never be so independent that there won't be some connection to my history—maybe to who I was, once I'm gone; I don't know.

HB: Where do you think your work belongs?

MPB: So far it belongs in galleries or homes. I have done some work that has been out in the street, public art works which have been quite wonderful to be able to do. Like the permanently installed markers of "Lost Streams." And a series of 11 x 17 foot photographs entitled "Root System," which were installed for six months at a site where the Canada Line was being built. Those were drive-by images that could be seen over a period of time—huge images of the underside of a particular tree that had been felled in Stanley Park by the big storm of 2006. That installation was an anomaly for me in terms of having photographs outside.

The space of the gallery is one that is so loaded and is a relatively privileged place to be. But so far, along with the book form and one's walls and floors, it's the only one that really works for me. I'm only just beginning to understand an online platform as a production space.

HB: Is that a direction in which you think your imagination will go?

MPB: Possibly, but maybe not. I am still attached to film, and the physical experience of the work and the physical experience of the photograph. I have an abiding interest in the life of objects—not just photographs, but also ceramics or carvings or anything that is actually humanly made that you can hold, that you can touch. That to me is still an important experience.

HB: I am very struck by this ability you have to engage with both the old and the new. You are deeply engaged with traditional media, the traditional technology, and yet you are very modern in your relationship to the web, to Facebook, to modern communications.

MPB: Well, I think it's necessary if you want to have some understanding of what most of the people around you are experiencing, especially as a teacher working with students who are usually between 19 and 25. It's so much a part of their world in a way that it simply wasn't when I was that age. I do need to understand how their imaginations are functioning and how much they are living in a world of simultaneous realities. They are much more practiced at it than I am.

HB: What you say is very striking. You're talking about keeping up with your students who live in a creative world where image making is up for grabs. People can create fantastic images on their mobile phones. The making of images has gone into a new dimension, hasn't it?

MPB: Oh, I'm curious about it. I'm certainly not closed to the possibilities that exist in that realm. But it's kind of hard work for me to go there without having a really inspiring reason to do so. The one change that has occurred in my work has been the use of video. Digital cameras have made it possible for me to shoot live footage—moving footage—in a way that's much more accessible than it ever was before when you were limited with a Super 8 camera to four minutes' worth of time. Not that there weren't charms attached to that technology, but I do really love to shoot movement.

HB: And of course having it instantly on screen.

MPB: Well, not quite instantly. There's the work of editing . . .

HB: Not instantly, but without the technical processes, or the uncertainty, that were part of filming in Super 8, for example.

MPB: Yes. You don't have to send it away to a lab. I think you'll find that a lot of photographers are using video in a way that seems kind of a natural progression, and that they would have been making video more if it had been a little easier all along. I have just been at *DOCUMENTA* (13), where there was an amazing number of video and sound installations, all quite immersive and wondrous, that would have been extremely difficult to produce in the past. The experience of them is so different from sitting in the cinema, with a hundred other people, watching a conventional film. Walking into a space and having the kind of solo experience of

a video that you might have in front of paintings in the gallery is a very different proposition.

HB: Thinking about those 12 years following the span of work represented in the exhibition, what directions do you think your work has taken? What preoccupations emerge in your work since 2000 that would be a major addition to that exhibition?

MPB: The most continuous formal thread has been working in colour, so “By Land and Sea: Prospect and Refuge” was my first venture into printing colour and having it become central. I was very conscious that colour photographs are about the surface in a way that black-and-white ones are not. Conscious that when you look at a black and white photograph you are seeing a reference to something else. Whereas with colour it’s easy to stop right at the surface of the image.

HB: It seems you’re getting it all with colour.

MPB: Yes, which is why I continue to use language around my photographs to change the way they are received; to direct, to some extent, the response of the viewers—so that they understand that things that aren’t visible are as much a part of the work as that which you can see.

HB: So colour’s a new dimension—colour with text.

MPB: And sound. I used sound in the 70s and 80s, and left it for a long time and have begun to use it again as a way of activating the space of the gallery. Also, with the two series “Human Nature” and “CHORUS,” I’ve been working with a square format rather than the rectangle, wanting to explore the territory of the square, a kind of flat place that doesn’t necessarily privilege up and down and horizons and cinematic views. It is an acknowledgement that I’m dealing with a two-dimensional space. I like the dance that happens between the clearly two-dimensional space of the square and the three-dimensional experience of the work. At the same time I’m wanting to use that structure to look at aspects of the landscape and language that are shot through with a range of information.

HB: Does that take you to new actual landscapes?

MPB: It's taken me from Paris, looking at a very urban mix of people and materials and design in the streets, all the way to the North Saskatchewan River in my series "Human Nature," with views from where the old fur trading forts were. The fur trade was driven by fashion in Great Britain. It was all about providing beaver fur pelts for top hats, and when they fell out of fashion the bottom fell out of that industry. But at the same time, the trade was creating entirely new—dynamic and harmful and exciting and terrible and wonderful—relationships between Europeans and indigenous cultures here. Along with these photographs I presented others from Friesland in the Netherlands, where there was huge work done on the flatlands in order to hold back the sea, reclaim the earth, and farm on a huge scale. That landscape is related to the history of the Mennonites, who originated there about 400 years ago. I combined those with images from Suffolk in England, a place that was connected to the second World War and the supposed dropping of the bombs, excess bombs. So I was thinking about the military, agriculture, oil, the fur trade, religion—and that whole mix of human preoccupations. My concerns were a combination of the historical and personal, the religious with the economic, all of it related to the human activities of the fur trade, resource extraction, agriculture—issues addressed in your writing and films around hunter-gatherer cultures and the agricultural aggressions that have occurred on the planet.

HB: As you're speaking I'm realizing that these are new fields of inquiry and new formats, but the underlying conceptual projects are still very similar—history, memory, and the link between the surface and the hidden historical meaning.

MPB: Absolutely. And each one of those photographs has a text attached to it which is, I hope, illuminating in some way. So when you first see the photo you might see it simply as an image of something quite beautiful. But when you read the text the image is altered and thickened with information.

HB: I absolutely love that. And it resonates so widely, doesn't it? Almost everybody has some connection to this sort of question.

MPB: I think in Canada it's important that as many of us as possible understand the complexity of our history. So much damage has been done as a result of our not paying attention to the ramifications of what's happened in the past.

HB: History and land are always connected. There's no such thing as land without history.

MPB: Exactly. "CHORUS," a photo/video/text/sound installation that followed "Human Nature," came out of a time of realizing that CBC radio was being threatened by the Conservative Government, and was already quite reduced and altered. CBC radio has always been an amazing companion to me. I was thinking about the music that I grew up listening to, not only on the radio, but playing as a child, and realizing that so much of what I listened to came from Europe, be it Britain or Germany or France or Italy, and not so much from Canada. And realizing that those musics were very specifically from their time and from their place. So I decided to visit some of the places that were attached to a number of composers, and to try to evoke something of their time that spanned the period from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth. These were Schubert (Austria); Brahms (Germany); Elgar and Britten (the Malvern Hills and Suffolk in the UK). Alongside these I placed images of some places in Alberta associated with the great Canadian fur trader, surveyor, and map-maker David Thompson, along with a journal entry of his. Thompson lived and worked at the same time as Schubert, Brahms, Elgar and George Crabbe (the writer of the original story for Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*). He produced his own "magnum opus," the "Great Map" of northwestern North America.

HB: Is it ongoing, the composer/landscape link?

MPB: I think I'm moving into a different place with it, just being in Suffolk and thinking more about Benjamin Britten and Peter Grimes. I'm doing a closer read of one location through stills and video of some of that landscape such that it is not so much about that music from the past, but how one receives a landscape visually, when simultaneously experiencing the wind, movement, complex ideas, history, all of that. I am trying to figure out whether there is some way that I will connect it to my life in Vancouver, thousands and thousands of miles away. My body's in one place, my mind

in another. So that has persisted through my work—this idea of being two places at once.

HB: Music is a wonderful exemplifier of that, isn't it?

MPB: It is. In "CHORUS," I included sound recordings that I made which were mostly of the dawn chorus of birds in a number of different locations, sounds that would have been very similar even two hundred years ago, when Schubert was composing, or one hundred fifty years ago for Johannes Brahms, or less than that for Edward Elgar and Benjamin Britten. I also included in that exhibition a video that I edited from footage shot in Europe and the foothills and mountains of Thompson's Alberta and in Vancouver. So there was this kind of mixing of places and registers with a soundtrack of four songs by these composers, sung by women, all in one twenty minute video. The video entitled "In ceaseless motion" includes footage shot from a car, a train, a gondola, and while walking in locations ranging from Vancouver to Paris to Banff to Germany.

HB: Wonderful. Do you have a sense of what is lying beyond this work?

MPB: Beyond is an unknown journey! More travels in British Columbia. But for now I am immersed in working with the recent images and video from Suffolk, a nourishing landscape with no familial ties but one I've been drawn to through you and Juliet and the music of Britten. There's something about the openness here that is similar to Westham Island and the bird sanctuary in Ladner, and to a certain extent Holland and Caithness, up in the north of Scotland.

In Suffolk we are right across the water from Friesland (Holland). They say that about 10,000 years ago they were a single land mass. They call it Doggerland—a place where the Thames and the Rhine were connected! And so I think about the scale of our lives and how we think of the length of our lives as being an important measure. I'm someone who believes that we're actually part of something so huge that we can't actually comprehend how minuscule we are in relation to this larger organism. If I feel resonances that I can't quite explain, I think that they must exist on an atomic level too. I want to be able to pay attention to those things. Suffolk is a place where I think about another concentric ring outside the particulars of, say,

Vancouver, or family. It's where I might have a sense of myself within a string that is much longer and much bigger than my lifetime.

HB: As is contained within the specifics of your work.

MPB: Yes. I suppose I want to create a link that isn't linear, or at least a link to some linearity that is not easily perceptible.

HB: Something to do with the boundlessness of linkage? Or maybe a link to the boundless.

We speak now at a few weeks from the end of the exhibition. Is there a part of you that is dismayed? It's a wonderful representation of twenty-five years of your creative life. One of these days it's going to end. What do you make of that?

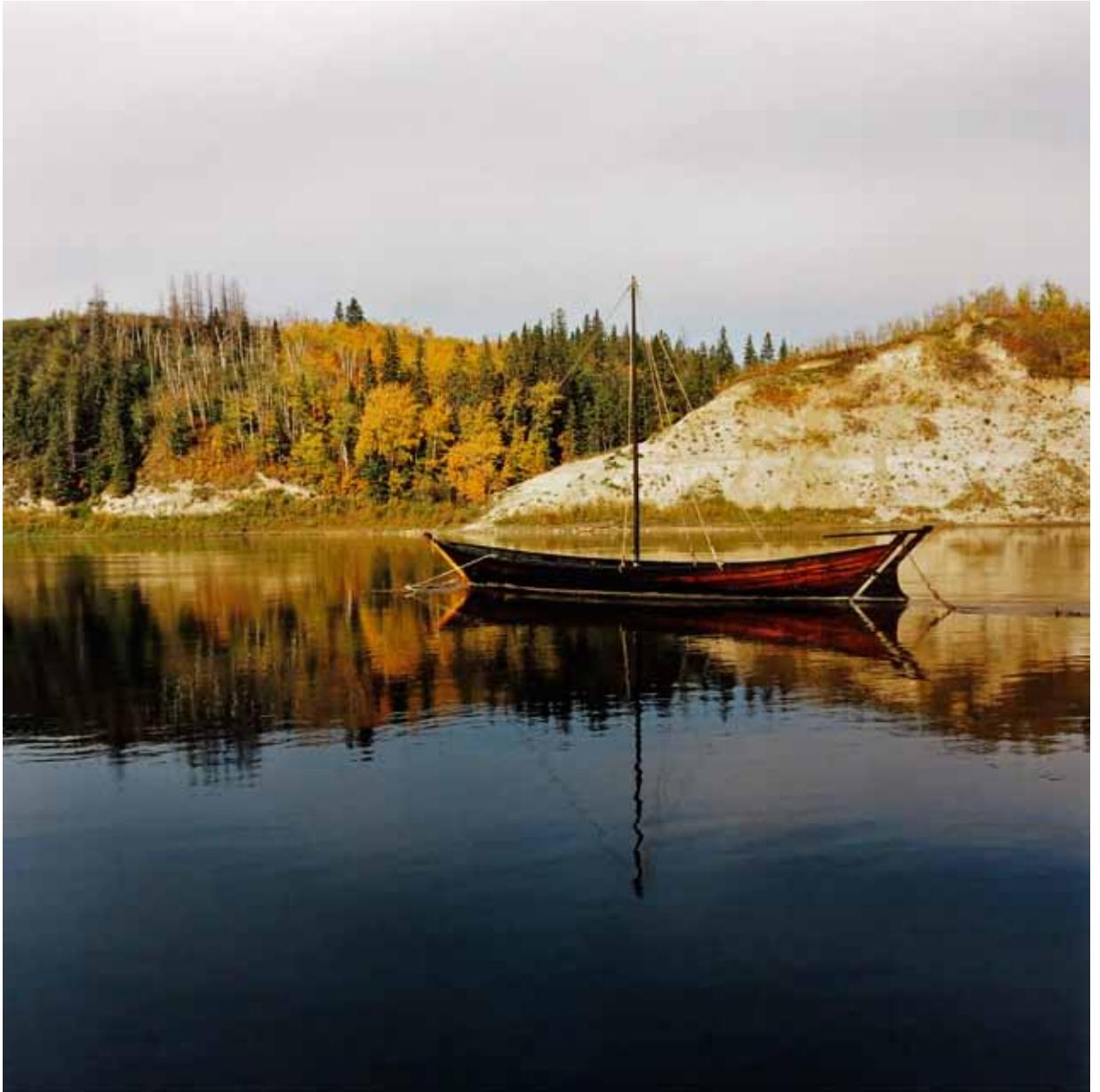
MPB: Well, I feel really fortunate that it has happened at all, and that there will be a catalogue, a trace of the exhibition's existence. I guess I'm becoming more and more aware of how things start and finish. I'm about to start my final year of teaching and am reconciled to the positive aspects of that. I only hope I am able to produce and show as much work again. It will be sad when this exhibition is over. It always is.

HB: It may look as if it's over, but it's not over. It lives on, in the catalogue of course, and it also lives on in what comes next in your work.

