



Lure of the Naïve:

An exploration of the naïve, faux-naïf and expressive illustration styles of James Thurber, Lorraine Fox, R.O. Blechman, Faith Ringgold, Sue Coe, Maira Kalman, and Roz Chast

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Abstract

This paper focuses on seven illustrators – James Thurber, Lorraine Fox, R. O. Blechman, Faith Ringgold, Maira Kalman, Sue Coe and Roz Chast – whose illustration styles I believe to be naïve, faux-naïf or expressive. Modernist art, indigenous art, children’s art, art of the insane, folk art, art brut and outsider art are researched as possible direct or indirect influences on the illustrators. In addition, appreciation of these art forms and other cultural factors are cited as contributing to the positive reception these illustrators and their naïve illustration styles enjoy.

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May 2010

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Chapter 1

Introduction

All seven of the illustrators I have chosen to research stood out initially for their novel approach, using naïve/expressive styles when their contemporaries were working in more art-trained styles. I will explore influences, whether folk art, children’s art, primitive art, or fine artists working in expressionist styles, which might have contributed to their break from naturalistic styles. Of the seven illustrators, four were trained in art – Faith Ringgold (b. 1930), Roz Chast (b. 1954), Lorraine Fox (1922-1976), and Sue Coe (b. 1951). R. O. Blechman (b. 1930) studied art and design briefly; Maira Kalman (b. 1949), majored in English and has no art training; and James Thurber (1894-1961), who was primarily a writer, had virtually no technical training.

James Thurber on his art:

In the case of a man who cannot draw, but keeps on drawing anyway, practice pays in meager coin for what it takes away. It would have taken away even more but for the firm and impolite interference of Andy White [E. B. White (1899-1985)], who came upon me one day fifteen years ago laboring over cross-hatching and other subtleties of draughtsmanship beyond the reach of my fingers. “Good God,” he said, “don’t do that! If you ever became good you’d be mediocre.”¹

During the course of western art history artists have been repeatedly reinvigorated by exposure to alien art – Renaissance artists by Greek and Roman art, Impressionists by Japanese prints, modern artists Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Henri Matisse (1869-



Fig. 1 Henri Rousseau, *Tropical Forest with Monkeys*, 1910, oil on canvas.

1954) by African and Oceanic art. In France, naïve artist Henri Rousseau (1844-1910) was embraced by modernist artists such as Picasso (1881-1973), Robert Delaunay (1885-1941), and Paul Signac (1863-1935) (see Figure 1).

1. James Thurber, *The Seal in the Bedroom and Other Predicaments*, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1950, Author’s Memoir pages.

Historical Overview

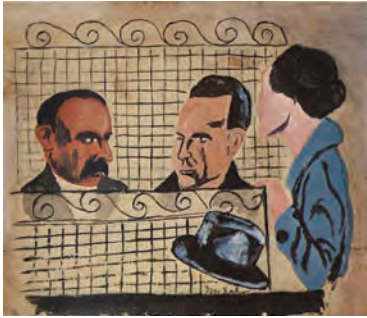


Fig. 2 Ben Shahn, *Sacco and Vanzetti: In the Courtroom Cage*, 1931-32, watercolor and gouache on paper.



Fig. 3 Paul Rand, interior illustration, 1936, collage, *Apparel Arts* magazine, Summer issue.

1920s era-defining drawings of flappers and Joe College types (see Figure 4).

Still, on the whole, mainstream illustration maintained its connection to naturalistic, 19th-century styles and, later, photo-based realism, well into the mid-20th-century. In this Historical Overview I will look at some of the innovations of early modernism with its interest in the primitive and expressionism, and the appreciation, starting in the early 1900s, in naïve art – children’s art, the art of the insane, and folk art – that continues to this day with interest in outsider art. The

Most American illustrators at the beginning of the 20th-century were working in naturalistic styles with the exception of humorous illustrators and cartoonists. Yet in Europe at the beginning of that century a revolution in art had begun – early modernism. Some American illustrators like Ben Shahn (1898-1969), who was also a painter, created illustrations that reflected this shift toward abstraction, simplification, etc., in a pseudo naïve style (see Figure 2), and American graphic designer Paul Rand (1914-1996), influenced by the Bauhaus,

incorporated modernist styles like collage and simple forms in his illustrations (see Figure 3). Other influences on American illustration were European imports Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and Art Moderne, which were modern, drawing on some of early modernism’s use of abstract shapes, simplification, flat colors, but too elegant to be considered naïve. There was also homegrown Victoriana and Americana, which could be naïve. John Held, Jr. (1889-1958) did a series of Americana-inspired satirical rustic-looking block prints for *The New Yorker*, very

different in style from his



Fig. 4 John Held Jr., *Horsewhipping the Masher*, 1928, blockprint, *The New Yorker* magazine. *New Yorker* editor Harold Ross and John Held, Jr. were boyhood friends in Utah. Ross, who liked the blockprints Held had done as a youth, encouraged Held to do more. Held did a Gay Nineties series – “satires of the genteel society at the end of the century.”

illustrators I have chosen to focus on broke from tradition and either adopted naïve/ expressive illustration styles or were genuinely naïve. All of the illustrators I've chosen are also, with the exception of Lorraine Fox, writers. These illustrators in some cases might not have been directly influenced by modern and naïve art but appreciation of these art forms, beginning in the 20th-century, made acceptance of their work possible.

In the writings by modernists and books on modernism, the adjective “primitive” and noun “primitives” are used broadly to describe diverse populations including: tribal societies in Africa and Oceania, indigenous cultures in Asia and Latin America, peasants in European cultures, pre-Renaissance artists other than classical Greek or Roman, folk artists, self-taught adult artists, children, and asylum inmates. In the context of these writings these words are not pejorative terms.

At present there are differing cognitive developmental theories of stages in children’s artistic development dependent on the educator’s psychological orientation. Even in the past when it was generally agreed the end point for children’s artistic development was realism, different terms were used to describe the stages and different age spans were assigned to them. Still, certain stages have been observed and, although theories of what occurs cognitively differ, there is agreement that artistic development follows a certain path. To cite an example, educator Viktor Lowenfeld (1903-1960) formulated the following developmental stages in the 1940s: Scribbling (ages 2-4), Pre-schematic (ages 4-7), Schematic (ages 7-9), Realism (ages 9-11), Pseudo-naturalism (ages 11-13).² (See Figure 5.)



Fig. 5 Anonymous child, female, age 3, marker on paper, collection Rudolf Arnheim. This is an example of the Pre-schematic stage (ages 4-7) with tadpole figure (head with stick arms and legs).



Fig. 6 William-Adolphe Bouguereau, *The Birth of Venus*, 1879, oil on canvas.

Early Modernism

In the book *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900-1916*, British author Christopher Butler begins with how ideas of late 19th-century European philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Henri Bergson (1859-1941), playwrights Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) and August Strindberg (1849-1912), writer Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), and American psychologist William James (1842-1910) created an atmosphere of skepticism of all that went before. Butler writes many followed Nietzsche in believing that

2. “Lowenfeld’s Stages of Artistic Development,” University of Minnesota, Duluth, <http://www.d.umn.edu/~jbrutger/Lowenf.html> (accessed March 30, 2010).

“What is needed above all is an absolute scepticism toward all inherited concepts.”³

In his book, Butler articulates how in the three disciplines – literature, music and painting – artists rejected the empirical-based philosophy of positivism, materialism and academicism and sought fresh inspiration in new societal developments, among them, appreciation of children’s art, the “discovery” of tribal art, and psychological theories of the unconscious by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Jung (1875-1961). There was a strong romantic component to this swing from the rational to exaltation of the irrational, as well.