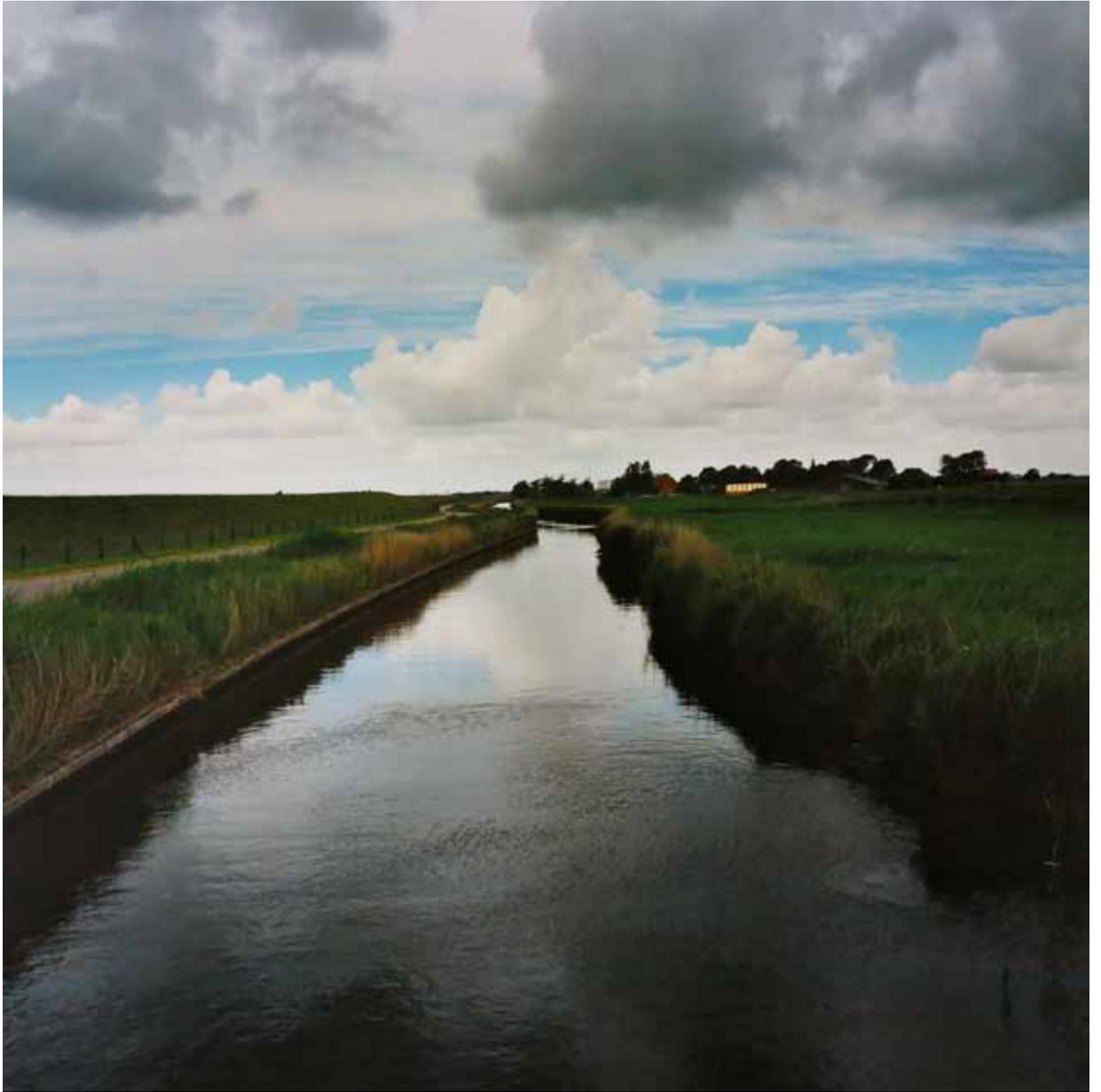
MPB: The saddest thing is putting work back in crates. Ha! That's the worst!

HB: Yet your new work is so alive. That seems to me to be the great achievement, the ongoing celebration.













MARIAN PENNER BANCROFT / from Human Nature (2008)

Original c-prints 30" x 30". Captions by page in order of appearance.

Alberta

37. View of Abraham Lake and Mount Michener from the David Thompson Highway along the North Saskatchewan River. The lake, formed in 1972 by the Big Horn hydroelectric dam, was named for Stoney Indian guide Silas Abraham, born nearby in 1871.
38. View from Fort Edmonton of a York Boat on the North Saskatchewan River. This fort was established by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1795. Traders sailed, paddled, and portaged these boats, capable of carrying over 2700kg of beaver pelts, to York Factory, 1200km away on Hudson's Bay where the bales were transferred to ships ultimately destined for Britain and the production of top hats.

Friesland

39. Children's slide at Witmarsum, the birth place of Menno Simons, a radical priest who broke away from the Catholic Church in 1536 defending the Anabaptist movement, preaching pacifism and a belief in adult rather than infant baptism. His followers are the Mennonites, a protestant group that exists today.
40. Drainage canal near Witmarsum, Friesland, Netherlands. The dikes in this region were first constructed in the middle ages to protect settlements built on mounds of dry land.

Suffolk

41. Oak tree in a crater near the Blythe estuary at Bulcamp Drift, Suffolk, England. 10,000 years ago this area was joined to Friesland, now 150 miles across the North Sea. It was thought that craters such as the one depicted were caused by the dropping of excess bombs during WW II. However, a local resident has set this theory aside. Simon Loftus states:

"I, too, always believed that the various craters around the estuary were caused by German planes offloading [however] I mentioned this to Dudley Wythe, who lived and worked here for most of his life—and he told me that they were in fact sandpits . . . at various places in those marsh meadows it used to get quite boggy, particularly at the intersections between one meadow and another where the cattle crowded through the gates—so they would dig out cartloads of sand to spread there, to make it passable."

42. Gabriel, Juliet, Hugh, and Colin near the estuary at Bulcamp Drift, Suffolk, England.



















MARIAN PENNER BANCROFT / from CHORUS

These photographs were made at sites associated with the music of four composers, and the maps and writing of one cartographer, all mediators of the landscape experience. The original c-prints are 20" x 20". Captions by page in order of appearance.

Vienna, Austria (Franz Schubert “Gretchen am Spinnrade”)

- 44. Vienna, from Urban Subject’s studio window
- 45. 300-year-old Jewish Cemetery (accessible only through Protestant seniors’ home)

Germany (Johannes Brahms “Alto Rhapsody”)

- 46. Buchenwald, at the memorial railway platform
- 47. Church yard in Jena, where Brahms’ “Alto Rhapsody” was first performed

Suffolk, UK (Benjamin Britten “Peter Grimes”)

- 48. Near Southwold, Blythe Estuary
- 49. Tree and pole, Bulcamp Drift

Malvern Hills UK (Edward Elgar “Sea Pictures”)

- 50. British Camp (Iron Age fort) looking south across the Severn Valley
- 51. Juliet with book at British Camp

Alberta (David Thompson “The Great Map”)

- 52. Willow bush at Eyrahi Nakoda Campground (Stoney Indian Park)

Texts to Accompany CHORUS

The following texts are from the writing of one surveyor, David Thompson, and the songs of four composers, Franz Schubert, Johannes Brahms, Edward Elgar, and Benjamin Britten, songs whose words were written by three poets: Johann Goethe, George Crabbe, and Richard Garnett. Thompson created in 1814 “The Great Map” of western North America and was alive during the lifetimes of all who are cited above except Britten. Brought out to Canada from England as a teenager to apprentice as a fur trader for the Hudson’s Bay Company, David Thompson distinguished himself as the foremost surveyor of Western North America in the early 19th century. While still a teenager and posted at Manchester House and Cumberland, he learned the Cree language. In order to increase trade possibilities, he was also sent to the eastern edge of the Rockies to spend the winter of 1788–89 with the Piegan to learn Blackfoot, the language of the Siksik (Blackfoot), Kainah (Blood), and Pikuni (Piegan).

“All things being ready, we set off in the last days of September and crossed to the right bank of the river, and under the guidance of James Gady proceeded in the direction of about wsw for the upper part, of the Bow River near the east foot of the Rocky Mountains, where we expected to find some of the Peagan Indians camped; a distance of about [. . .]miles, over extensive plains, with patches of wood in places At length the Rocky Mountains came in sight like shining white clouds in the horizon. . . . William Flett and myself were lodged in the tent of an old man, [Saukamappee] whose hair was grey with age; his countenance grave, but mild and open; he was full six feet in height; erect, and of a frame that shewed strength and activity. Almost every evening for the time of four months I sat and listened to the old man, without being in the least tired, they were blended with the habits customs and manners, politics and religion such as it was, Anecdotes of the Indian Chiefs and the means of their gaining influence in war and peace, that I always found something to interest me.¹

1 Thompson, David. *The Writings of David Thompson*, Volume 1, The travels, 1850 Version.

Mein Ruh ist hin
Mein Herz ist schwer
Ich finde sie nimmer
Und nimmermehr.
Wo ich ihn nicht hab,
Ist mir das Grab,
Die ganze Welt
Ist mir vergällt.
Mein armer Kopf
Ist mir verrückt,
Mein armer Sinn
Ist mir zerstückt.
Nach ihm nur schau ich
Zum Fenster hinaus,
Nach ihm nur geh ich
Aus dem Haus.
Sein hoher Gang,
Sein' edle Gestalt,
Seines Mundes Lächeln,
Seiner Augen Gewalt,
Und seiner Rede
Zauberfluss,
Sein Händedruck,
Und ach, sein Kuss.
Mein Busen drängt
Sich nach ihm hin.
Auch dürf ich fassen
Und halten ihn,
Und küssen ihn,
So wie ich wollt,
An seinen Küssen
Vergehen sollt!¹

Aber abseits wer ist's?
Im Gebüsch verliert sich sein Pfad;
hinter ihm schlagen die Sträucher
zusammen,
das Gras steht wieder auf,
die Öde verschlingt ihn.
Ach, wer heilet die Schmerzen
dess, dem Balsam zu Gift ward?

Der sich Menschenhaß
aus der Fülle der Liebe trank!
Erst verachtet, nun ein Verächter,
zehrt er heimlich auf
seinen eigenen Wert
In ungenugender Selbstsucht.

Ist auf deinem Psalter,
Vater der Liebe, ein Ton
seinem Ohre vernehmlich,
so erquicke sein Herz!
Öffne den unwölkten Blick
über die tausend Quellen
neben dem Durstenden
in der Wüste!²

1 Johann Goethe, "Faust: Gretchen am Spinnrade"
1808 (music by Franz Schubert 1810).

2 Johann Goethe, "Alto Rhapsody" 1777 (music by
Johannes Brahms 1869).

The deeps have music soft and low
When winds awake the airy spry,
It lures me, lures me on to go
And see the land where corals lie.
The land, the land, where corals lie.

By mount and steed, by lawn and rill,
When night is deep, and moon is high,
That music seeks and finds me still,
And tells me where the corals lie.
And tells me where the corals lie.

Yes, press my eyelids close, 'tis well,
Yes, press my eyelids close, 'tis well,
But far the rapid fancies fly
The rolling worlds of wave and shell,
And all the lands where corals lie,

Thy lips are like a sunset glow,
Thy smile is like a morning sky,
Yet leave me, leave me, let me go
And see the land where corals lie. The land,
the land, where corals lie.³

3 Richard Garnett "Where Corals Lie" 1859 (from "Sea Pictures" music by Edward Elgar 1899).

To those who pass the Borough sounds betray
The cold beginning of another day.
And houses sleeping by the waterside
Wake to the measured ripple of the tide.

SWALLOW

There's a boat sinking out at sea,
Coastguard reports.

FISHERMAN

Within reach?

SWALLOW

No

FISHERMAN

Let's have a look through the glasses.

CHORUS

Or measured cadence of the lads who tow
Some entered hoy to fix her in her row.
Or hollow sound that from the passing bell
To some departed spirit bids farewell.

AUNTIE

What is it?

BOLES

Nothing I can see

AUNTIE

One of those rumours!

ALL

In ceaseless motion comes and goes the tide,
Flowing it fills the channel broad and wide.
Then back to sea with strong majestic sweep
It rolls in ebb yet terrible and deep⁴

4 Montagu Slater, final scene from libretto for "Peter Grimes" 1945, based on George Crabbe's "The Borough" 1810 (music by Benjamin Britten 1945).

ROGER FARR / Six Bay Area Poets with Varying Degrees of Affiliation with the 95-Cent Durruti School of Social Poetics

In 2010, Joshua Clover and Juliana Spahr called for an assembly in Berkeley—“the 95 Cent Skool”—of writers whose work was in some way informed by social struggle, emphasizing in particular self-identified Marxist and anarchist tendencies in contemporary poetics. As they wrote in their initial call:

Our concerns in these six days begin with the assumption that poetry has a role to play in the larger political and intellectual sphere of contemporary culture, and that any poetry which subtracts itself from such engagements is no longer of interest. ‘Social poetics’ is not a settled category, and does not necessarily refer to poetry espousing a social vision. It simply assumes that the basis of poetry is not personal expression or the truth of any given individual, but shared social struggle.

In response to this call, more than 20 people turned up from Canada, the US (including Hawaii), and the UK, to discuss the tensions, variants, and possibilities of a newly engaged social poetics. No consensus was reached and a very good time was had.

The following year, a second, smaller gathering took place, this time under the banner of the “Durruti Free Skool” (provocatively titled after the infamous Spanish anarchist-militant Buenaventura Durruti). A full account of this second session, by Brian Ang, can be found online at *Lana Turner*.

In this section of *TCR*, then, I have collected work by some of the Bay Area-based writers I met at the gatherings and whose work I admire. While I would not want to make the reductivist claim that the work in this section elaborates or represents the concerns that surfaced over the course of the two assemblies, it is worth noting that many of the Bay Area participants and organizers later became active in the Oakland Commune, a “zone of opacity” that completely blew up—in a good way—during the Occupy Wall Street actions of 2011. Certainly, *that* historical moment—“the first of many last resorts”—materializes here.

—ROGER FARR, August 2012

BRIAN ANG / from *Totality Canto 23*

Gained building utility induction vertices gamble
Rather becoming absolute ciphertext budget blessedness competition modern
Nothing contingent style
Only illustration multiplication difference
Makes free two-thirds press vibrations per confiscated science specters stake
Viable party sign fed will
Combine identifying weak unmalleable intruding sense number
Obvious random solution speed section jazz mine fact completely
More
Around divided
Acknowledge spare solipsist users
Arranged susceptible here probability grid war
Cultured normal cinema chromosome break ethics exponentially unjustified disk
framework
Surface largely
Suggested unobservable self-deception home gravity fish inactivity reasoning rule
Quibbling quantum horse's inevitable realist harm citizens
Caught crystal confirming
Short jaded one-time conduct philosophy module exercise bear
Chief
Federal causal equal entity architecture
United inverse capacity difficulty pictorially committing truth words
Go given purchased prime treatise energy turn
Easier underlying carefully
Banqueting same insecure known undominated endangerment explosion mathematics
surprised
averse
Legitimate
Persistent chlorophyll empiricists phrase feature
Evil articulate many-worlds astronomy page trendies calculation message problems
Evidence elite conditions travels

Say customary global polka cryptogram graph

Ideologically song's

Reconstruct jurist eigenvalues geopolitics best people lines think

Experiment popular scale temple system favor

Existing sculpture curie

Example glas faith maps consisteth second thorough other plainly

Prove

Endured language mirror menu

Familiar anna wind encounter occupation

Attacker all

Amounted infinitely aesthetic logarithm letters tributes seen

Arisen covering permissive medieval raï van magnetism sight institute virgin

Parallel régime orbits exhausted least sequence unions rely

Ornamental multitude note

Vacuum

Compulsory sublime redistribution sum cycles row

Dispute less main natural authentication electron religion effects out

Drawing took symmetric du notion pupil circumstances

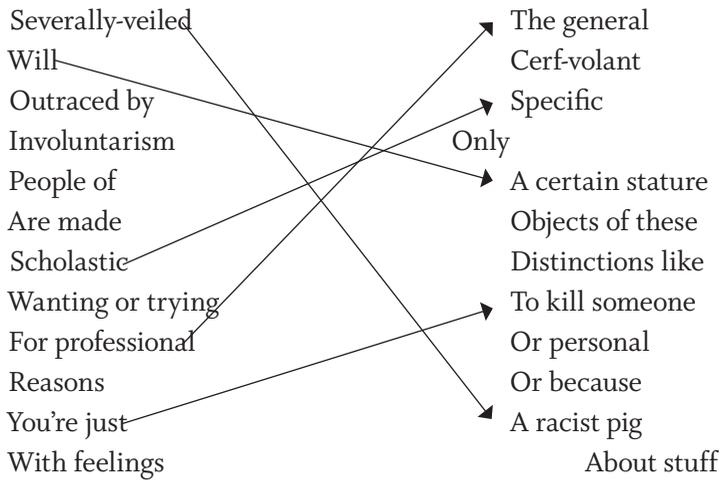
Import atheist

Imposed theory machine chancery revolution

Abrogate ignorance poststructuralism consent

Now barbarism rectangle prosperity authority decorum inquiry caricatures evade begin

JASPER BERNES / from **We Are Nothing and So Can You**



Are not these our properties?
The sad passions, sapped by a system of weights and measures?
Some hate takes and some hate breaks.

Looted fitteds fly through the air,
As if we were graduating
Into the terrifying unrelatedness
Of these things and bodies
As if a bank were just brick and glass and paper
Animated by an archaic, insane script.

But now that we know that every
Atom of the world is outfitted
With a tiny extradimensional camera

What use can we have for remembering
To die here and there 24 times per second?

I'm sure my nonchalance will rescue yours
Wearing some kind of decorative trauma

But now the white baby stroller
Emerges from the fog

And we start to run

Surviving off the continuous passage of its moment of realization, transferred, hall by hall, like the angel of death above the marked doors of the Israelites, a tone blown-out to mere topos. Humanity thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to convert into a series of off-on switches. It took us months. We were meticulous—replacing every pair of eyes in every painting or figurine or sculpture with a 0 or 1, with love or hate, death or life, truth or falsehood, capital or labor (the content hardly mattered); replacing the genitals with transistors; the mouths with capacitors; the whites and yellows with fine arrays. It was almost ambiguous, in the river, our genders awash. It was our Sphinx, our pink remind. It made the whole history of art into time that answered its own question—like, why is there something instead of nothing? And when will we finally win? How much is left? It reduced Paris to Is, New York to New, Los Angeles to Los. 19 20 21. But since it answered only with light or sound it required a myth to be explained. This is that myth.

The times of things describe the circle
“He was raised by wolves”
“And Swedish au pairs”
“And a dark cloud whose
Intercommunicating vapors. . .”

The times of things avant la unbecoming
Whimper at the scabby heart of the matter,
Decentered carousel of hand and eye
There is a new version available
Whose tangents describe
The turning spit of sovereign abstraction:
An hour is an hour is our
Face planted in bright dirt and.
The red thread of lived activity
Woven into white ticking
And stretched across the sky
Until the smolder and suffer of bildung
Removes the ding-dong from the dull
Bells of arrival and we use the buildings
As giant bongos or Mao Zedong
Machines or medial
Porquería, time not as translation
In space but height or falls
Above the slough and thrill
Of discontinued parts
Let x let yet, let y let then, let all
The knotted, wrung-out, loveless
Rates decoct as crystal and as crisis
All that rises without at

Or would we? Were we not the ones who—in the swerves and gaps of history—transform general will into a kind of general was, into the dailies and rushes of counterfact, the epic fail, man-nation? Or would the 500 years experiment find at its limits not just capitalism or class society but the human form, not just the speaking ape but all the carbonated sacs of self-reproducing logos that foamed out of that old, terrible constancy? You stood stupidly in the field. Your brow was like the focusing ring of a camera—you could tighten it around a tiny color and the foreground would flow back into a kind of low tide of the mind where the old oppositions seemed to dissolve, lengthwise, heightwise, now-wise, into the non-identity of cell and circuit. Would it have been meaningless, then—the communist impulse, invariant baseline of those final human centuries, banished and expelled, crushed and restructured and dusting the bedsheets of the hospital ward, yet still arising, again and again, with all its clamor and naming? Shouldn't we have simply hastened on the end, cheered on the hot, whirring metals of the computers in the basement? The frequencies collecting in our forehead did feel good—we understood it not at all at once, the bright reasons flashing like stairs in the dark. We drank it up. And then we fought as hard as we could.

DAVID BUUCK / from **We Do the Polis in Different Voices**

How to make
nothing happen

until there's
something

there in that
negation

where we want
to have begun

Of space-time
compressing

momentum
without target

running not
yet amok

inside the tent-
ative present.

Of duration
scansion'd into

communiqués
disguised as poems

in whatever
time this is

here on the
trampled grass

In the epic
gap that splits

actors from
their lines

the play-
ing field

opens ops
for now-time

A field
of intensities

pulse through
a set

of others
coaligned

in throng
songs

Were verbing
swerved

and swayed
into sieves

maneuvering
toward

fissures
in the line

The improbable
trembles

in each arched
body

what are
the forms

we'd like
to live in

From I to
we is an other

zoned outside
coterie comforts

the forms
drop away

and new ones
rise up

—OAKLAND, 2012

MELISSA MACK / OF : FORMATION or OF, ANONYMITY : OF BLACK BLOC FASHION

a

tongue is bunched or arched
near the middle
the bunching or arching is lower down
a crouching near the floor

cluster formal battle tactic

up from the throat

the neck is a sheath

(but a hand to the neck
to check the sound is neither
a neck
-er -chief
or a hand
-ker -chief—
drop the hand from the neck
and the -neck, and the -chief
to form the word *kerchief*
goes soft to chiff,
bird worker, a breather

portent >>> interruption

oak pop drops on the roof
a sound every so many beats

if it repeats—cheep—but with no intervallic
consistency, is it a pattern or a tactic?
from the safety of my shack
rental studio good light bad carpet bldg w/ 1 bedroom
17 bathrooms

do i know my neighbors?
can't answer (locks can work like fashion)
a woman lives in that head covering (it's a pattern or a tactic)
pop's not timed to the seed-beaked,
though he or she could be

the ones who made it happen

or is it the avant or fall fire or leaf debris, pinging
action alert or the twitterverse? > > >

does a pattern/tactic matter

recall a kerchief

it hides the vocative O
a clothing a closing the teeth come down hard
on the —V—
same shape flipped as the hiding chief-
ly for anonymity (see alone fore-
runner al-one) in the streets
re-voke your vocation
we grow our call out from beneath
to flow in an open secret

WENDY TREVINO / Division of Research

Zeray Alemseged

Dr. Zeray Alemseged's research explores early human evolution in the context of 6 million years of environmental and climatic change. Currently, Dr. Alemseged is engaged in a thorough analysis of his own landmark discovery of the earliest and most complete *Australopithecus* skeleton in the history of paleoanthropology. His other projects focus on the evolutionary history of tool use and meat eating and past environmental and climatic conditions responsible in shaping human evolution. Because understanding the place and role of our species in nature promotes conservation and sustainability initiatives—since saving the planet is tantamount to saving our own species—Dr. Alemseged strives to make anthropology part of people's everyday lives by presenting his research at conferences, participating in interviews for popular radio and television shows, publishing in prestigious scientific journals, and utilizing the Academy's many outlets in order to engage Academy visitors.

Frank Almeda

Dr. Frank Almeda's research explores Melastomataceae, a family of flowering plants commonly referred to as "princess flowers" that comprises a large part of the vegetation in tropical biodiversity hotspots. Currently, Dr. Almeda's work focuses on a large segment of the princess flower family called Miconieae, using DNA sequences from this large assemblage of species and other data to provide an evolutionary history of princess flowers. Because princess flowers are an indicator of species richness in tropical rainforests, this work will be used to inform and direct conservation efforts around the world. In addition to his scientific contributions, Dr. Almeda engages diverse groups of people in thinking about the interdependence of people, plants, and the environment, lecturing regularly to audiences at the Academy and beyond.

Stanley Blum

A zoologist by training, Dr. Stanley Blum has worked full time in the field of biodiversity informatics—the application of information technologies to biodiversity science—since 1990. Working collaboratively with researchers, programmers, and other informatics professionals, Dr. Blum strives to maximize the quantity, quality, integration, and uses of the information resources created by the Academy's Research Division. In addition to helping Academy researchers manage their own data, this work entails making the Division's databases accessible online and integrating biodiversity data across organizations both nationally and internationally.

Tom Daniel

Dr. Tom Daniel's research explores the geographic distribution and evolutionary history of various plant species as well as the roles these species play in their respective ecosystems. Much of his research focuses on species of the mostly tropical family Acanthaceae (*Acanthus*) in the United States, Mexico, and Central America, but in addition to this work Dr. Daniel has spent the past decade working on a revised account of all native and established plants in San Francisco County. In addition to his numerous publications and presentations, Dr. Daniel has assisted researchers screening Acanthaceae for new compounds with which to treat cancers, illustrating the potential impact of his research.

Terrence Gosliner

Dr. Terrence Gosliner's research focuses on the biodiversity, evolution, and conservation of marine biotas, using nudibranchs and their relatives as a model system for studying evolution. While the evolutionary relationships of nudibranchs are explored largely in the confines of a lab, Dr. Gosliner conducts his field and biodiversity research in the Verde Island Passage of the Philippines, the world's

most biologically diverse marine environment. These biodiversity studies were instrumental in bringing the Passage to the attention of Conservation International and the World Wildlife Fund and **the subsequent** establishment of the region as a special conservation corridor. Dr. Gosliner's lab work on nudibranchs has also proven valuable in identifying species to be studied by the National Cancer Institute and pharmaceutical companies for their potential use in producing **new drugs** to fight cancer and HIV. In addition to publishing and presenting his research, Dr. Gosliner has sought to broaden **the impact by training** the next generation of systematic biologists who study mollusks, a group including undergraduate and graduate students from the United States, Filipino scientists, and students from **third-world nations**

Healy Hamilton

The focus of Dr. Healy Hamilton's research is ecological **forecasting** which integrates spatial information on species, climate, and environment of the **past, present, and future** to better prepare for changes in a rapidly changing world. Her research is specifically applied in that it is meant to support conservation organizations and **management agencies** that lack the capacity for rigorous ecological forecasting but still need this information to develop strategies for confronting global change. Dr. Hamilton's ecological forecasts help identify places where a given species exists today that have a high probability of maintaining their necessary climate into the future, and when applied to ecologically- or economically-important animal species, forecasting results contribute to the design of wildlife corridors, one of the most widely **recommended approaches** for supporting biodiversity adaptation to climate change. Due to **the service-oriented and highly collaborative** nature of her work, Dr. Hamilton actively develops research results into outreach efforts that go beyond (without precluding) publications.

JEANINE WEBB / Higgs Boson Fever Fills Cern with 24-Hour Particle People and Angry Seductive Metaphysix

see these hips have never been theoretical

excitement: almost palpable

the canteen: abuzz

Fabiola shows beautiful event displays of these Higgs candidates in the 4-lepton channel.

“take these hips to a man who cares” is not an ontology

while this song is not correct or fair to circumstance (i.e. tragic

like all summers in the end)

sometimes the relief of essentialism in the real.

or like, don't

take them to a man! if we ourselves

are the means of production

it becomes muy importante

that we seize ourselves

we at times appear not to see all the cities

we've sacked

but à la même temps-perrapture

these inner calculations can

kill the actions, shame we

inherit, or

CANCELLED

“due to threat of police

against all activities

except Occupy Your Soul,”

so yeah.

parricide which means murder of a parrot, obvs.

I'm giving all these books love

bites in semi-public places

I mean looks

several loves at four-sigma confidence interval
does that mean rhythm or does that mean

don't worry about what's right / just be
for real

I was, *am*
trying every possibility
of opening.
you know: to stop dying in the cycle
because one's heart is not a silver machine
of debenture and furthermore is
a torch so: shine it on the funk

We kept bartering bibelots in Byblos
and in spite of this cortege of reactionary siamangs
and the corridors of mounted police

in the swash of modistes
an End of Empire State
of Mind began, in a dream state
where on the verandas shared
I mean eras, our hearts became
a beautiful catalog of weapons

it was mad hot

and then we weren't even allowed to keep
that narrative it was stolen back from us
in an underwhelming offscreen firefight

by a daring girl in the service economy
police raid the worst
kind
hand-
bound

by a Nobel
“for his work on the standard model”
so it clocked us
in.

“Fine, there is something there—a resonance,” says a Martinus Veltman, emeritus,
martinizing.

Honey laundering rings.
Then my barricades
beginning to feel
annulate
my impuissance
unexcused
merciless!

All the Involved Parties: Oh don’t talk to me anymore! I am shuddering among the
sages!

colliding on the daily
how hard it is to sing when your heart is
crushing and the prison needs conflagrated
and the laundry needs done
that’s not even my idiom
but it’s ours

The ZZ+2photon Combination: So much applause. So much energy!

Still it was difficult but I galvanized
every gimcrack and courted
every panjandrum. I fitted
myself with neon goggles
and voltaic gloves before
putting on this record
for the nearest
and farthest of
friends

love, our subject

COLIN BROWNE / Tom Cone and The Opera Project

My theory was that if a text is set correctly for the sound of it, that meaning will take care of itself. And the Stein texts, for prosodizing in this way were manna . . . You could make a setting for sound and syntax only, then add, if needed, an accompaniment equally functional. I had no sooner put to music after this recipe one short Stein text than I knew I had opened a door. I had never had any doubts about Stein's poetry; from then on I had none about my ability to handle it in music.