For visual artists, traditional academic goals of realism, representation, and illusionistic perspective were rejected, and “the idea that creativity (and art) had to be subjective, intuitive, and expressionist in character” was embraced.⁴

The shift from objective, reality-based, naturalistic art led to the artistic styles Fauvism, Cubism, and Expressionism by artists Matisse, Kandinsky, Braque, Picasso, and others. Interestingly, Butler writes that these artists were essentially conservative in that they “believed in the evolution of art.”⁵ They had all worked in the earlier styles of the late 19th-century and believed they were taking the ideas of artists before them – the Symbolists, Impressionists and, most importantly, Post-impressionists Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) – to the “next logical step” – anti-illusionism, abstraction, simplification, decorative design, and expressionism (see Figures 7-9).

Robert Goldwater, author of *Primitivism in Modern Art*, first published in 1938 and revised in 1965, points out that large collections of primitive art were on view in



Fig. 7 Paul Gauguin, *Spirit of the Dead Watching*, 1892, oil on burlap mounted on canvas.



Fig. 8 Paul Cezanne, *Bend in the Road*, 1900-06, oil on canvas.



Fig. 9 Vincent Van Gogh, *Café Terrace at Night*, 1888, oil on canvas.

3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kauffmann and H. J. Hollingdale, New York, 1968, 409; quoted in Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900-1916*, New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1994, 2.

4. Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900-1916*, New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1994, 3.

5. Butler, *Early Modernism*, 75.

ethnological museums in major cities throughout Europe and America in the last third of the 19th-century, thus, “The artistic interest of the 20th-century in the productions of primitive peoples was neither as unexpected nor as sudden as is generally supposed.”⁶ These collections contained art and utilitarian objects from South America, the South Pacific and Africa. Still, objects we now view as art were not viewed as such by 19th-century ethnologists who held Social Darwinist beliefs that evolution also applied to the arts, with naturalism as the most evolved form of art, and racist ideas that tribal cultures were incapable of creating ‘Art.’

Preceding the modernists’ interest in the primitive, Goldwater cites instances in the 19th-century when artists looked at primitive art from earlier times and includes the influence of early Nazarene Italian art on the pre-Raphaelites, and of folk art and Mycenaean art on French Art Nouveau and German Jugendstil art movements, mentioning artist adherents Edvard Munch (1863-1944), Odilon Redon (1840-1916), Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898), Van Gogh and Gauguin.

Goldwater notes that while Gauguin “employed subject matter from the South Seas, and adapted individual figures from Indian art...With the exception of a very few of Gauguin’s sculptures there was no study of the form and composition of aboriginal sculpture.”⁷

Of modernism, Goldwater makes the distinction between three kinds of primitivism: romantic, emotional, and intellectual. In the romantic category he includes Gauguin and the School of Pont-Aven (in Brittany, France) and the Fauves; in the emotional category, Die Brücke (The Bridge) and Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider); and in the intellectual, Picasso, Cubism, Purism, and Constructivism.

Butler doesn’t make these distinctions between the three movements of Fauvism, Expressionism, and Cubism. In fact, he refutes the supposed analytical underpinnings of Cubism, because, as in Fauvism and Expressionism, formal decisions are made on the basis they “simply feel right.”

This emphasis on the particular and the instinctive was immensely reinforced by Modernist beliefs about the primitive, which justified a withdrawal from the Realist world of painstaking empirical perception, to one of simpler, but emotionally direct, conception.⁸

Butler does note general distinctions between the modernist art of France, Germany

6. Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986, 3.

7. *Ibid.*, 143.

8. *Ibid.*, 121.

and Italy, though. He includes the expatriates from other countries, i.e., Kandinsky in Germany and Picasso in France, as sharing the sensibilities of their adopted countries. In France modernism is not so emotionally fraught, in Germany with the Brücke there is a dark, forboding social criticism, and in Italy a pronounced utopian anti-bourgeois fervor, as evidenced in futurist manifestos.

Goldwater points out that modernists differ from their predecessors in that they were exposed to African art. Maurice de Vlaminck (1876-1958) claimed he “discovered” African art in either 1904 or 1905 when he purchased three statues – two from Dahomey and one from the Ivory Coast – on display behind the counter of a bistro. Although he had often visited the Trocadéro ethnological museum with André Derain (1880-1954), it was not until then that he was “profoundly moved...sensing the power possessed ...by these three sculptures.”⁹ Goldwater points out, “The admiration for this new primitive tradition differed in some respects from any previous appreciation of exotic art. For the first time the products of a native culture were being considered as isolated objects, entirely apart from the context of their creation.”¹⁰ Yet, he also cites Vlaminck’s interest in the statues as a throwback to earlier collectors’ appraisals of native objects as curios and “mystical symbols,” not as art.

Goldwater observes that the “nudes bathing in landscape” paintings, a common Fauve theme, are detached, with their calm, “tropicalized” settings, non-interactive figures and lack of action, and yet are also emotionally charged. “The fauves’ reduction of the means employed to flat color areas and a limited selection of colors gives their work directness and immediacy.”¹¹ (See Figure 10.)

Butler observes that Matisse’s fauvism “examines the elements of representation – perspective, modeling, the effect of light – and subtracts some of those which were most conspicuously made for ‘realism,’ in favour of others. Conventional modeling goes, as



Fig. 10 Henri Matisse, *Le Luxe II*, 1907, casein on canvas.



Fig. 11 Henri Matisse, *Harmony in Red*, 1908, oil on canvas.

9. Ibid., 87.

10. Ibid., 88.

11. Ibid., 96.

does colour faithfully reproduced as impressionist atmosphere, or the reflection from a lighted surface.”¹² Of Matisse’s *Harmony in Red* from 1908 (see Figure 11), Butler writes, “...as a Fauve, he [Matisse] shows that once the premiss that colour may be non-representational is accepted, there are entirely new possibilities for pattern and the decorative in twentieth-century art.”¹³

Matisse himself wrote in *Notes on a Painter*, published in 1908:

The entire arrangement of my picture is expressive: the place occupied by the figures, the empty spaces around them, the proportions, everything has its share. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the diverse elements at the painter’s command to express his feelings.¹⁴

Butler clarifies that by “feelings” Matisse does not mean a response to “some favoured narration of human life” – that, instead, Matisse “demands we begin to learn a language of painting – that, for example, we correlate our emotional response to pure colours.”¹⁵

Butler notes Matisse was also the first to “step into the land of the ugly,” a major departure from “the rather calm, contented, and glamorous work in the line from Gauguin to Derain” with his *Blue Nude* (1907), “a rude challenge to mildly salacious academic painting on the Venus theme as shown in the Salons.”¹⁶ (See Figure 12.)

Butler writes that Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger* (1907) (see Figure 14) was most likely a response to this painting by Matisse and states, “the ugliness and threat of the *Demoiselles* breaks decisively with the sophisticated hedonism of the tradition in which Matisse and the Fauves most often worked.”

The painting was started spring of 1907 and reworked later that year after Picasso “underwent the ‘shock’ and ‘revelation’ of the primitive art in the Trocadéro museum.”¹⁷ (See Figure 13.) The painting was originally done in the primitive Iberian style inspired by



Fig. 12 Henri Matisse, *Blue Nude*, 1907, oil on canvas.



Fig. 13 Trocadéro Museum, Oceanic Gallery, 1930, Paris. Photo: Musée de l’Homme, Butler’s *Early Modernism* book, page 10.

12. Butler, *Early Modernism*, 32-33.

13. *Ibid.*, 35.