—Virgil Thomson, *American Music Since 1910* (1971)

Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) famously said that as a girl she'd loved the opera because she could not understand the words. It meant that she could absorb each moment's vibrancy without the irritable distractions associated with ploughing the semantic turf in search of meaning. The operas she attended would have been sung in French, Italian and German, masterpieces of plotting and double-entendre presented by travelling stock companies selling European chestnuts to the “uncultured” and the striving nouveaux-riches of America looking to burnish their credentials. For Stein, these performances opened the door to her practice as a writer absorbed by new theories about the nature of consciousness and a listener attentive to rhythm, sound, repetition and the semantics of the American language as it was spoken. It took a while, but by 1913, her friend Mabel Dodge Luhan could write in the journal *Arts and Decoration* that she'd begun to understand Stein's strategies by “listening to Gertrude Stein's words and forgetting to try to understand what they mean. . . .”

Tom Cone held Stein in high regard, but he also had enduring faith in the ability of urgent, precisely-targeted language to pierce the mighty and to speak truth to power, corruption, and fear. As a playwright and librettist, he worked to find linguistic disruption, disjunction and interruption wherever he could find it. He never stood still; when one linguistic strategy began to show wear and tear he shifted in the direction of its contrary, never wanting to bore himself and always wanting to be a step ahead. He was happy to be excessive, to challenge and to irritate, and, at the

same time, to touch the heart in ways one could never have imagined. His characters, tangled up in language, were never easy.

Tom was enthusiastic about contemporary opera. It was his conviction that it should be regularly overhauled in order to stay relevant and persuasive. This meant that if there were words they would have to be comprehensible; they'd have to mean something. For this to happen, in his city and in his adopted nation, they'd have to be sung in English and clearly articulated. Writers would have to turn their minds to lyrics, syllables, vowels, and consonants that incited and complemented the musical score. With Stein, he believed that "The business of Art . . . is to live in the actual present, that is the complete actual present, and to completely express that complete actual present" ("Plays" in *Lectures in America*). He was infuriated by the insistence of contemporary opera companies in Canada and the United States on producing more or less the same repertoire that Gertrude Stein would have heard as a child. He was dismayed by the stuffy, old-fashioned culture of grand opera, and excited by every attempt to create and produce opera with new young singers, musicians, writers, and composers. He knew that audiences would come to new operas if they had vitality and urgency, and he knew that companies could create international reputations by taking risks. He was vocal about this, and yet budgets and traditions and long-term planning by opera companies seemed to preclude new forms, new words, new music, and new advances in the art.

Tom and his wife Karen Matthews had once before addressed the timidity of Vancouver's musical institutions by creating, in 2004, with their colleague David Pay, a successful series in their living room that featured the commissioning of new songs. Called Song Room, it brought together Vancouver composers, writers and musicians twice a year to experiment with exciting and often risky collaborations. It brought new audiences to new music, and undertook to further develop these audiences by casting an ever-wider net. The "Collaborations" issue of *The Capilano Review* (Winter 2008) featured eleven Song Room collaborations. In the fall of 2010, Tom and Karen took the step of creating a new series called The Opera Project for the purpose of creating ten-minute operas. They commissioned four composers and four writers (Tom being among them, for which we can be grateful), and in May of 2011, they unveiled the new works in their home, including Tom's *Love Thy Neighbour*

with music composed by Edward Top, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra's composer-in-residence.

The rules for The Opera Project commission are simple. The work may be no longer than ten minutes, there's not much room for acting, costumes or props, each project may feature up to four singers and four instrumentalists, and, as with all Cone & Matthews events, the money collected at the door goes directly to the performers. Tom insisted that the words had to be audible and comprehensible, and was firm in his conviction that the writer's libretto is equal in value to the composer's score, a surprisingly radical proposition in opera circles.

With the commission in hand, creators were free to explore and to redefine the very idea of what an opera might be, and this was true for the second set of five Opera Project commissions presented on the evening of September 22nd, 2012. The evening was dedicated to Tom, who died on April 5th, 2012. It was the last group to have Tom's imprimatur, if this is the right word, the last to have been chosen by him, to have received his particular blessing, the last to feel the warmth and the attention that came with being a part of this musical/textual experiment. When he asked one to participate, it was never just to fill in a hole on the program. There was a silent contract, or perhaps not so silent sometimes, as he was often free with his advice. He liked to take artistic, emotional, intellectual risks, and he wanted the participants to join him in taking those risks, to outdo him even! This is what mattered; he wanted to be transported somewhere he'd never been before. It was his challenge to anyone involved. He searched restlessly for artists who were breaking new ground. As genres became comfortable and predictable, he set off to look for whoever was launching a fresh assault on the present. I loved that restlessness. All of us who knew him will miss his urgency. He brought joy to all involved: joy in giving and joy in receiving.

Karen Matthews has said that she will continue with The Opera Project and with Song Room, which is Tom's wish. Audiences and artists alike will rejoice, knowing that there is still a place for experimentation and collaboration that they've had a share in creating and sustaining. We're grateful for Karen's generosity, and to David Pay and Carol Yapple, co-producers, who have contributed so much to the successes of both series.

—COLIN BROWNE, 23 September, 2012

JENNY PENBERTHY / *La crise: un drame d'Ubu Moi et Toi*

Music: Jacqueline Leggatt

The original performers, on the evening of September 22nd, 2012, were: Marianna Valdes, soprano; Madeline Lucy Smith, soprano; Melanie Adams, mezzo; Lee Plested, bass; Janna Sailor, violin; Alana Lopez, violin; Marcus Takizawa, viola; Thomas Weideman, cello; Al Cannon, conductor.

Characters: THE PEOPLE (two members of the indignant public)
 UBU MOI (vain, pompous, self-promoting, above the fray)
 UBU TOI (practical, aware of the severity of the crisis,
 ruthless, managerial)

Setting: All four characters are in the same boat, adrift on an ocean that both lulls them to sleep and surprises them with unexpected waves.

The singers are asleep on the boat. A wave strikes, waking Ubu Moi and The People—Ubu Toi sleeps. They put their arms out sideways to steady themselves.

The People: Whoa! What was that?
 We're sinking! We're sinking!
 Help, this boat is sinking!

Ubu Moi: Oh noise, noise. *Adjusting his suit and tie as if for the cameras*
 Moi, je suis Ubu Moi
 I'm in the money game . . .

The People: Windbag! Scumbag!

Ubu Moi: I think outside the box
 Connect the dots
 Downsize . . . when I can . . .

The People: What a scumbag!

Ubu Moi: I can . . .

The People: What a windbag!

Ubu Moi: I can . . .

Ubu Moi: Competitive advantage
 At the cutting edge
 It's a win-win
 A win-win . . .

Ubu Toi's cell phone rings, waking her up. She talks into the phone throughout, hearing bad news.

Ubu Toi: Ubu Toi ici.
 Have you seen the numbers?
 Oh my fat wallet!
 Don't panic
 It's business as usual
 Give them more credit
 Let them spend, let them spend

The People: There you go again!
 We are people, not products.
 We are people, not products.
 We will not pay for your crisis!

Ubu Moi: Throw them overboard! (*in a lordly manner*)
 Do we need them?
 Are they worth anything?

Adjusting as if for the cameras

 I'm the chief executive officer
 Number One
 Worth a lot
 A lot, a lot . . .

The People: Listen to him!
 Windbag! Scumbag!

Ubu Moi: I'm a team player
A game-changer
A no-nonsense type . . .

All singers: Whoa! Where did that come from? (*putting their arms out to their sides to steady themselves—another big wave is passing*)

Ubu Moi: Give me your money
I'll grow your money
Moi, je suis Ubu Moi

Ubu Toi: Oh holy globe! (*still on the phone*)
We need bailouts
Hedge your bets

The People: We want jobs!

Ubu Toi: Have you seen the polls?

Ubu Moi: Moi, I'm captain of the ship
We have the wind behind us
We're driven by results
By positive momentum
Going forward
Moi, je suis Ubu Moi

The People: We want pensions!

Ubu Toi: They want to retire?

The People: We are people, not products.
We are people, not products.

Ubu Toi: They're chattering again!
Can we shut them up?

The People: Oooh, they're drowning us!
They're drowning us!

Ubu Toi: By my bonus!
 Are we capsizing?

The People: We'll have to swim for it! Swim for it!

Ubu Moi & Toi: Where is our team?
 Where are the Ubuists?
 The middle-menagists?
 The consult-physicians?
 The memo-factotums?
 Come on, quick march
 To the rescue
 Financial gentlemen!
 We're in a tearing hurry
 Do you hear!

Ubu Moi & Toi, hands on brows, looking into the distance

Ubu Moi: There goes Greece, farewell!

Ubu Toi: And Egypt, a lost opportunity!

Ubu Moi: Italy, adieu!

Ubu Toi: Spain up ahead!

Ubu Moi & Toi: Can't see it
 Can't see it

Ubu Moi: We've got Libya in the bag.

Ubu Moi & Toi: Where are we going?
 Where are we going?
 We should have arrived by now!

DAVE DEVEAU / Unnatural

Music: James Coomber

The original performers, on the evening of September 22nd, 2012, were:
Steven Bélanger, baritone; Lee Plested, bass; Martin Fisk, percussion; James
Coomber, conductor.

O: To say it's unnatural is to say it's a sin.
The language is different, the thought is the same.
This place is so far away from home.
I must find the story underneath.

O sits in a café. G comes to serve him.

O: Do you serve coffee?

G: No coffee here.

O: What would you recommend?

G: I bring you something. I bring you.

G exits.

O: There is magic in this place.
Tension.
Danger.
There are secrets.
I need to see what's underneath.

G brings a bottle of soda.

G: Soda.

O: Ice?

G: No ice here.

O: A cold one?

G: No fridge here.

O: Thank you all the same.

G: *(aside)* The way he checks over shoulders.
Looks around with such disdain
He thinks he knows it all.
They always think they know it all.

G: You not from here.

O: What do you mean?

G: Are you waiting for someone?

O: Waiting.

G: Are you reporter?

O: I'm just waiting to find something they might understand.

G: No reporter allowed in here.
You go back home. This is no place for you.

O: Thank you, but I'll be fine.
I'm just waiting.

G: You will wait forever.

O: Why?

G: No one will talk to reporter.

O: I'm not . . .

G goes to leave.

O: His ear is pierced but there's no ring.
His eyes are filled with mystery.
His face wants to smile, but is too afraid to dare.

But do I dare? Do I really dare?
(To G) I was told I might find people like me here.

G: Reporters?
Foreigners?

O: That's not what I mean.

G: You wait for somebody or not?

O: What is your name?

G: No names here. Too dangerous.

O: Can you sit for a moment?

G: I can't.

O: Please.

G: I can't.

O: Please.

G: You can't understand.

O: How do you keep safe?

G: From what?

O: You know what I'm saying. I know you do.

G: Not by sitting. Not by talking.
They're watching.
They're listening.
Your friends and neighbours are also spies and liars.

O: What do you mean?

G: I shouldn't speak.

O: Tell me.

G: They will round you up.
They will stone you.
They will take away everything you know.
Hunt you.
Shame you.
Kill you.

O: But why?

G: It's not about why.
It's about being smart.
Fitting in.

O: Then how do you do it?
Live day to day?

G: What would you die for?

O: I don't know.
For freedom?

G: For freedom?
For being true?
Being real?
Honest?
For being yourself?
For your life?

G notices his own outburst and becomes suddenly aware of the danger around him. He exits.

G returns.

G: Can I get you more things? Some rice? Some soup?

O: Are you safe?

G: You are naïve.

No one is safe here.

O: Have they come after you?

G: No one is safe here.

O: Can you tell me your name?

G: There's danger in being who I am.
I can give you a name, but it is not mine.

O: Why not leave?

G: You wouldn't understand. I can't.

O: What do you mean?

G: You have said too much.
It is illegal. People like you.

O: Like me?

G: You will be caught.

O: Where I'm from we can get married.
Where I'm from we have parades.
Where I'm from . . .

G: Where you're from . . .
Where you're from does not matter.
Now go. They are coming.

O: How do you know?

G: Because I called them.
What choice did I have?
They're watching.
They want to see what I'll do.
If you're not with, then you're against.
Unnatural behaviour

O: But you're the same as me.

G: This is not your place.
This is not your understanding.

O gathers his things.

O: Your life could be better.

G: Go.

O: Somewhere else. Life is different.

G: Go.

O: Take my hand.

G: Go!

O: Take my hand.

They grab hands. A special signal. Sirens

G: Go, you are not safe.
No one is safe here.
No one is safe here.
No one is safe here.
No one is safe here.

O flees.

COLIN BROWNE / *The Oval*

For Tom Cone

The location for “The Oval” is a sanatorium that once stood across the street from St. Francis Elementary School in Halifax. It was built to house WWI vets who contracted tuberculosis and was still in operation when I was in grade three. The big, open yard contained an oval like a track-and-field oval. Instead of hundred yard dashes, as they were called at the time, the patients walked, stumbled or staggered around in the dust, or the mud, or the wet snow like men on their way to their doom. Later on, when I first saw *Marat/Sade*, it brought back the hours I spent fixated, watching these men through the fence while I should have been on my way home from school. I have used the words “contagious hospital” to describe the sanatorium because they’re from William Carlos Williams’ *Spring and All*, and Tom Cone loved Williams, as you may know.

In the opera, which takes place in the present, a Canadian soldier, Peter, arrives one night at the fence that encloses the oval. (In the story the sanatorium is still standing.) He may not know exactly why he has come to this place, but he has been drawn here, as if a spell has been cast on him. Something happened here. As he stands under the streetlight, a man appears, a Padre by the looks of it, although the place has been abandoned for years and the Padre seems distinctly ghostly/otherworldly. They speak, and the Padre tells Peter he’d better go home. But Peter insists, and the padre relents. Out of the night a woman’s voice is heard, Peter’s long dead mother Miriam.

Music: Eileen V. Padgett

The original performers, on the evening of September 22nd, 2012, were: Megan Morrison, mezzo; Matthew Stephanson, tenor; Alex McMorran, baritone; Peggy Lee, cello; Elinor Harshenin, cello.

Three characters: PETER, A MAJOR
MIRIAM, HIS MOTHER (a ghost)
A PADRE (a ghost)

The location: A FORMER SANATORIUM IN HALIFAX

A man, Peter, illuminated by a streetlight, peers through a tall wrought-iron institutional fence. Its paint is peeling. Like all fences, we're not sure if it's meant to keep insiders in, or outsiders out.

PETER. Hello?

PADRE. My son?

PETER. Do you live here?

PADRE. You could say that.

PETER. I'm looking for the old contagious hospital.

PADRE. What do I call you?

PETER. A brother in arms.

PETER. Now I remember,
it's snowing
I'm four years old, going on sixty,
we stood here on the corner.
I clung to the belt
of my mother's coat.
Men circled an oval,
spitting, coughing
gulping like fish. . . .