14. Henri Matisse, in *La Grande Revue*, 25 Dec. 1908, repr. In Flam (ed.), *Matisse on Art*, 36; quoted in Butler, *Early Modernism*, 35.

15. Butler, *Early Modernism*, 35.

16. *Ibid.*, 107.

17. *Ibid.*, 109.

reliefs he had seen at an exhibition at the Louvre in 1906 distinguished by, in Goldwater's words, the "lozenge-shaped eye" and "strong quart de Brie nose."¹⁸ X-rays show Picasso repainted the two figures on the right, "Hence the uneasy mixture of contrasting styles that we now see."¹⁹ Butler notes the heads of the left hand side figures don't resemble "any particular African or other work that Picasso could have seen beforehand. Those noted by scholars may be similar, but they are not potential sources."²⁰

Goldwater, however, does see "direct formal borrowings" in Picasso's art and that he knew sculptures and masks from the Ivory Coast and Gabon.²¹ Picasso and Matisse were the only artists of that time to collect African art on a large scale. Still Goldwater notes that while Picasso angularizes facial features and body parts he also twists and torques them, energizing the poses and indicating expression which is lacking in the "static, hieratic, impersonal" African art (see Figures 15 and 16). He writes, "It is important to recognize this new emotional tone, because it suggests that although Picasso's intention was toward the recognition and utilization of the formal solutions he perceived in African art, a romantic feeling for the savagery of the primitive also played an important role in the attraction it had for him."²²

The Brücke was a group formed in 1905 by Expressionist artists based in Dresden. Members included Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), Emil Nolde (1867-1956) and Max Pechstein (1881-1955). Kirchner "discovered" African and Oceanic art in 1904 at the Dresden ethnological museum. Unlike Gauguin or the Fauves, the Brücke "never regarded primitive art simply as a curiosity."²³

18. Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 147 and 150.

19. Butler, *Early Modernism*, 109.

20. *Ibid.*, 110.

21. Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 147.

22. *Ibid.*, 152.

23. *Ibid.*, 105.



Fig. 14 Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*, 1907, oil on canvas.



Fig. 15 Pablo Picasso, study for *Les Femmes d'Alger*, 1907, medium unknown.



Fig. 16 Ivory Coast, Senofu, title known, date unknown, wood.

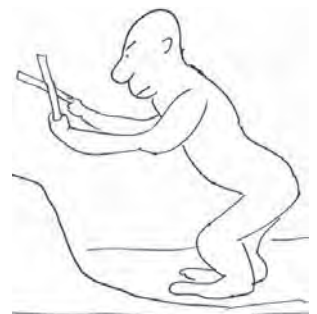


Fig. 17 James Thurber, *The Good Provider II*, date unknown, pen and ink drawing. Who knew?

Goldwater writes, “What fascinated them was the power and immediacy of primitive art or, as Nolde said, “its absolute primitiveness, its intense, often grotesque expression of strength and life in the very simplest form.”²⁴ Goldwater notes, “The change from Gauguin’s point of view is toward an interiorization of the conception of the primitive, a change whose start we have noted in the work of the Fauves...” but “intensified in the work of the Brücke artists.”²⁵ Besides nudes in nature, which like the Fauves the Brücke artists painted, cabaret, music hall and Bible scenes were popular. He notes of the art, “the individuality of the figures, the existence of the actors as separate human beings, has almost disappeared in favor of the purely typical roles which they are playing.”

Of Kirchner’s scenes of prostitutes, brothels, and of variety shows, Goldwater writes that Kirchner went past the surface reality of similar subjects by Toulouse Lautrec (1864-1901) and James Ensor (1860-1949) “plumbing deeper, more primitive depths than either of his predecessors.”²⁶ (See Figure 18.) Goldwater continues, the Fauves “made use of thick, unfinished line,” but the Brücke takes this further, with a “deliberate coarsening of technique” with “confusion of outline,” “filling in of the background...with an unregulated scribble that again resembles the work of children and that indicates clearly the value given to the immediate and the unfinished.”²⁷

Of Nolde’s painting *Entombment* (1915), Goldwater observes how “through the crowding of its composition, the concentration of its modeling on the closely juxtaposed heads with their large features, and the reduction of these heads to the expression of a single, dominating emotion, becomes a thing of immediate terror.”²⁸ (See Figure 19.)

Goldwater writes that the Blaue Reiter, formed in 1911 in Munich, as compared with the Brücke, were acquainted with “a wider selection of aboriginal styles” and “primitive exotic arts” and were “more articulate about that kinship.”²⁹ In their manifesto, *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, published in 1912, in addition to including their own work and those of



Fig. 18 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Berlin Street Scene*, 1913, oil on canvas.



Fig. 19 Emil Nolde, *Entombment*, 1915, oil on canvas.

24. Ibid., 105.

25. Ibid., 108-109.

26. Ibid., 114.

27. Ibid., 118-119.

28. Ibid., 114.

29. Ibid., 126.

their contemporaries in France, they include a vast array of primitive art from their own and other cultures:

...illustrations of figures from New Caledonia, the Malay Peninsula, Easter Island, and the Cameroons; a Brazilian mask, and a stone sculpture from Mexico; a Russian folk statuette and Russian folk prints; Egyptian puppets and an archaic Greek relief; Japanese woodcuts, Bavarian glass painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and German nineteenth century folk pictures; a thirteenth century head of a stone cutter, fourteenth century tapestries, and a Baldun-Grien woodcut. In addition there are European and Arabian children's drawings and watercolors, and many popular votive pictures.³⁰

Goldwater notes that though the Brücke drew inspiration from children's art, this is "the first time that we find an express appreciation of its qualities and of the reasons for their importance to the modern artist." Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944): "In addition to his ability to portray externals, the talented child has the power to clothe the abiding inner truth in the form in which this inner truth appears as the most effective."³¹

Although the Blaue Reiter appreciated these diverse art forms and in their writings articulated they were in "spiritual sympathy" with them, they, unlike the Fauves and the Brücke before them, didn't incorporate primitive motifs in their art outside of folk, particularly Bavarian glass painting, and medieval art.³²

There is also a spiritual component to Marc's and Kandinsky's art – in Marc's case pantheism, and for Kandinsky Christian and Theosophical content.

In his summary of the Blaue Reiter, Goldwater writes that, "...while their animal and folk subject matter is more specifically primitive in its limited reference, their painting is technically subtler and more complicated than either that of the Fauves or of the Brücke; while the fundamental emotions to which they appeal are both vaguer and more general."³³ (See Figures 20 and 21.)

Butler writes how the art of the modernists was received by audiences and critics with outrage and



Fig. 20 Franz Marc (1880-1916), *The Large Blue Horses*, 1911, oil on canvas.



Fig. 21 Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition IV*, 1911, oil on canvas.

30. Ibid., 126.

31. Wassily Kandinsky, "Ueber die Formfragen," *Der Blaue Reiter*, 92-93; quoted in Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 128.

32. Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 129.

33. Ibid., 139.

accusations of “childishness, irrationality, or plain insanity,” and, “Even Cézanne could be seen as late as 1910 as one of a number of ‘insensate revolutionaries.’”³⁴

Butler also gives voice to reservations about the aims of modernism:

As the language of rhythm or the ambivalently emancipated dissonances of atonality, or the multiple perspectives of Cubism dominate a work, there is a very significant loss, which is compounded by the appeal to the primitive, collective, and mythical depths of the unconscious. It is part of the destruction of our sense of the individuality of human character, and of a corresponding critical commitment to a personal sensibility...³⁵

English art critic Roger Fry (1866-1934) was a champion of European modernist artists, particularly Matisse. In an exhibit he organized in 1910, Fry wrote of Matisse:

“...this search for an abstract harmony of line, for rhythm, has been carried to lengths which often deprive the figure of all appearance of nature. The general effect of his [Matisse’s] pictures is that of a return to primitive, even perhaps of a return to barbaric, art... Primitive art, like the art of children, consists not so much in an attempt to represent what the eye perceives, as to put a line round a mental conception of the object.”³⁶

A reviewer of the 1910 show for *The Times*, C. J. Weld-Blundell, far from agreement,

judged that the work shown had gained ‘simplicity’ by being merely regressive, and throwing away ‘all that the long developed skill past artists had acquired and bequeathed.’ It may reconstruct the past, but actually ‘stops where a child would stop.’... Really primitive art is attractive because it is unconscious; but this is deliberate – it is the abandonment of what Goethe called the ‘culture conquests’ of the past. Like anarchism in politics it is the rejection of all that civilization has done, the good with the bad.³⁷

Post World War I, some formerly Expressionist artists returned to more representational styles. In Berlin, artists George Grosz (1893-1959), Otto Dix (1891-1969) and Georg Scholz (1890-1945) developed an art style called the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), “a figurative painting with emotional and social content.”³⁸

In his autobiography Grosz wrote:

To arrive at a style which expressed energetically and without detours the

34. Cf. Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism, 1900-1930*, London, 1981, 47; quoted in Butler, *Early Modernism*, 76.

35. Butler, *Early Modernism*, 118-119.

36. By the *Burlington Magazine* in its Feb. 1908 issue, in Bullen, *Post-Impressionists*, 43; quoted in Butler, *Early Modernism*, 215.

37. C. J. Weld-Blundell, cited in Hynes, *Edwardian*, 329; quoted in Butler, *Early Modernism*, 215-216.

38. Jean-Luc Duval, *Avant-Garde Art 1914-1939*, New York, N.Y.: Rizzoli International, Inc., 1980, 63.



Fig. 22 George Grosz, *The Convict: Monteur John Heartfield after Franz Jung's Attempt to Get Him Up on His Feet*, c. 1920, watercolor, ink, pencil, and cut-and-pasted printed paper on paper.



Fig. 23 Otto Dix, *Match Seller I*, 1920, oil and collage on canvas.



Fig. 24 Sue Coe, *Woman Walks into Bar – Is Raped by Four Men on the Pool Table – While 20 Watch*, 1983, mixed media.

harshness and insensitivity of my objects, I studied the most immediate manifestations of the artistic instinct: I copied folk drawings in public urinals: they seemed to me the most condensed expression and translation of strong feelings. In this way I attained a style as pitiless as a knife, which I needed to render my observations dictated by an absolute negation of man.³⁹

Modernism in America

The Armory Show, held in New York in 1913, was the first large-scale exhibition that introduced Americans to modern art, including art from Europe. Organized by the Association of American Painters and Sculptors (AAPS), it was initially conceived as an exhibition of American artists but grew in scope to include European modernists. Kandinsky, Picasso, and Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), were among those showing work for the first time in the United States. Others, including Cézanne, Redon, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Matisse, had shown work in America but in smaller venues. “The Armory Show has consistently been regarded as a moment of cultural crisis and a radical break with tradition, out of which emerged a new and vital art, literature and drama.”⁴⁰ One of the outcomes of the show was the creation of a market for modern art in America. Another result, noted by art historian W. Jackson Rushing, was an appreciation of Native American art among non-Native American painters and sculptors: “Viewers were encouraged to

39. George Grosz, *A Little Yes and a Big No: The Autobiography of George Grosz*, trans. Lola Sachs Dorin, New York, N.Y.: Dial Press, 1946; quoted in Duval, *Avant-Garde Art*, 63.

40. Askart.com, “New York Armory Show of 1913,” <http://derosaworld.typepad.com/derosaworld/2009/02/relatively-speaking-thats-not-art.html> (accessed September 25, 2009).

accept non-representational form because of its derivations from the art of the continents' first peoples, deliberately distancing it from European modernism."⁴¹

Children's Art

In the introduction to Goldwater's book the author writes,

Whether we understand it or not, and whether we approve it or not, this affinity of large sections of modern painting to children's art is one of the most striking of its characteristics. It is part of a much wider and vaguer affinity which has been generally recognized, yet never pinned down: It has been felt that modern art is in some way primitive.⁴²

In *The Innocent Eye: Children's Art and the Modern Artist*, author Jonathan Fineberg explores the influence of children's art on early modern artists, including Matisse, Kandinsky, Picasso, Paul Klee (1879-1940), Joan Miró (1893-1983), Marc Chagall (1887-1985), the Nabis Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) and Maurice Denis (1870-1943), and, later, COBRA artists (which included artists Pierre Alechinsky, b. 1927; Asger Jorn, 1914-1973, Karel Appel, 1921-2006), Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985), Jackson Pollack (1912-1956), through to contemporary artists, including Terry Winters (b. 1949), Donald Baechler (b. 1956), Keith Haring (1958-1990), and Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988). Fineberg states that many artists not only collected children's art and adopted children's styles of rendering, but, in some instances, were directly inspired by compositional elements of an individual child's actual drawing or painting. It could be art by their own children (Miró), or from collections of anonymous children's art, or even, in the case of Klee, the artist's own childhood drawings.



Fig. 25 Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Untitled*, 1981, oilstick on paper.

In the preface, Fineberg writes, "I hope this book will allow us to acknowledge without fear what even the most uninformed viewer of modern art has always intuitively known: that a fundamental connection exists between modern art and the art of children."⁴³

Yet, when the connection is recognized it can provoke hostile comparisons of modern art "with the 'awkward scrawls' of children," serving "as a rhetoric for dismissing the significance of radical ideas in art, as when a German critic in 1933 described the work of

41. Ask Art, "New York Armory Show."

42. Goldwater, *Primitivism*, ix-xx.

43. Jonathan Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye: Children's Art and the Modern Artist*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997, 2.

Paul Klee as ‘mad, infantile smearings.’”⁴⁴

Fineberg writes that the public’s disdain of modern art as something a child could do was actually something modern artists aspired to. Gauguin said, “you will always find vital sap coursing through the primitive arts... In the arts of an elaborate civilization, I doubt it!”⁴⁵ And in 1904 Cézanne told fellow Post-impressionist painter Emile Bernard (1868-1941), “As for me, I would like to be a child.”⁴⁶

Fineberg begins his study with ideas held about children and innocence, which run from the Renaissance through the 1800s, and cites philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and his idea of the noble savage and art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900), who coined the term “the innocence of the eye.”

Fineberg cites scientific developments that led to “the cultivation of naïveté” at the end of the nineteenth century:

Freud’s [Sigmund Freud, 1856-1939] archaeological excavation of the unconscious mind and the debate over Darwin’s evolutionary theories paralleled the pervasive “primitivism” of vanguard art from Gauguin to Stravinsky, and Baudelaire’s speculations on “childhood regained” were subsumed under a broader desire for authenticity...primitivism offered a purgative for Western culture’s materialism and for the rigor mortis of its cultural hierarchies; in this regard the attraction to child art was a subspecies of primitivism.⁴⁷

In the 1880s and 1890s, Fineberg writes, German art historian Alfred Lichtwark (1852-1914), English psychologist James Sully (1842-1923) and German educator Carl Götze (1836-1887) linked children’s art with the art of tribal societies and by the end of the 1890s studies of children’s artistic development were on the rise and exhibitions of children’s art were mounted in cities throughout Europe and America every year up until World War I. The exhibits were of interest to artists and the general public, as well as educators.