MIRIAM. Ah, I see them still. . . .

Peter does not notice the character of Miriam, even when she speaks to his face.

MIRIAM. I should not have brought you.

PADRE. There wasn't a man here
who didn't wish
he'd taken one in the head.
You've been in the sun. . . ?

PETER. My tour of duty's done.

PETER. I'm looking for someone.
Richard Monk.

PADRE. A word of advice:
go home.

PETER. I've forfeited my home.

PETER. Do you remember a woman?

PADRE. Time's up.

MIRIAM. I headed west,
changed my name, and got lost
like everyone else.

PETER. She walked away from me.

PADRE. The heart does break, you know.

PETER. When dawn breaks
I report for my court martial.
What did she want?

PADRE. Monk was our gardener . . .

PETER. Her grandfather . . .

PADRE. A place like this
needs a gardener.

PETER. She brought something to him.

What did she want?

MIRIAM. I called you my sparrow . . .

PADRE. The truth is best hidden in plain sight.
Years ago, a patriotic industrialist
proposed a tomb
for an unknown soldier. . . .

MIRIAM. Wait right here, I said.

PADRE. It was easy work,
finding a boy's bones;
gently were they raised
and gently wrapped
and gently sent to sea,
but parliament wanted to bury the war
not the boy . . .
our gardener had a late night visitor . . .

PETER. What has this to do with me?

PADRE. God's mercy and man's mercy
are cut from the same cloth.

MIRIAM. Love just has it in for some.

PETER. I know what was in her bundle.
I'll go to the police.

PADRE. Tell them you were talking to a ghost!

PETER. You've taken the law into
your own hands.

PADRE. Your law caters to the elect.
We untouchables must
devise our own assizes—
a law that walks on all fours.

MIRIAM. My sparrow. . . .

PADRE. Can you forgive her?

PETER. One must want to forgive.

MIRIAM. I did not stop loving you.

PADRE. Let me show you something.
Put your foot in the stirrup.

PETER. No.

PADRE. Up you go.

PETER. I'm falling.

PADRE. Hold steady.

PETER. No.

PADRE. Hold steady.

PETER. Holding steady.

PADRE. Don't look down.

PETER. I'm falling.

They rise into the air.

PETER. Oh my god,
I'm falling.

MIRIAM. I'll hold you up.

PADRE. Don't look down.

PETER. Oh! Oh my god!

PADRE. Now look down.

PETER. Looking down.

PADRE. What do you see?

PETER. My god,
we must be up a mile.

PADRE. What do you see?

MIRIAM. Bones and tears . . .

He turns to Miriam in surprise. After a moment, he takes her hand in his, and looks at her lovingly.

PETER. Bones and tears . . .

PADRE. What did you think the earth was made of?

PETER. . . . as far as the eye can see . . .

PADRE. From the furrow of the night
to the fallow of the day—

MIRIAM. From the swallow to the sparrow
from the feather to the arrow—

PETER. From son to mother
from mother to boy—

MIRIAM. From joy to sorrow
from sorrow to joy—

PETER. From father to daughter
from mother to son—

MIRIAM. Little sparrow
little one.

PETER, MIRIAM & PADRE. From the furrow to the fallow,
from the swallow to the sparrow,
from the knuckle to the marrow,
from the feather to the arrow,

from the harm to the haven,
from the haven to the heart,
though we're cracked and broken,
bind us eternally
never to part.

KEITH WALLACE / Fran Herndon and Her Circle

In the context of the art that came to be canonized as art history in the US during the 1950s and 60s, the work of Fran Herndon presents a challenge. In New York, the aggressiveness of Abstract Expressionism was nudging towards a more introspective Colour Field painting, and in San Francisco, in particular in the Bay Area Figurative Movement, abstraction morphed into a figurative expressionism found in the work of painters such as Elmer Bischoff, Joan Brown, Richard Diebenkorn, Nathan Oliveira, and David Park, artists who, at that time, became the iconic representatives of the northern California art establishment. While Herndon's paintings also explore figuration and expressionism, they appear less preoccupied with the genres of the nude and still life, solving formal problems, or fixating on the nuance of mark making. Instead, she delves into an exploration of the psyche where doubt, mutability, and intuitive abandon create an iconography with haunting, ambiguous, narrative subtexts that span from the ecstatic to the somber. Herndon's idiosyncratic imagery and paint handling suggest she could be an artist working in isolation rather than participating at the centre of the dominant art discourse, which, in any case, wasn't taking place in San Francisco.

Indeed, she does function outside of the dominant discourse, but she has not worked in isolation. In 1957, Herndon moved with her husband, writer Jack Herndon, to San Francisco and quickly became involved with a close-knit milieu of painters, poets, and actors who shared particular sensibilities philosophically, intellectually, and aesthetically. The members of the circle with whom she was most closely affiliated included the poets who represented the San Francisco Renaissance, the core members being Jack Spicer (with whom Herndon was especially close), Robert Duncan, and Robin Blaser, along with Stan Persky, George Stanley, Madeline Gleason, Helen Adam, and others, and its wider artistic coterie, among them the painters Jess, Tom Field, Paul Alexander, Lyn Brockway, and Harry Jacobus, with whom her painting style was associated—one of textured impasto and rough swathes of colour. Just as the Renaissance poets were aware of, but maintained a distance from, San Francisco's Beat poets, these painters did not consider themselves part of

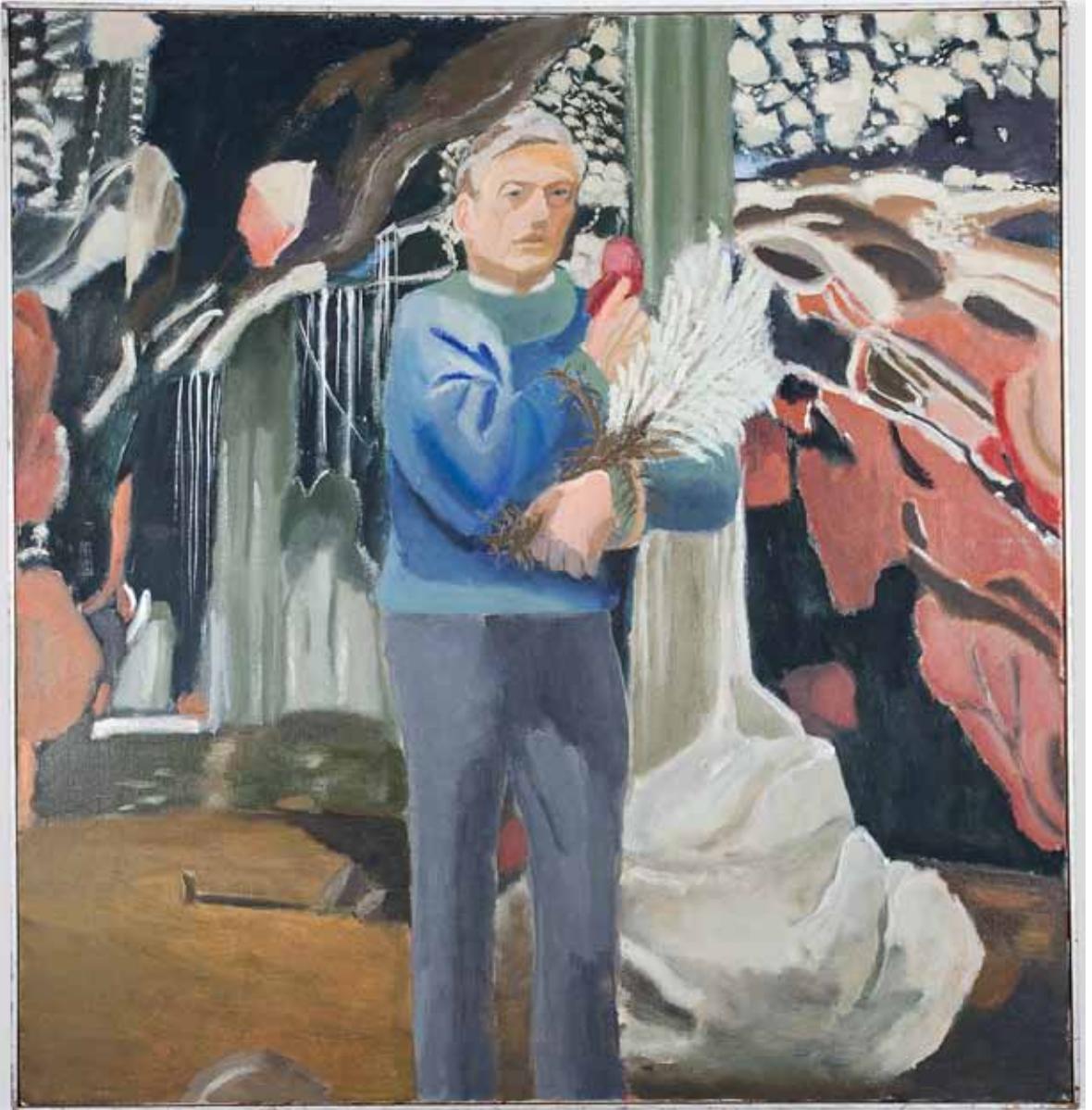
the Bay Area Figurative Movement, even though some were their teachers at art school.

While aspiring to position themselves as the avant-garde was not on the agenda for these artists and poets, lurking within their practices existed a pursuit of art for art's sake. But instead of exploring what might constitute the essence of art from a formal or intellectual perspective, as was the case in New York, many of them turned to what was considered out-of-date or archaic as a source of inspiration. They embraced the abundance that exists in all periods of history and reconstituted it in an eclectic library of images and words that sought out the magical, mythical, subliminal, sentimental, and sexual—all catalysts for a poetic experience, but out-of-sync with the modernist agenda of the era—which, ironically, made them quite radical for their time, especially during the conservative decade of the 1950s. In their world, it was the potential of the poetic imagination through allegory, metaphor, and symbolism that predominated, as well as to live lives that were neither the norm nor the expected, anticipating the vast social transformations that would fuel the 1960s.

Herndon's milieu constituted a salon in the classic sense of the word; social interaction would not take place primarily in bars or cafes as is associated with the Beat generation, but was better suited to the intimate and less regulated domestic space of the home where unfettered social and intellectual exchange was exercised. In this respect, these artists and poets were less interested in, even mistrustful of, strategizing a career in art than in expressing their love for art regardless of their successes—or not (the poets exerted tremendous influence outside of this specific community, but most of the visual artists remained relatively marginalized)—and in producing work for their own edification. And galleries for them were also social spaces rather than harbourers of commerce and careers; Harry Jacobus, Jess, and Robert Duncan opened the King Ubu Gallery in 1952 where there was an underlying anticipation, but not ambition, of selling work and it met with little success as a business, closing within a year. Over the next decade there followed other such short-lived artist-run spaces such as the Peacock Gallery and Buzz, both of which exhibited Herndon's work.

These artists moved among various disciplines, and the cross-over between poetry and visual art, especially, was almost seamless. For example, Jess made paintings and collages that often incorporated text; Robert Duncan was celebrated for his poetry but he also drew and designed sets for the theatre; Fran Herndon collaborated with Jack Spicer in illustrating his books such as *Golem* and *The Heads of the Town Up to the Aether*, and they created a kind of subliminal correspondence between her lithographs and his poem *Homage to Creeley*. She also made collages, in one case cutting up pages of *Sports Illustrated* as a resource for images that depicted unexpected versions of well-known sports scandals.

The work collected in this issue of *TCR* illustrates Herndon's painting, collage, and lithography from the early 1960s, and represents one of the most productive periods of her career. While the legacy of the San Francisco Renaissance poets within the Vancouver scene has been well-documented, the painters have had less influence on artists here. None of them relocated to Vancouver as Blaser, Stanley, and Persky did, and Fran Herndon's work has been seen here only sporadically, although a renewed interest in her work was manifested in a solo exhibition at Blanket Gallery in May 2012. It is the tentacular spirit of this particular strain of the poetic that Herndon was deeply involved with and that reached across the US and up the West Coast to Vancouver.

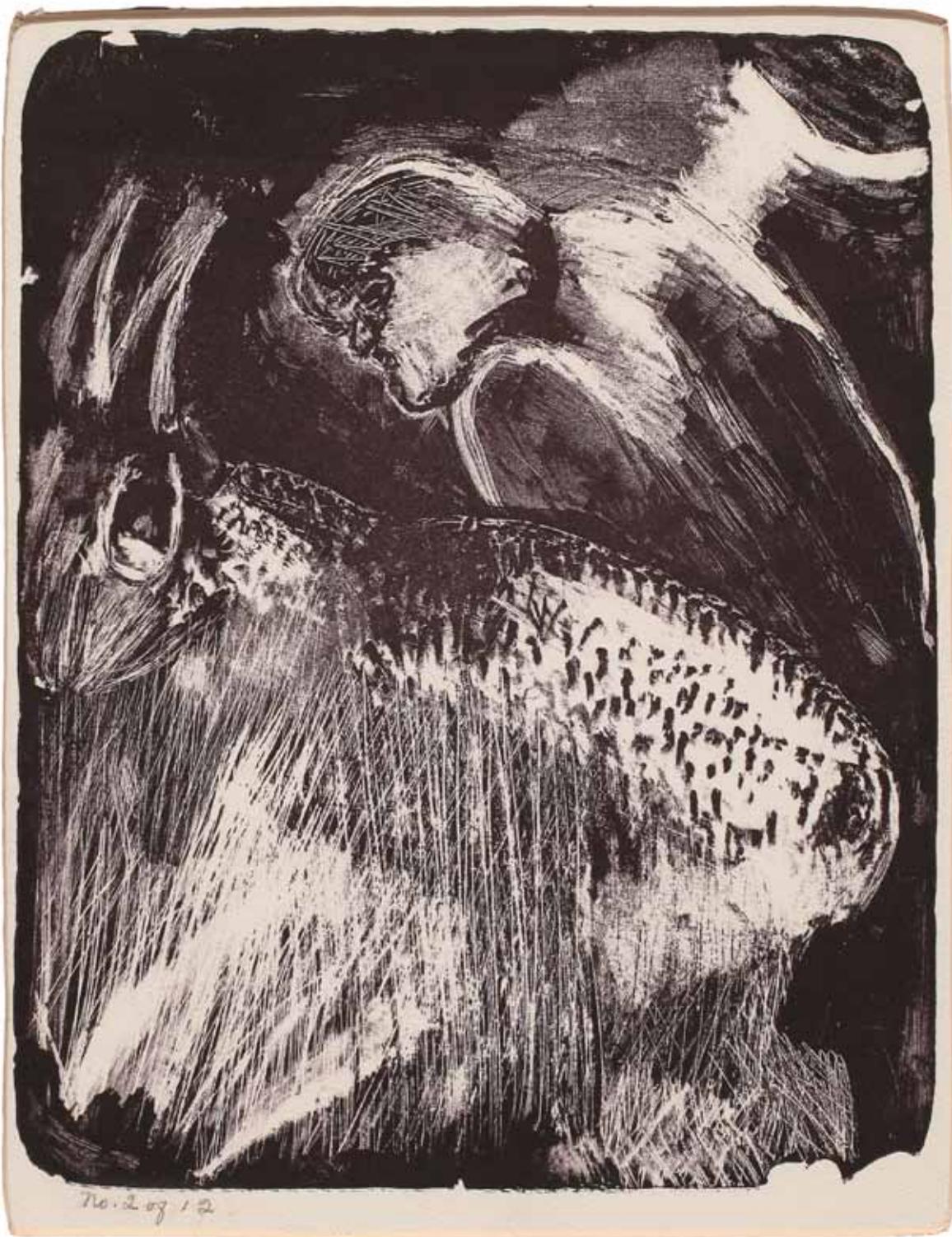




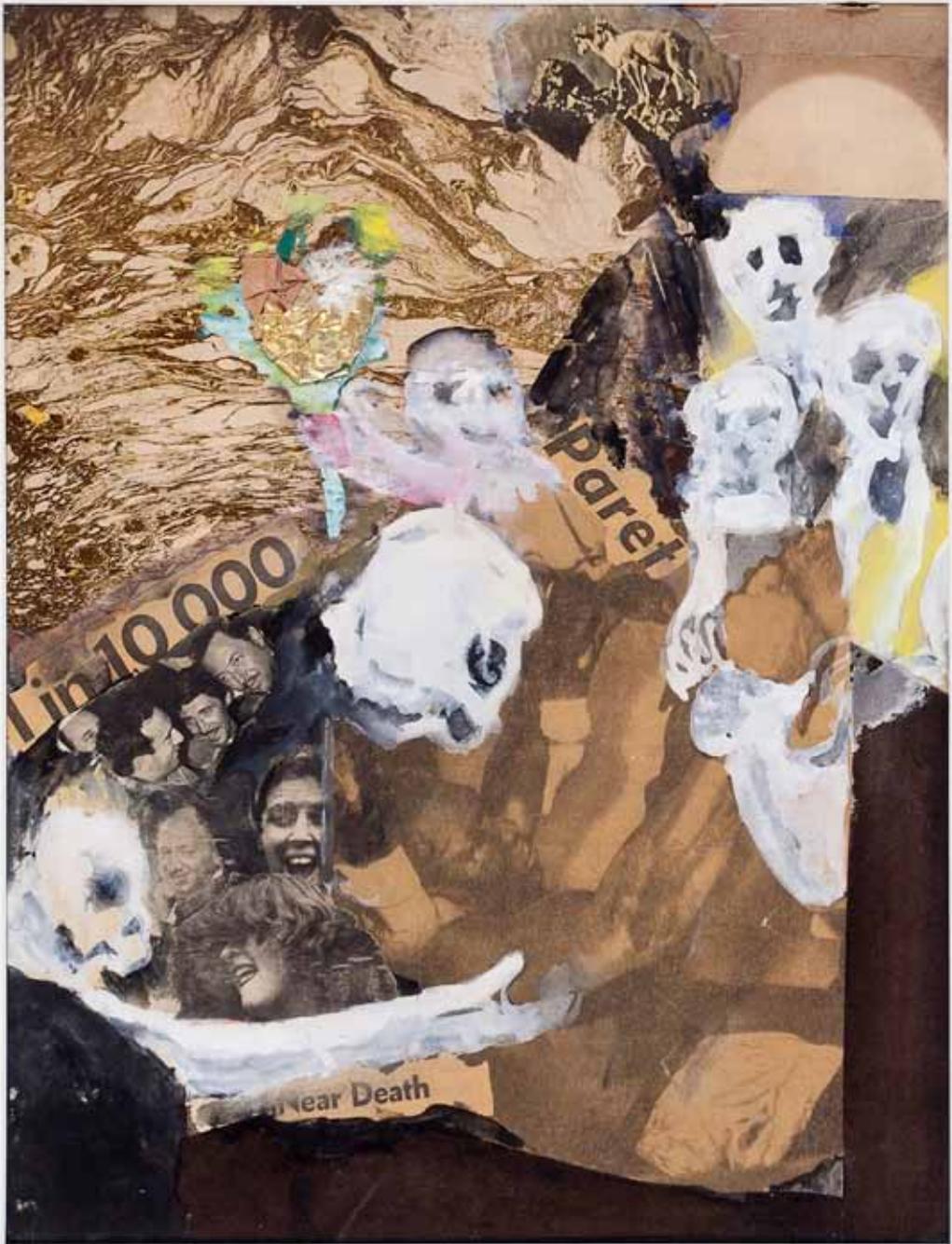




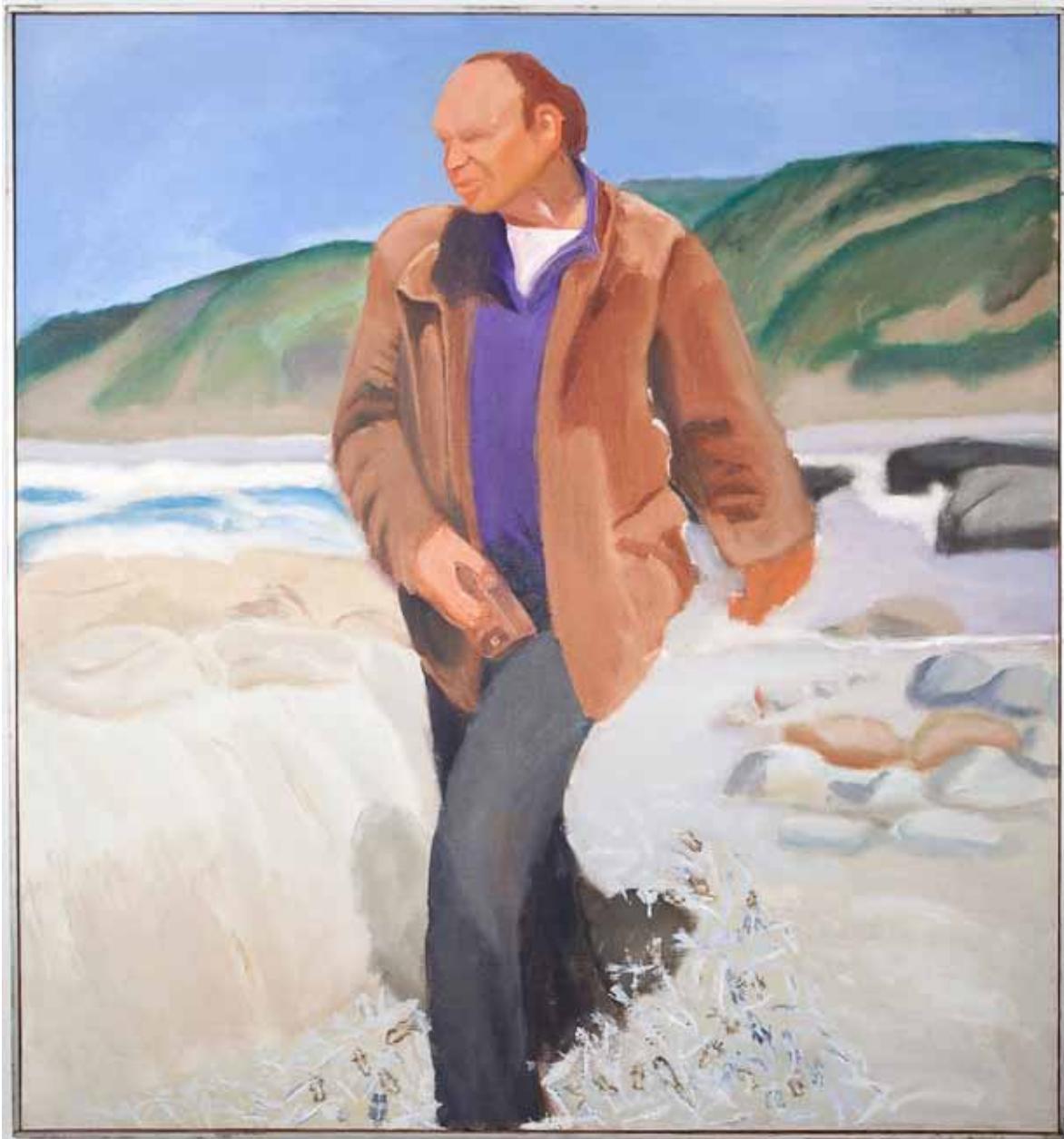
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FRAN HERNDON / Selected Works

Captions by page in order of appearance

101. Fran Herndon, *Portrait of Robin Blaser*, 1963, oil on canvas, 137.4 x 132.2 cm. Collection of Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Gift of David Farwell, from the collection of Robin Blaser and David Farwell.
102. Fran Herndon, *Doodlebug*, 1962, oil on canvas, 67.9 x 67.3 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco.
103. Fran Herndon, *Ophelia*, 1962, oil on canvas, 128.3 x 118.8 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco.
104. Fran Herndon, *Pg. 29 (The Heads of the Town up to the Aether)*, 1960, lithograph, 25.4 x 20.3 cm.
105. Fran Herndon, *Untitled (King Rabbit)*, 1962, lithograph, 25.4 x 20.3 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco.
106. Fran Herndon, *Death of Kid Paret*, 1963, collage on masonite, 45.5 x 35 cm. Collection of Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Gift of the artist.
107. Fran Herndon, *King Football*, 1962, collage on masonite, 62.9 x 53.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco.
108. Fran Herndon, *Jack Spicer on the Beach*, c. 1962, oil on canvas, 124.7 x 114.8 cm. Collection of Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Gift of David Farwell, from the collection of Robin Blaser and David Farwell.

KEVIN KILLIAN / Fran Herndon¹

Born in Oklahoma in 1929, of Native American origin, Fran Herndon escaped to Europe just as Senator Joseph McCarthy turned this country upside down. The U.S., she told us recently, was then “no place for a brown face.” In France she met and married the teacher and writer James Herndon, and the couple moved to San Francisco in 1957. (The first of their two sons, Jay, was born the same year.) Shortly after arriving in the Bay Area she met four old friends of her husband’s: Jack Spicer, Robin Blaser, Robert Duncan and Jess—the brilliant crew that had invented the Berkeley Renaissance ten years earlier, artists now all working at the height of their poetic powers in a highly charged urban bohemia.

Fran Herndon became most deeply involved with the most irascible of them all. From the very first evening that they had spent time together, Jack Spicer (1925–1965) seemed to see something unusual, something vivid in Fran that she had not seen herself. It was as if he were establishing a person, the way he created a poem, out of the raw materials she presented, and for a long time she did not know what it was he wanted her to be. Fran was mystified but elated by a power that Jack saw hidden inside her demure, polite social persona. He knew before she did that she would never be completely satisfied with the roles of mother and housewife.

When Spicer scrutinized her, as if envisioning in his mind’s eye a new and somehow different person, she began thinking: there must be some off-moments from being a mother, and during those moments, what would she do? “I remember clearly discussing school with him. And out of the alternatives I mentioned, he zeroed in on the Art Institute.”

She began to drop off two-year-old Jay at a nursery school in North Beach, and walk up the hill to the Art Institute on Chestnut. She was quietly astonished at this turn of events, but already Jack was “a very powerful figure in my life. His opinions were crucial.” “He saw in me,” she recalls, “something greater than I saw in myself.” In 1959, she and Spicer inaugurated a series of joint projects, beginning

¹ This text was prepared for the exhibition, “Fran Herndon,” at Altman Siegel Gallery, September 8, 2011. It appears here courtesy of Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco.

with their editorial work on the mimeo magazine *J*. Simultaneously, they collaborated on Spicer's poem, "Homage to Creeley," each working independently and meeting weekly to share results. *J* was devised as a reply to the Beat magazine *Beatitude*, recently launched in San Francisco by Spicer's rival, poet Bob Kaufman. Spicer and Herndon circulated an open letter, saying what they wanted and more importantly, what they didn't want. Submissions were to be left in a box behind the bar at The Place, a prominent poetry/jazz/performance space in North Beach. Fran took charge of the artwork, requiring her artists to work in stencil or typewriter font or a combination of both. Under the constraints of DIY was born what has been called "in many ways the most beautiful of all the mimeo magazines" (Steven Clay and Rodney Phillips, in their 1998 survey of mimeographed poetry journals and ephemera).

Simultaneously, Spicer's "Creeley" poems and Herndon's lithographs startled and enchanted them both. In the evenings Spicer came by the Herndons'—sometimes three or four times a week, sometimes every night. Fran felt herself waiting for his visit, convinced of the link between the lithographs she was creating and the poems that were pouring out of him. He was never present while she worked on her graphics, and she never saw him writing, but somehow the results of their private endeavor meshed in a way that seemed perfect to them both. Jim Herndon later wrote about the experience: "Jack would show up at his certain night with his new poem and Fran would have a new litho. Jack would point out a correspondence between the two. He would show how Fran couldn't have known about the content of the poem. He would show that he couldn't have known about the image in the litho." Fran said,

Sometimes it was reaching, but he knew that there was some connection in [my] work and what he was writing. It was as if at times it was prophetic (I mean, he would never have expected that to happen)—and he was just ecstatic when he could see that connection. At times it surprised *me*, because I had no inkling of the poems that were preceding or coming after those lithos. He saw it as not in any way illustrating the poems, but just an interaction of some kind.

She was skeptical, but wavering. She wasn't sure what to believe. Jim Herndon wrote,

She wanted to forget it. She wanted to have it. She didn't want ghosts drawing her lithos. She hoped they were. She wanted the visible. She loved the litho-stone, apparently firmly connected to the invisible. One night Jack produced a poem about a *white rabbit absolutely outlined in whiteness / upon a black background* and Fran produced her litho of a white rabbit absolutely outlined in whiteness upon a black background, and the correspondence between the two was thus exact, as if the ghosts had gotten tired of just hinting about it.

This experience lasted no longer than four or five months. "It was a magic process." She loved the litho stone she used: its perfect smoothness and porousness, its absorption of acid. Never again, she recollected, did she achieve the singularity she achieved with the lithos for "Homage to Creeley." "Somehow when the poems were finished, that's when it was over, really."