Artists organized many of the exhibitions and showed their work side by side with the work of children. Among the shows was the 1908 Vienna Kunstschau, where the first room of the exhibit was devoted to children’s art from the classes of Franz Cižek (1865-1946). Cižek was an educator and artist from Vienna who was the first to encourage free artistic

44. Robert Scholz, “Kunstgotzen sturzen,” *Deutsche Kultur-Wacht* (1930, fas. 10, p. 5; cited in O.K. Werckmesiter, “The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee,” *Aerts Magazine* 52, no. 1 (September 1977), 149; quoted in Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye*, 23.

45. Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye*, 10.

46. Paul Cézanne, first published in *Mecure de France*, June 1921, and reprinted in *Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne*, Paris: Michel, n.d., 104-5; quoted in Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye*, 9.

47. Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye*, 11.



Fig. 26 Gabrielle Münter (top), *House*, 1914, oil on cardboard; and child's drawing (Rudi Schindler, bottom), from the collection of Kandinsky and Münter.

expression for school children. In America, Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) between the years 1912 to 1916 mounted four children's art exhibitions at his 291 Gallery in New York.

Beginning in 1908, Blaue Reiter artists Kandinsky and Gabrielle Münter (1877-1962) together collected around 250 children's drawings and paintings on paper. Münter started out as Kandinsky's student in 1902 and later became his lover. Their relationship lasted until 1914 when at the outbreak of World War I Kandinsky was forced to leave Germany. Other Blaue Reiter shared their interest in children's art, including Paul Klee, Alexi Jawlensky, and Lyonel Feininger. After the war, teaching at the Bauhaus, Kandinsky resumed collecting children's art.

Fineberg writes that in his early work Kandinsky drew on "children's compositional devices as well as... the style of their imagery" adopting such children's vocabulary as "free spatial orientation," "amorphous" color handling, "disjunction of scale," "isolating images from one another," "annihilation of foreground/background."⁴⁸

However, neither Goldwater nor Butler corroborate

Fineberg's finding that children's art was a direct inspiration for Kandinsky. They do see influences of Bavarian and Russian folk art motifs, though.

Gabriele Münter, however, actually recreated children's drawings whole in her paintings and Fineberg provides numerous examples (see Figure 26).

In 1902, fellow Blaue Reiter artist Paul Klee (1879-1944), back home in Bern after completion of his art studies in Munich and Rome, found drawings he'd done as a child in his parents' attic, among them *Woman with a Parasol*, 1883-85 (see Figure 27). He was struck by their "highly developed stylistic character and their fresh quality of 'naïve' observation..."⁴⁹

Fineberg writes Klee had earlier expressed disenchantment with the academic curriculum he'd received in a letter to his then-fiancée, Lily, in



Fig. 27 Paul Klee (age 4-6), *Woman with a Parasol*, 1883-85, pencil on paper.

48. Ibid., 56.

49. Ibid., 83.

1901, so his “discovery” in his parents’ home gave him further impetus to strike out on a different course.

Fineberg writes, “For about a decade from 1906, Klee focused on the syntax of his childhood drawings and by extension on the schema of children’s art in general. Then around 1918 he began to concentrate on the iconography of childhood works (particularly his own) and, finally in the 1930s his entire style veered toward a childlike directness,”⁵⁰ (see Figure 28).

Fineberg writes in the teens and ’20s, especially, Klee mined his childhood sketchbooks for subject matter, style, and techniques. He also drew inspiration from his son Felix’s childhood drawings. Klee no doubt saw Kandinsky’s collection of children’s drawings both pre- and post-World War I.

Goldwater in the chapter “The Child Cult” also writes of the influence of children’s art on artists, particularly Klee, Miró and Dubuffet. In Klee’s art Goldwater finds motifs from the Congo,



Fig. 30 Paul Klee, *Picture Album*, 1937, oil on canvas. Goldwater notes of this painting the “stylized human images of Papuan Gulf ceremonial boards with their concentric linear patterns...and other Melanesian motifs.” (Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 191.)

New Guinea, Melanesia, and the mentally ill, but notes it is his “affiliation with children’s art” which is most “pervasive.”⁵¹ (See Figure 30.)

Representationally, he [Klee] quite deliberately limits himself to the stage of ‘intellectual realism.’⁵² This kind of representation is opposed to visual realism in that it is composed of the inclusion of those features of an object which are considered important and which are known to be part of it, regardless of whether they could all be visually present at the same time. This is a stage of artistic formulation through which all children apparently pass,

50. Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye*, 84.

51. Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 195.

52. G. H. Luquet, *The Art and Religion of Fossil Man*, Paris: Masson, 1930, 72-73; quoted in Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 197.



Fig. 28 Paul Klee, *Pastorale (Rhythms)*, 1927, oil on canvas mounted on wood, (right); and child’s drawing (Kätchen Busse), pencil on paper, from the collection of Kandinsky and Münter (left).



Fig. 29 Child’s drawing given to Klee by educational psychologist Hans-Friedrich Geist around 1930, watercolor and crayon on paper. The composition is reminiscent of Klee’s watercolors done in Tunisia, yet this drawing postdates them.

until in response to some form of pressure from the established tradition they begin to turn to visual representation. It disregards ‘correct’ optical proportions in favor of a hierarchy of size that reflects importance, whether among different figures or within the same figure (so that the head is always large)...⁵³

With Klee’s conscious “borrowings and adaptations from the primitive and from children’s art” he seeks to achieve a “freshness and innocence, a wish not unlike that of the romantics, but going much further and containing mystical overtones.”⁵⁴ Goldwater quotes from Felix Klee’s (1907-1990) book on his father, “...he feels an affinity with the insights of ‘children, madmen and savages’ into an ‘in-between world’ that ‘exists between the worlds our senses can perceive.’”⁵⁵

In a conversation Klee had with Bauhaus dramatist Lothar Schreyer (1886-1966), Klee said he had no problem having his art compared to “children’s scribbles and smears. That’s fine!” and further told Schreyer, a few of the illustrations in Hans Prinzhorn’s (1886-1933) book, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, were “fine Klees.”⁵⁶

Goldwater sees Klee’s art as simultaneously “naïve and sophisticated.”

He [Klee] introduces childish drawing and perspective, whole and with sympathy, into an abstract pictorial and color organization of the most advanced sort, calling upon his awareness all of the achievements of modern art. In the contrast there is a deliberate irony that is at the root of the humorous yet mournful note, that sense of the helpless that is struck by so many of these small pictures and that lends them their larger implications.⁵⁷ (See Figures 31-32.)



Fig. 31 Paul Klee, *Yellow Harbor*, 1921, watercolor and transferred printing ink on paper, mounted on cardboard.



Fig. 32 Paul Klee, *Tomcat's Turf*, 1919, watercolor, gouache, and oil on gesso, mounted on cardboard.

53. Ibid., 197.

54. Ibid., 199.

55. Felix Klee, *Paul Klee*, New York: Braziller, 1962, 214; quoted in Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 200.

56. Ibid., 182-184; quoted in Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 200.

57. Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 201-202.