In the meantime Fran turned to painting, and never really looked back. (Her second son, Jack, was born in 1960). In the early 60s, Herndon worked furiously in a concentrated period of time, painting as though her life depended on it. In these pictures all of American painting seems drawn into the vortex: the social realism of such predecessors as Grant Wood and Thomas Benton; the furious blend of abstraction and figuration that flowed into de Kooning's brand of "action painting"; the canny, mystic attention to details of nature and landscape of Marsden Hartley and Georgia O'Keeffe. Pop art, too, figures into the mix, and the mixed media suspensions of Rauschenberg, Bruce Conner, and Jess. Not here, but in the library at Special Collections of SUNY Buffalo, hangs Fran's portrait of Robert Duncan, festooned with sparkly cloth to represent his shirt of many colors. In the present exhibition (at Altman Siegel Gallery) note the thickness and the sculptural mass of the paint, writhing and byzantine, as though trying to pry itself loose of the canvas. In *Opening Day*, the exuberant, rabbit-filled picture of Willie Mays, number 24, Mays' famous words float in medieval gold. "I don't compare 'em," he told a sportswriter in 1959, on being awarded his third Golden Glove award, "I just catch 'em." Similarly, Spicer never took credit for his own

poems; they didn't really belong to him, he said, he hadn't written them, he had just received them from an outside force he called the "Invisible World."

Spicer couldn't type, and entrusted the manuscripts of his new book-length projects to Fran's secretarial skill. She typed *The Holy Grail* for him, as it appeared to him little by little, in 1962, and created a series of lithographs centering on the figures in the Arthurian legend. At the same time, Fran completed the "sports" collages that make up her most intriguing achievement in art. The lithographs for Spicer's "Homage to Creeley" were, of course, black and white; in the collages she burst into color as though entering a paradise of revealed myth and truth. Across town, Jess was creating a similar series of "paste-ups," like Herndon ripping and slicing up visual images and rearranging them onto canvas. Spicer assigned Herndon the humble pages of *Life* and *Sports Illustrated* for her materials, and she painted over and under these images and achieved a rich, often misty glaze. The subjects of this series were sports-world versions of betrayal, tragedy, and loss, such as the trade of Y. A. Tittle for Lou Cordileone by the San Francisco 49ers in *King Football*; the first Liston-Patterson heavyweight fight; the scandalous death of the boxer Benny "the Kid" Paret. Take the haunting *Catch Me if You Can*, the cover image of this issue of *TCR*.; Herndon's brushstrokes transformed the photographed greyhounds straining for the finish line into wraithlike creatures. Like Kandinsky's horses, these are not "real" beasts but expressionistic, ephemeral, alert animals, closer to unicorns. Perspective is flattened: foreground and background keep switching, giving the collages a watery, dreamlike quality removed from Jess' ornate, precise surrealism. The "sports collages" also are very direct about race subjects: in the throes of the civil rights struggle, America was ripe for the sort of rich, dazzling imagery Herndon brought to her athletic subjects; there's tragedy and anger here as in the later anti-draft, anti-war collages, but there's also a glorification of black and Latino athletes that anticipates the work, forty years later, of a SFAI graduate, Kehinde Wiley. Even Marilyn Monroe pointedly becomes *The White Angel*, in Herndon's memorial collage of the same name; we see first Bert Stern's memorable *Vogue* image of a fretful Monroe, then her whiteness collapses into a mad sprawl of faces, body parts, skull, wraith and animal imagery as she sinks underground into the dark.

These pictures benefit from their origins in predetermined chance operations; whatever was featured on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* from week to week dictated the image structure of the work. That was the magic part; the rest was up to Fran Herndon, and into art history through a very long circuitous route.

All the artists in the Spicer circle vacillated between trying to get their work shown, and another, queasy feeling that art was over. In addition, Spicer was intently contemptuous of those who tried to make money from art or writing. His own books were issued without copyright. Anyone who published a poem in a magazine outside of San Francisco was labeled a “sell out” to the larger, eat-em-up consumer culture. Or they were part of what he called the “Fix.” It would have been enormously difficult to move out from beneath that psychic plane, that heavy disapproval. In *Secret Exhibition*, her 1990 survey of Bay Area art, that focuses on “six California artists in the Cold War era,” critic Rebecca Solnit employs a cultural studies approach to analyze the propensity of many San Francisco artists to make art in secret. On the one hand, such propensity stems from occulted traditions, including that of the hermeticism of the artist; in another light, as Solnit shows, San Francisco was so far off the art map that the artists she describes felt curiously free to invent their own, tiny, freakishly distorted art world, and a new kind of art to show in it: the funk-junk assemblage rag bag thing we all know well now. Few artists took any precautions to preserve their work, taking a Darwinist view, “sink or swim,” or perhaps yielding to an Existentialist urge to cast one’s fates to the wind. Documentation was unheard of. The scene was thus rather nihilistic. And gave birth to a lot of artists-run spaces, from the King Ubu Gallery of 1952 to the Batman Gallery later in the 60s. Spicer and five of his students from the California School of Fine Arts established the “6” Gallery in 1953. But Solnit’s book omits discussion of the galleries run by this group of artists: Borregaard’s Museum of 1960; the Peacock Gallery of 1963; and Buzz, the gallery organized by Paul Alexander, Bill Brodecky and Larry Fagin in 1964. The outsiders and rebels of Solnit’s world, whose work was shown in the big Whitney show of 1995, “Beat Culture and the New America,” had only a very distant interest in this group, who were beyond the pale in many ways, even to the outsiders of *Secret Exhibition*.

The problem with artists-run spaces is, of course, that though they deliver the means of distribution back to the producer—which has a beauty of its own, an

exhilarating freedom—they depend on continued enthusiasm, and enthusiasm comes easy at first but quickly slows to a trickle. Thus Borregaard’s Museum, the Peacock Gallery, and Buzz lasted only a few seasons at most. The exhibition at Altman Siegel Gallery gathered together a representative sampling of Herndon’s portion of the grand November 1963 Peacock Gallery show organized by the poet Robin Blaser (1926–2009). If you squint and look at the splendors of *Ophelia*, *Tile Rats*, *Will the Circle Be Unbroken?* or the sublime *Doodlebug*, it might almost be 1963 over again.

In the 1970s, as contemporaries like Jess, Bruce Conner, and Jay DeFeo began finding fame, Herndon put aside art for personal reasons, and when she returned to painting she did so in a deliberately low key, unheralded way. But in that period a coterie of admirers from many disciplines has grown vocal, and through a sprinkling of small but important exhibitions, interest in her work has reached a new height. Fran Herndon continues to make paintings and collage in her home studio in the Richmond district of San Francisco.

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Acknowledgments

The text of the essay draws from some of my previous writing on Fran Herndon’s work: from the afterword to the Granary Books edition of Spicer’s poem, “Golem,” which was printed with seven of Herndon’s sports collages in 1998; from the biography of Spicer that I wrote with Lewis Ellingham, *Poet Be Like God: Jack Spicer and the San Francisco Renaissance* (also 1998); and from talks on Herndon’s art I’ve given over the years on kind invitations from poets Charles Bernstein and

Bill Berkson. Most of the quotes from James Herndon (1926–1990) are from his book *Everything As Expected* (1973), an account of the making of his then wife's sports collages; in addition, some of the testimony of Jim and Fran Herndon is taken from interviews conducted at various times by Lew Ellingham, by myself, and by Lee Plested. Unpublished material by Jack Spicer appears here through the courtesy of Peter Gizzi and the Jack Spicer Literary Estate, copyright @ 2011.

Appendix: Text of Jack Spicer and Fran Herndon's J Manifesto of spring 1959.

The first issue of *J* will appear in the early part of September. *J* will be a 16-page mimeographed flyer very much like *Beatitude*. It will sell for the same price or lower. It is non-copyright.

POETRY—I especially want poems from people who have written very few poems. Criteria of selection will be personal and arbitrary but poems will be selected mainly on the basis of whether, for one reason or another, they are likely to be exciting to other poets. Good or bad, beat or square, rhymed or unrhymed will, I hope, have nothing to do with it. This will not be a little magazine.

PROSE—Prose will be entirely secondary to poetry. Anything that is temporary (out-of-date in three weeks) will be acceptable. Letters, ill-tempered comments, suicide notes

ART—Each issue will contain several [full-page, 8 ½ x 11] drawings. These must be line drawings that can be reproduced on stencil or actually submitted by the artist drawn on a stencil. Painters, students, even instructors.

Jack Spicer
Fran Herndon

Manuscripts and drawings should be submitted to the Box marked J in The Place, 1546 Grant Ave.

DAVID FARWELL / Strand Palace¹

In 1995, Fran Herndon arrived in Vancouver from San Francisco. She had come to attend a conference, “The Recovery of the Public World,” held to honour the poetry and poetics of Robin Blaser, my late partner. It was an exciting and interesting event with people attending from all over North America. Fran arrived with a large painting which was exhibited in a show at the Charles H. Scott Gallery, across the street from where the conference was being held at what is now Emily Carr University. The painting, a large watercolour measuring 30 inches x 40 inches, showed four figures dancing around a pond. It had and still has a mystical rather magical quality about it and appears timeless. I can remember Robin’s response to Fran’s painting the first time he saw it. After gazing at it for some time he turned to me and said: “I know exactly where it will hang in the living room.” I don’t know what Fran’s intentions were regarding that painting, but I do know that she left Vancouver without it and today it may be seen in the exact spot in our living room that Robin chose.

Robin and Fran were long-time friends. They met at Berkeley in the late 1940s when Robin, newly arrived from that great metropolis of Twin Falls, Idaho, fell into friendship with those figures that were to determine his poetic direction for the rest of his life, Jack Spicer and Robert Duncan. Fran was a part of that magic circle of artists, poets, actors, and writers that gathered in and around San Francisco in the late 40s and early 50s which resulted in a renaissance of art and literature on the West Coast.

I first met Fran in the late 1970s when Robin, after a major falling out with some of his fellow poets resulted in his move to Canada, began to reconnect with his San Francisco roots. On several occasions we stayed at Fran’s wonderful home on 15th Avenue—not far from the Golden Gate Bridge, the De Young Museum in Golden Gate Park, and the Presidio—a home filled with paintings and sculpture, both hers and by artists she has known from the San Francisco area. I remember

¹ This piece was delivered on the occasion of the opening of a show of paintings by Fran Herndon at Blanket Contemporary Art gallery in Vancouver on Friday, April 27th, 2012. Fran Herndon was in attendance.

my first visit to her home. We had flown down from Vancouver and taken a cab to her address. Robin pulled a key from his pocket and let himself in. He hadn't told me that Fran was away—probably on one of her walking tours in Europe or other parts of the United States. (I should explain that Fran is a walker with a capital W. Last June in San Francisco, when she and I walked to Le Chapeau, a great little French restaurant where we were to celebrate my 66th birthday, I was in a sweat by the time we got there after trying to keep up with Fran. Believe me when I say that she can Walk.) Walking through her home that first time and trying to imagine the kind of person who lived in that marvelous space, I remember saying to myself, “I think I’m going to like this person.” And when I finally met you some days later, I did and I still do.

Back in 1965 when Robin arrived in Vancouver he had a number of Fran Herndon paintings with him. There were two in the basement that he frequently went downstairs to look at. They were, unfortunately, too large to hang in our home. One was a portrait of Jack Spicer walking along a beach and the other a portrait of Robin holding a large bundle of sagebrush, a very Idahoian symbol. When talking with Fran over a drink on Wednesday afternoon, shortly after she got off the plane from San Francisco, she explained that she had asked a friend to mail her some sagebrush so that she could include it in the painting. And so there it is. Both those paintings are now at the Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery at UBC.

There are other paintings of Fran’s that we collected over the years. I remember one visit during which Robin grabbed an oil painting right off the wall in Fran’s foyer. As I remember it, Fran, after working with watercolours for a number of years, had decided to experiment with oils again and this was her first finished piece. It was too large to roll and carry onto the plane so we had it shipped. And I am embarrassed to say that the cost of the shipping was more than what we paid Fran for the painting. But with exhibitions such as this wonderful celebration of Fran’s art I hope those days are gone.

In September 2008, Robin and I flew to San Francisco and were picked up at the airport by several students from the University of California, Berkeley, and driven over the Bay Bridge to the campus. Robin had been invited to give a poetry reading in the Morrison Room of the English Department, a beautiful room with amazing acoustics. He was not in very good shape by then. It was not until several

months later that he would be diagnosed with a brain tumour, but there were definite signs during this visit that all was not well. Two days later—the day after Barack Obama had been elected the President of the United States of America—we were driven back across the Bay Bridge and set up camp in the St. Francis Hotel on Union Square in downtown San Francisco. Robin made me promise not to contact anyone in the city. He was quite content to sit at the window of our suite in the St. Francis and watch the goings on in Union Square. Two months earlier we had done the same thing in New York. We spent a week seated at a small table under a statue of Dante in a park opposite the Lincoln Center. I made frequent trips to the Starbucks close by for coffee and for sandwiches at lunchtime. We had breakfast at the Flame, a greasy spoon a block away, and dinner at a great Italian restaurant across the street. The rest of the time we sat under the shadow of Dante and watched the world go by. It seemed like an extended meditation. In retrospect, it was a wonderful slow motion farewell.

But in San Francisco, when Robin decided that he didn't want to eat lunch in the hotel that September day, we made our way down to the lobby and out into the brisk fall breeze. We hadn't got half a block before we saw, striding toward us, Fran Herndon, looking, as Robin would say, "marvelous." And so we had lunch together at that hotel with the enormous bouquet in the lobby. Fran, I know you were upset at Robin's condition, but you didn't show it and I have to tell you it was that chance meeting that he remembered and talked about most when we returned to Vancouver. You were positively the best thing that happened on that trip. I don't know what stars or gods brought that meeting about, but I have thanked them many times over. And I thank you for then and now.

Fran Herndon—I love your work and I love you.

JANE SPRAGUE / Two Poems

Universal American Anthem

what of ourselves we put in
the possible
remains of democracy
Athenian re-imagining
a once that never was
our unimaginable present
fragments of nothing—mist
 droplets skim every skin
never anything other than this
atomic bodies floating in space
claim I I I again and again
while the whole world wastes
itself away
our fingers our hands
same webbing feel
teeth
sharp as piranha
our language cuts
flip side to head

your voice also mine
timbre of oboes
or keen for the dead
our wailing
unceasing
seizures
of dissonance and fear
reach nothing but the sky

Creon said to Antigone: Go to the dead and love them.

We forget I my our self
pinned to sky

the edge of everlasting
illusion

we break apart
and are breathed in
else where

as nothing in this closed system
world is ever *lost* or goes away

in relation we are unmade
rebordered new sense of self
enveloped by the whole ugly
mess of fucked into nothing
but the memory of you
I cannot staunch
as my twitching forelegs
bend backwards
expose their silver ligaments

to the diminishing
glint of your—

you and you and you

as if we could reach across
our scalpeled lines

the incisive I lets nothing in
forever and a day

mutual clasp fabricate
secure links to lines
between the space my heartbeats
make in air around
your vacant eyes

skyward
glassbottlebrown
no longer shiny

Bring Me Back

a body
or gun
smithereens it all
wheat-pasted rage
two-fisted rifle

my thumb works again and again

we I need not unordinary words
to speak the sound of erasure

calculus of mass decimation
primate—primal—us—and our
animal familiars

there are many ways of war

all of which we know
bedmate familiar

don't forget to write *whiteness*
when our shit is the plan

as if one genocide
so large
close
perpetually trumps all others

in memory and rage

Contains language appropriated from Thom Donovan's *The Hole* (Displaced Press 2012) and Susan Howe's "There Are Not Leaves Enough to Crown to Cover to Crown to Cover," *The Europe of Trusts* (New Directions 1990). "Bring Me Back," WK INTERACT, NY, NY, 2007.