Goldwater writes that in contrast to Klee’s “analytic” art, Miró “continues to have something childlike about him, both as a person and a painter.”⁵⁸ Poet and surrealist founder André Breton (1896-1966) observed of Miró “‘a certain arresting of his personality at an infantile stage,’ which gave him a special relationship to the automatic dreams images of surrealism.”⁵⁹ Goldwater writes that Miró most likely first saw African art in 1919 at Picasso’s studio, but concludes that despite some instances where he “adapted designs or motifs” he appreciated it “...less for its formal structure than for the atmosphere it evokes.”⁶⁰

Goldwater notes that despite the affinity one observes between Miró’s art and children’s art, “the methods of children’s drawings, with their broad irregular outline, simplified figure notations, and arbitrary proportions and perspectives”⁶¹ figure relatively rarely in his [Miró’s] paintings and lithographs.” In some instances, Miró “bases himself on an even earlier stage of childish representation [than Klee’s], one in which no body is shown, and the head, seen full face as an irregularly defined oval or circle, rests directly upon straight legs ending in ball-like feet.”⁶² (See Figure 33.) Though his painting “gives the impression of ‘a thing at once elementary and precious,’ related to uninhibited childish notations,” Goldwater finds “it has more to do with a general sense of the ideographic symbol (whether for plants, birds, stars, or figures).”⁶³ (See Figure 34.) Thus “...Miró has an ambiguous relation to children’s art. He employs it, but drastically changes it, to create a world of his own fantasy, full of movement and gaiety, but also sardonic and grotesque, with some of the child’s unhesitating cruelty.”⁶⁴

Jean Dubuffet, another artist directly influenced by children’s art, was able to devote himself full time to painting in 1942 after a fitful art career that began in 1918. In 1923,



Fig. 33 Joan Miró. *The Bird with Calm Look and Wings in Flames*, 1952, oil and gypsum on canvas.



Fig. 34 Joan Miró. *The Beautiful Bird Revealing the Unknown to a Pair of Lovers*, 1941, gouache, oil wash, and charcoal on paper.

58. Ibid., 204.

59. André Breton, *Génèse et perspective artistique du surréalisme*, 1941; reprinted in *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, New York: Brentano, 1945, 94; quoted in Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 204.

60. Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 205.

61. Ibid., 206.

62. Ibid., 207.

63. Ibid., 207.

64. Ibid., 209.



Fig. 35 Children's drawings, gouache on paper, from the collection of Jean Dubuffet.



Fig. 36 Jean Dubuffet, *Cookie Tin Break*, 1962, gouache on paper.

Fineberg mentions, a friend gave Dubuffet a copy of Prinzhorn's *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, a prescient gift. Although Dubuffet did not read German the book is profusely illustrated. In 1943 he experienced a breakthrough – art making became for him “a tool of discovery” rather than about style. At that time Dubuffet had also collected “a stunningly colorful and boldly gestural inventory of works by children that bear a striking resemblance to his own work of the mid- and later 1940s.”⁶⁵

In 1952 Dubuffet wrote of his artistic credo:

Indeed, my persistent curiosity about children's drawings, and those of anyone who has never learned to draw, is due to my hope of finding in them a method of reinstating objects derived, not from some false position of the eyes arbitrarily focused on them, but from a whole compass of unconscious glances, of finding those involuntary traces inscribed in the memory of every ordinary human being, and the affective reactions that link each individual to the things that surround him and happen to catch his eye...⁶⁶

Fineberg concludes, “The technique and style of Dubuffet's

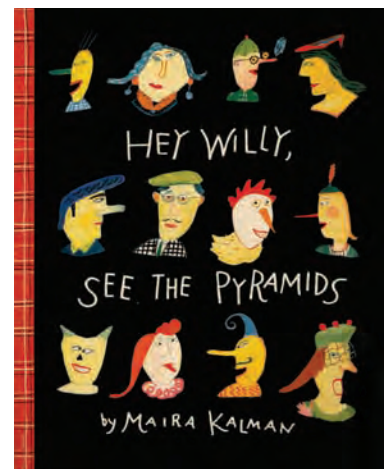


Fig. 37 Children's drawings, gouache on paper, from the collection of Jean Dubuffet (top); and Maira Kalman (bottom), *Hey Willy, See the Pyramids*, 1989, cover. Kalman's illustrations resemble children's art.

65. Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye*, 155.

66. Jean Dubuffet, *Memoir on the Development of My Work from 1952*, trans. Louis Varèse, in Peter Selz, *The Work of Jean Dubuffet*, 97, 102; quoted in Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye*, 154.

work from 1944 through much of the rest of his career explicitly draws on the art of children in the deliberately crude gesture and awkward materials...⁶⁷

Of Dubuffet, Goldwater similarly notes the influence of children's art. "Like Klee, but in a much more brutal, direct, and tangible way, Dubuffet, wishing to cast off the accepted tradition of the 'acquired means' [cited by Matisse], sought a road back 'into the elementary and formative beginnings of art [to transcribe] a state of child-like innocence and amazement."⁶⁸ Fineberg notes, Dubuffet, like Klee, was also interested in Prinzhorn's book on the art of the insane, but additionally "he was attracted by untrained, amateur art of all kinds (whether children's, barbaric, folk or psychotic), and made a considerable collection of l'art brut."⁶⁹ Goldwater quotes Dubuffet's goal "'to carry the human image... immediately into the range of effectiveness without passing through esthetics."⁷⁰ He draws on children's way of rendering human figures, "simplest frontal and profile views, crude bodies with enlarged heads," and surroundings but, in addition, "builds up his materials, whether oils or synthetic substances, in a thick and ridged impasto and with a deliberate preservation of messiness and confusion that conveys something of the child's tactile pleasure in manipulating clay or mud." (See Figure 38.) In so doing, "He creates an object which has a fetish-life of its own."⁷¹ Goldwater finds in his paintings a "mood" of "aggressive immediacy, a positive pleasure in the ordinary (the vulgar)."⁷²

Goldwater in his conclusion, like Fineberg, cites 19th-century ideas of childhood by Baudelaire and Delacroix and their appreciation of "youthful ability to perceive acutely and to feel with enthusiasm," yet, they "would have been shocked to find artists who are inspired by the actual forms of children's art and who adapt at least some part of its techniques (or



Fig. 38 Jean Dubuffet, *Joë Bousquet in Bed*, 1947, oil emulsion in water on canvas.



Fig. 39 Hermann Beil, title unknown, date unknown, watercolor. Beil is one of the artists represented in Prinzhorn's book *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*.

67. Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye*, 161.

68. Peter Selz, *The Work of Jean Dubuffet*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1962, 11; quoted in Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 209.

69. Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 209.

70. Selz, *The Work of Jean Dubuffet*, 60, as quoted in Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 209-210.

71. Goldwater, *Primitivism*, 210.

72. *Ibid.*, 213.

lack of technique) in their own work...”⁷³ Fineberg emphasizes the similarities between modernist and children’s art and, in that attempt, overlooks the sophistication and “adult iconography” of the modernists. Goldwater, however, notes, “Of course the paintings of Klee, Miró, and Dubuffet do not really resemble those of children. They are nevertheless reminiscent of them, and quite deliberately so. It is the conscious incorporation of this reminiscence, and its evocation with a particular accent (witty, gay, or brutal) to comment upon man’s adult condition, that distinguish the twentieth century.”⁷⁴ Similarly, the illustrators I will focus on later in the thesis, though drawing on naïve styles, at bottom, also share this knowingness and sophistication.

In 2006 Fineberg curated a show, “When We Were Young,” organized by the Krannert Art Museum and Kinkead Pavilion, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where Fineberg teaches, and The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. In the show, child art by Klee, Picasso, Toulouse-Lautrec, and other artists was hung next to art of gifted child artists.⁷⁵ In a review of the show for *The New York Times*, Leslie Camhi writes, “Do childhood works by artists reveal traces of their future genius? What can the drawings of gifted children tell the viewer about the relationship between art and society? These are among the questions posed by this provocative show and its catalog, one of the first contemporary museum exhibitions to approach children’s art from an aesthetic perspective.”⁷⁶

Art of the Mentally Ill

In 1921, Dr. Walter Morgenthaler, a doctor at the Waldau Clinic in Switzerland, published a monograph, *A Psychiatric Patient as Artist*, about Adolph Wölfli, a schizophrenic and his patient. Wölfli, who, unprompted, began drawing shortly after his admission in 1895, was tremendously prolific. His output included a 45-volume, 25,000-paged imaginary life story with 1,600 illustrations and 1,500 collages. Only his single sheet artwork was included in Morgenthaler’s book and Wölfli’s fame was based on those drawings. I viewed an original copy at the library in German that was in very poor condition. In the back were perhaps ten plates of



Fig. 40 Adolf Wölfli, *Angel*, 1920, pencil and colored pencil on paper, dimensions unknown.

73. *Ibid.*, 214.

74. *Ibid.*, 214.

75. Leslie Camhi, “If a Little Genius Lives in the House, What’s on the Fridge?” *New York Times*, June 18, 2006, 34.

76. *Ibid.*, 34.

Wölfli's artwork. The first was in color and the rest in black and white. The Adolph Wölfli Foundation was formed in 1972 and his works reside at the Museum of Fine Art in Bern, Switzerland.

I previously cited Hans Prinzhorn's seminal book *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, published in 1922, and its impact on modern artists Klee and Dubuffet.

In 1918 Prinzhorn was appointed assistant at the Psychiatric Clinic of Heidelberg University where he was enlisted by the chief psychiatrist, Karl Wilmanns, to expand the collection Wilmanns had begun of artwork by mental patients and to "analyze them in a scientific study."⁷⁷ Prinzhorn collected over 5,000 artworks by about 450 patients from psychiatric institutions in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, and the Netherlands. Other psychiatric institutions of the period collected inmates' art for the purpose of psychiatric diagnosis but Prinzhorn's assignment was to include aesthetic evaluation as well. Prinzhorn's background in art history and philosophy in addition to medicine uniquely suited him for this task. He left his position in Heidelberg in 1921 and published *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* in 1922. In writing his book Prinzhorn drew on the work of psychologist, philosopher, and graphologist Ludwig Klages (1872-1956); Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler (1857-1939), who renamed the psychosis formerly referred to as praecox dementia, schizophrenia; and art historian and critic Conrad Fielder (1841-1895), who "insisted upon the experience of art as a product of perceptual knowing, a mental structure in its own right, capable of authentic cognition."⁷⁸

In the preface to the 1995 edition Professor Dr. W. von Baeyer writes,

Despite the changes in observational methods and the interpretations of pictures made by the mentally ill, especially schizophrenics, Prinzhorn's book retains its place in the borderland between psychiatry and art, illness and creative expression. Prinzhorn, who consciously excluded all psychoanalytic aspects, was primarily interested in the formal principle of configuration manifested by the pictures, for instance the patients' stubborn luxuriant need for symbolism or their ornamental, repetitive ordering tendencies. Diagnostic information was only marginally important for him. He was particularly impressed by the indisputable artistic achievement of many of the patients.⁷⁹

Prinzhorn begins his book with a theory of "creative urges" that result in art making

77. Bettina Brand-Claussen, "History," The Prinzhorn-Collection of the Psychiatric University Hospital in Heidelberg, http://www.prinzhorn.uni-hd.de/geschichte_eng.shtml#ns-era (accessed October 23, 2009).

78. James L. Foy, 1971, introduction to *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, by Hans Prinzhorn, New York, N.Y.: Springer-Verlag, reprint 1995, xii.

79. V. von Baeyer, preface to *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, by Hans Prinzhorn, New York, N.Y.: Springer-Verlag, reprint 1995, vi.

from psychomotor-inspired scribbling, expressive, playful, ornamental, ordering, imitative, symbolic to eidetic image making and configuration, and includes examples of the inmates' works to illustrate these "tendencies." The middle portion of the book is devoted to a more detailed account of ten particularly talented schizophrenics (Karl Brendel, August Klotz, Peter Moog, August Neter, Johann Knüpfer, Viktor Orth, Hermann Beil, Heinrich Welz, Joseph Sell, and Franz Pohl). In keeping with Conrad Fielder's theories of evaluating art "empathically," Prinzhorn "affords the reader a glimpse into the ten people's life histories and personalities...analyzing the works by empathic means."⁸⁰

Prinzhorn concludes that,

Untrained mentally ill persons, especially schizophrenics, frequently compose pictures which have many of the qualities of serious art and in their details often show surprising similarities to the pictures of children and primitives, as well as to those of many different cultural periods. Their closest relationships, however, are with the art of our time because of the fact that contemporary art, in its search for intuition and inspiration, consciously strives after psychic attitudes which appear as a matter of course in schizophrenia.⁸¹

Prinzhorn also suggests areas for further study but did not follow up on any of them. Prinzhorn traveled to America in 1929 to promote the ideas in his book. Disturbingly, from the late 1920s onward, Prinzhorn came under the sway of National Socialist ideas and wrote several articles for the conservative magazine *Der Ring* in 1930 and 1932. Prinzhorn wrote several other books before his death of typhus in 1933, but none were as successful. From 1921 through 1933 exhibitions of the collection were mounted throughout Europe, including nine German cities, Leipzig, Paris, Geneva, and Basel.

Unlike Morgenthaler and Prinzhorn, who valued the artistic output of asylum inmates, the clinical director Professor Wilhelm Weygandt (1870-1939) collected artwork of the



Fig. 41 Peter Moog, *Madonna*, date unknown, ink and watercolor, Prinzhorn collection.



Fig. 42 Joseph Sell, *Prison Chicanery*, date unknown, pencil, Prinzhorn collection.

80. Bettina Brand-Claussen, "History," http://www.prinzhorn.uni-hd.de/geschichte_eng.shtml#ns-era.

81. Hans Prinzhorn, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, 27.

insane for very different reasons – to show that the avant-garde art being produced at the time was similar to art in his collection and was therefore “degenerate, demented or schizophrenic.”⁸²

Later, in 1937, the Nazis culled art from the Prinzhorn collection with the consent of the new Heidelberg Clinic’s director, Carl Schneider, for their “Degenerate Art” exhibit in Munich. Willmanns, the previous director, had been discharged in 1933 and all art activities at the hospital ceased. In the exhibit, the asylum inmates’ works hung side by side with works by such modern artists as Klee, Chagall, Kandinsky and Max Ernst (1891-1976), who were accused of “cultural decadence.” Strikingly, the artworks selected from the Prinzhorn collection were chosen to show that the art of the insane was “superior” to their modernist counterparts – more pious, less inept, with more academically suitable subject matter. The exhibit was attended by over three million visitors and inflamed the general public’s already prejudiced feelings about modern art. Ironically, the Prinzhorn collection was preserved during the Nazi years because of its usefulness. The inmates’ inclusion in the show did not spare them, though, and four lives were taken in the Nazi euthanasia program.

I was curious what present day psychologists think of Prinzhorn and his theories. Online I found a review by Joseph J. Schildkraut, writing for *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, of a catalogue titled “Beyond Reason: Art and Psychosis: Works from the



Fig. 44 August Klotz, *Worm Holes etc.*, date unknown, watercolor, Prinzhorn collection.

Prinzhorn Collection” that accompanied a 1996 exhibition of the collection at the Hayward Gallery in London. Schildkraut notes that the Prinzhorn Collection’s assistant curator Bettina Brand-Claussen found, “Contrary to Prinzhorn’s claim of spontaneous production of art...patients were encouraged to produce works of art and asserts that ‘many patients – more than Prinzhorn was prepared to admit – had prior notions of visual design and imagery from school, from drawing lessons, or from craft or technical training’ and ‘Prinzhorn’s notion of unconscious creativity stands revealed as a case of



Fig. 43 Artist unknown, *Portrait of a Lady*, date unknown, crayon, 27 x 29 cm, Prinzhorn collection.