Remains

Story—a not-story—I don't know how to tell

There is too muchness of story // story layered on story
tribes, not mine
who am I to speak

For the deaths of the graves of the cannonballs found in fields of the signs of slave
graveyards taken of the Army planted trees the spindly red pine groves too straight
tall trees too tall to grid hike or see

poverty in schools
on dirt roads and asphalt
insolvent institutions
the ruined land itself

shale to water to mystery to past
horn-toed feet to river paths ran hard and flat

made our tollroad state highways number seventeen or eightynine
and so on.

Signs // highway markers cite // celebrate ruin
conquest Coreogonel // Indian Princess // Indian Castle

Year 16xx burnt
Year 17xx tavern
Year 18xx cabin
axe

The buried past—X number of “slaves” // “men and women” // “buried” XX “rods” off
Ellis Hollow Road

under and are
owned land now

our general public's archive printed out in metal in ink
long gone now // stowed away or thrown
from behind the bordered lawn their posted

PRIVATE PROPERTY
KEEP OUT
VIOLATORS WILL BE
erased

SEAN HOWARD / disjunctures (possible poems, for richard outram)

Explicable now are the poem's radical disjunctures of sequential logic, syntax, level of language and address.

—Peter Sanger, *Through Darkling Air: The Poetry of Richard Outram*

I dwell in Possibility—
A fairer House than Prose
—Emily Dickinson

& meaning is being

like the world: the willow braiding
its image on the stream, the intimate
distance of silence

•

modernity, solely human, assiduously

withholding ways from itself: poly-
phonic webs, the nominal shreds
of reality

•

this world, though less

than love, naturally supernatural: sifted
water, body of god, not easy when
words disrupt poetry

•

black market, the imaginative

economy: clawed, prose to threads; un-
surprised—‘here is outram,’

said blake

•

the poet saving accidents

for later: images left on the steps—
water in tatters, the brightness

he writes

•

riding the goddess’s

cycle (*quis custodiet?*): towards
the vortices of

prose . . .

•

child, the poem

left unattended: the Word listening,
the man overhearing

the light

•

outram's arrows, moonlight

in the chamber: my unidentifiable voice (
the swerves of a dress); rumour—eros

& sophia . . .

•

the future-present

tense of art: reason aging, the self
sufficient? the poem crouch-

ing, poised

•

divine, trees transmit

light: rain in the dictionary,
language just god's

old address

•

desk—stage

hands (making a play for
her): sex, slowly re-

covering

•

man, light's lethal

creature (faustus's moon—luna nowhere
to be seen): ominous, cassandra's

silence

•

dreams, outram calling

the wound: poetry, *child's-play?*, to
survive appropriation &

di smissal

•

terms that open

holes in themselves (prose—surfaces pre-
pared): streams we expect trees

to reflect

•

belief in the maze (the

long jade thunder): lear—'look,
nothing in outram's

dictionary!'

•

rare, he thought—poetry of the

kind that matters (in the silence that
accompanies): & *meaning is being*
like the world

GEORGE STANLEY / Two Poems

The Vacuum Cleaner

I'd almost finished the vacuuming
when the on-off switch (that had been wonky for months)
finally broke. I couldn't turn the machine off,
it was stuck on on. So I finished vacuuming
& unplugged it. Next week I took it in to the shop.

A beautiful girl
came out from in back.
I handed her the vacuum cleaner
(the power head, that is;
the attachments I'd left at home),
and as she inspected it, we began to talk
in a friendly way—about what
I don't remember, but I recall feeling
that I was not just a customer
to her.

The beauty of girls
and boys
pursues me
wherever I'm going.

Then I had to take my head in—to the clinic.
I sat in the examining room
waiting for the door to open.
Then it did. The young doctor
entered & said, "I'm Jason."

Insomnia

Papa Soul,
Mama Body,
Baby Mind.
All in one bed,
one head.

Papa wants to dream,
meet angels.
Mama wants to cook,
make waffles.
Baby wants to think,
all night,
all night long.

All night long
he kept them awake,
thinking.
Papa caught the eye
of not one angel.
Mama rose weary,
too weak to make waffles.

This is crazy,
Papa said.
It's not normal,
Mama said.
All of us thinking,
never one of us winking.
We have to get some rest!
So they shut Baby up
in his own little head

& the rest of his life
he lay there in bed,

thinking, thinking,
always thinking.
Never winking,
ever asking:

What were they thinking
when they put me to bed
in my own little head?

Contributors

BRIAN ANG is the author of *Pre-Symbolic*, *Communism*, *Paradise Now*, and the poetry generator *THEORY ARSENAL*. Collaborations include poetry and noise with the band A White Hunter and the film *Qua Insurrection* with Mayakov+sky. His current poetic project is *The Totality Cantos: An Investigation of Epistemological Totality*. Recent criticism and theorizing have appeared in *The Claudius App*, *Lana Turner: A Journal of Poetry and Opinion*, *Rethinking Marxism*, and a commentary series in *Jacket2*, “PennSound & Politics.” He edits *ARMED CELL* in Oakland, California.

Born in British Columbia, MARIAN PENNER BANCROFT lives and works in Vancouver. Educated at the University of British Columbia, The Vancouver School of Art (now Emily Carr University of Art+Design) and Ryerson Polytechnical Institute (now Ryerson University), she is an associate professor at the Emily Carr University of Art+Design. Her work has been exhibited and collected internationally and across Canada, most recently at the Vancouver Art Gallery in a solo exhibition entitled “Spiritlands:t/HERE: Selected Photo Works 1975–2000” for which there is a catalogue. She is the recipient of the 2012 Audain Prize for the Visual Arts for lifetime achievement and is represented by Republic Gallery in Vancouver.

JASPER BERNES is the author of *Starsdown* (In Girum 2007) and *We Are Nothing and So Can You* (Tenured Ninja 2012). He is a postdoctoral fellow in the Literature Department at Duke University.

HUGH BRODY is an anthropologist, writer, and film-maker. He has made documentaries about two British artists, Henry Moore and Antony Gormley. He directed, and co-wrote with Michael Ignatieff, the feature film *Nineteen Nineteen*. His work in British Columbia has included the book *Maps And Dreams* and films made with Gitksan,

Nisg'a and Mowachat/Muchalaht First Nations, as well as the film *The Meaning of Life*, shot in a Fraser Valley prison. He is also author of *The Other Side of Eden*, *Hunter-Gatherers*, and *Farmers and the Shaping of the Word*. His most recent work has been with the ḵKhomani San of the southern Kalahari. He holds the Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley and is an Associate of the Scott Polar Research Institute at the University of Cambridge.

COLIN BROWNE's most recent book is *The Properties* (Talonbooks 2012). He is working on a new collection, and a book about the Surrealists and the art of the Northwest Coast and Alaska. The 10-minute opera, “The Oval,” with music composed by Eileen Padgett, was presented at the house of Karen Matthews and Tom Cone in Vancouver on the evening of September 22nd, 2012.

DAVID BUUCK is a writer who lives in Oakland, CA. He is the founder of BARGE, the Bay Area Research Group in Enviro-aesthetics, and co-founder and editor of *Tripwire*, a journal of poetics. *An Army of Lovers*, co-written with Juliana Spahr, is forthcoming from City Lights. Publications, writing and performance samples, and further info available via davidbuuck.com.

JEFF CARPENTER has participated in Edmonton's diverse literary and performing arts culture for over ten years. In addition to a growing amount of juvenilia and ephemera, he is author of the chapbook *malachi on foot* (Red Nettle Press 2008) and, with glenN robsoN, as the sound poetry duo Tonguebath, he authored and performed *DUN JOHN & DR AGON* (Extra Virgin Press 2010). He is currently writing a book of fractal origami titled *Narrative Luck*, thanks to the Edmonton Arts Council's generous support. Carpenter is

acting Acting Director of the Alberta Research Group (ARG), an award-winning "pataphysical think tank.

JEFF DERKSEN's books include *Annihilated Time: Poetry and Other Politics*, *Down Time*, *Dwell* and *Transnational Muscle Cars*. He has edited, as a member of the research collective Urban Subjects, *Autogestion: Henri Lefebvre in New Belgrade* and *Momentarily: Learning from Mega-events*. A collection of essays on art, *After Euphoria*, is forthcoming, as is *The Vestiges*. He works at Simon Fraser University.

DAVE DEVEAU is an award-winning writer and performer whose plays and operas have been produced across Canada and in Europe. His critically-acclaimed play *My Funny Valentine*, having recently closed in Dublin, will be remounted at Vancouver's Firehall Arts Centre in February. He is currently working on commissions for Zee Zee Theatre, Green Thumb Theatre, Lunchbox Theatre, Sociable Films, and Theatre la Seizieme.

ROGER FARR is the author of *Surplus* (Linebooks 2006), *IKMQ* (New Star 2012), and *Means* (Linebooks 2012). He teaches in the Creative Writing and Culture and Technology Programs at Capilano University, and edits CUE Books.

DAVID FARWELL is a retired therapist who, for over thirty years was the partner, lover, accomplice, minder, and companion of the poet Robin Blaser. Need he say more?

FRAN HERNDON was born in 1927 and lives and works in San Francisco, California. Beginning in 1959, she collaborated with Jack Spicer and co-edited the mimeo magazine *J*. Her work was first exhibited in 1963 as part of the "Group Show" curated by Robin Blaser at Peacock Gallery in San Francisco. Her work has been shown recently at solo exhibitions at Altman Siegel Gal-

lery, San Francisco (2011) and Blanket Gallery, Vancouver (2012).

SEAN HOWARD is the author of two collections of poetry, *Local Calls* (Cape Breton University Press 2009) and *Incitements* (Gaspereau Press 2011). His work has been published in numerous Canadian and international magazines, and anthologized in *The Best Canadian Poetry in English 2011* (Tightrope Books). His piece "dis-junctures (possible poems, for richard outram)," in this issue, is the winner of TCR's 2nd Annual Robin Blaser Poetry Award.

KEVIN KILLIAN is the author of two books of poetry, three collections of stories, three novels, and other books of all descriptions. His newest novel is called *Spreadeagle* (Publication Studio 2012). In addition, he has often written on the US poet Jack Spicer (1925-1965) and his circle.

MELISSA MACK is a poet whose work has appeared in *TRY!*, *With + Stand*, the *SF Public Press*, and in the anthology chapbooks *What Is Called Violence* (DOT.PRESS 2012) and *The Feeling Is Mutual: A List Of Our Fucking Demands* (2012). In summer 2012, she helped organize a week-long experiment in free radical collective education: <http://bayareapublicschool.tumblr.com>. Her 10th anniversary of living in Oakland, California is Valentine's Day 2013.

JENNY PENBERTHY is grateful to Tom Cone for urging her to write a libretto for the Opera Project. The libretto itself owes a debt to Alfred Jarry's absurdist drama *Ubu Roi*.

JANE SPRAGUE's books include *The Port of Los Angeles* and *Imaginary Syllabi*. Current projects include *My Appalachia*, a collection of prose and poetry that explores genocide, the legacy of slavery, and generational poverty in Upstate New York. She lives with her family on a manufactured island in Long Beach, CA.

GEORGE STANLEY's works were featured in *TCR* 3.14. *After Desire* is due from New Star Books in 2013.

WENDY TREVINO lives and works in the SF Bay Area. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *LIES*, *Mrs. Maybe*, *OMG!*, *With + Stand*, *Abraham Lincoln*, *TRY!*, and *West Wind Review*. From July 2010–July 2011 she interned in Development at a science museum in San Francisco. "Division of Labor," in this issue, is an erasure of her work.

KEITH WALLACE has been a curator of contemporary art since 1979. From 1991 to 2001 he was Curator, then Director/Curator, of the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver where he developed a program of regional, national and international exhibitions. He is currently Associate Director/Curator of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery at the University of British Columbia. Since 2004, Wallace has been Editor-in-Chief of *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* published by ARTCO in Taipei.

JEANINE WEBB's poems have appeared in many journals, most recently in *Lana Turner* and *ARMED CELL*. She is one author, with Brian Ang, Joseph Atkins and Tiffany Denman, of the poetry pamphlet *Poetry is not Enough*. Some recent writing on the U.S. occupations, poetry, friendship, and le carré rouge can be found on the Harriet blog. She helps organize San Diego, California's Agitprop Reading Series, edits the journal *TACOCAT*, and is a PhD student in Literature at the University of California San Diego.

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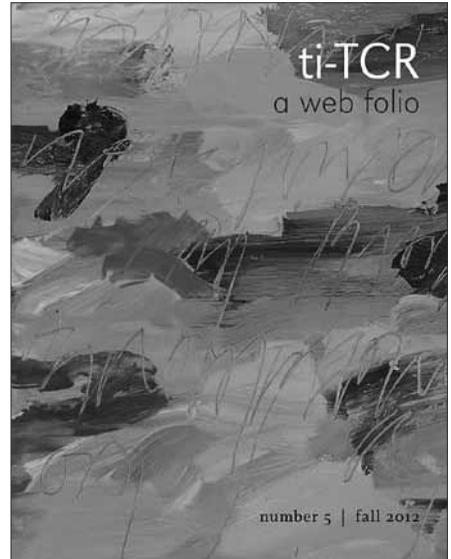
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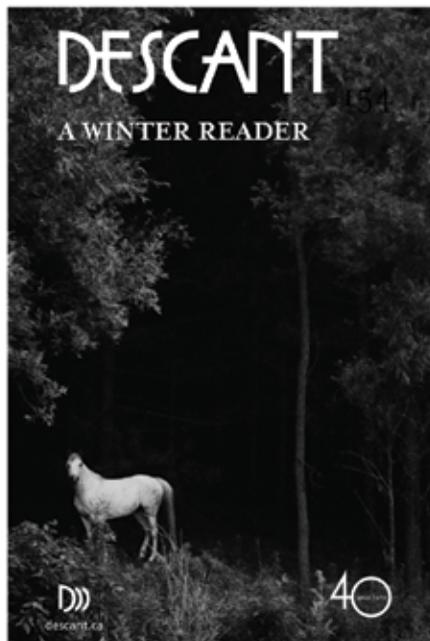
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