82. Bettina Brand-Claussen, “History,” http://www.prinzhorn.uni-hd.de/geschichte_eng.shtml#ns-era.

Expressionistic wishful thinking.”⁸³

At the same time, Brand-Claussen concludes, “For all its occasional absurdities, Prinzhorn’s *Artistry* is a unique and finely presented work...it was his achievement to rescue previously despised works from the psychopathological and diagnostic clutches of his colleagues and – by virtue of their psychological origins in the ‘deepest strata’ of the mind – to place them on an equal footing with ‘professional’ art.”⁸⁴

Schildkraut writes that Caroline Douglas in the final essay, “describes the intellectual climate at the time when Prinzhorn worked on this collection: Romanticism, with its elevation of ‘the madman [into] a kind of hero in touch with a reality somehow more vivid and authentic.’” Also, “Regrettably, ...Prinzhorn’s selection of examples of the art of the mentally ill may have been biased toward the works that conformed to his theories.”⁸⁵

Additionally, Schildkraut notes that “Douglas raises the possibility that some of the patients whose art is included in the Prinzhorn Collection may have had what we would now classify as manic-depressive disorder rather than schizophrenia.”⁸⁶

In America, Mexican-American schizophrenic artist Martin Ramírez (1895-1963), like Wölflli, started drawing spontaneously, in Ramírez’ case after he had been confined for many years. Born in Mexico, Ramírez emigrated to California sometime around 1925 and initially found railroad work. In 1930 he was found destitute and disoriented and was sent to the Stockton State Hospital. At some point he was transferred to DeWitt Mental Hospital in Auburn, California where he began drawing “on available bits of paper glued together with a paste made of bread or potatoes and saliva.”⁸⁷ In 1954 Ramírez handed drawings he had hidden from the hospital staff to Dr. Tarmo Pasto (1906-1986), a psychology professor at Sacramento State College who was doing research there.

Pasto, who was an artist as well as a psychologist, immediately saw Ramírez’ talent, saved Ramírez’ drawings, provided Ramírez with art supplies and organized four shows of Ramírez’ work,



Fig. 45 Martin Ramírez, *Untitled (Train)*, c. 1953, pencil and crayon on pieced paper.

83. Joseph J. Schildkraut, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Book Forum, December 2000, <http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/full/157/12/2068-a> (accessed September 25, 2009).

84. *Ibid.*

85. *Ibid.*

86. *Ibid.*

87. Roberta Smith, “Outside In,” *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/26/arts/design/26rami.html> (accessed September 25, 2009).

including one at Syracuse University. Dr. Pasto and Chicago artist Jim Nutt (b. 1943), fellow teachers at Sacramento State, met in 1968. Nutt, who was very taken with Ramírez' work, persuaded Pasto to sell Ramírez drawings to himself and his art dealer, Phyllis Kind. By the time of his death Ramírez had created over 300 works. New research has thrown into question whether Ramírez was actually schizophrenic. When Ramírez was picked up in 1930 he was mute and remained so until he died. Yet evidence has turned up that in Mexico he was married and had two children. He wrote letters home and drew in the margins. His iconography draws on images he would have experienced or seen in Mexico and California. In Roberta Smith's review in *The New York Times* for his solo show in 2007 at the American Museum of Folk Art, she writes,

Outsider art is often conveniently artist-free; it has been made by someone who is, as the term implies, on the margins – poor, uneducated, nonwhite, mentally ill, dead or otherwise inaccessible. All this makes for an aura of purity and innocence, but also a blankness. The work becomes a vessel, open to interpretation, in need of protection and available for a reverential possession and habitation that is almost a form of colonialism. This exhibition counters such possession by suggesting that Ramírez's art was, like all great art, typically site-specific, that is, firmly rooted in real experiences and memories that he reshaped and distilled according to his needs and talents. The more we know about this artist, the clearer it becomes that we are just beginning to fathom his extraordinary achievement.⁸⁸

Folk Art

Beatrix Rumford's essay "Uncommon Art of the Common People: A Review of Trends in the Collecting and Exhibiting of American Folk Art," provides a concise overview of the history of collecting and exhibiting folk art in America. She begins by stating that the origination of the idea of folk art as a "special category" started in Europe in the 1860s, "fostered by a romanticized view of the simple life of the folk."⁸⁹ She writes folk art in America wasn't collected until thirty years later, in the 1890s, but according to the *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art*, America's 1876 centennial marked the beginning of folk art collecting.⁹⁰ Rumford writes it was not until the early part of the 20th-century, however, that collecting really caught on, becoming "a national phenomenon." Both sources credit the newfound interest in the early teens to artists, many of whom were immigrants, who

88. Ibid.

89. Beatrix T. Rumford, "Uncommon Art of the Common People: A Review of Trends in the Collecting and Exhibiting of American Folk Art," in *Perspectives on American Folk Art*, ed. by Ian M. G. Quimby and Scott T. Swank, New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Company 1980, 12.

90. Gerard C. Wertkin, Lee Koogan, editors, *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art*, New York: Routledge, 2004, xxviii.

summered at an art colony in Ogunquit, Maine.

The Ogunquit School of Painting and Sculpture was founded in 1913 by Hamilton Easter Field (1873-1922), “a wealthy painter, art critic, promoter and educator,” who had traveled widely in Europe between 1894 and 1910 studying art and acquiring art. While there he met important modernists, including Gertrude (1874-1946) and Leo Stein (1872-1947), Picasso, George Braque (1882-1963), and Juan Gris (1887-1927).⁹¹

Field decorated the former fishing shacks, now artist cottages, with “decoys, weathervanes, homemade rugs, and unsophisticated paintings”⁹² that he bought locally. The artists who came to the summer art colony included Robert Laurent (born in Brittany, 1890-1970), Wood Gaylor (1883-1957), Marsden Hartley (1877-1943), Bernard Karfiol (born in Hungary, 1886-1952), Yasuo Kuniyoshi (born in Japan, 1893-1953), and William Zorach (born in Lithuania, 1887-1966).

Like their compatriots in Europe, Rumford writes, “the [Ogunquit] modernists...were determined to break away from the representational and impressionist tendencies of late 19th-century academic art. Each artist was struggling to develop a visual language expressive of emotion... They recognized in the neglected carvings and portraits many of the same abstract qualities that were the essence of their own art and came to appreciate what America’s unschooled 18th- and 19th-century craftsmen and amateurs, unshackled by aesthetic theories, had achieved.”⁹³ Citing Holger Cahill’s (1887-1960) book, *American Folk Art: The Art of the Common Man in America*, Rumford writes that some of the artists who either hailed from Europe or who had traveled there recognized in the American primitives the same qualities that had sparked “their European counterparts’ much publicized interest in primitive art forms,” from the “Fauve enthusiasm for exotic objects found in African, Oceanic, and other non-European cultures,” to the interest of “Der Blaue Reiter and The Brücke in the art of peasants and children.”⁹⁴



Fig. 46 Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *The Swimmer*, c. 1924, oil on canvas.



Fig. 47 Elie Nadelman, *Tango*, c. 1918-24, cherry wood and gesso.

91. Victoria Grieve, *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture*, Chicago, Illinois: University Illinois Press, 2009, 41.

92. Rumford, “Uncommon Art,” 14-15.

93. *Ibid.*, 15.

94. Holger Cahill, *American Folk Art: The Art of the Common Man in America, 1750-1900*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1932, 26-27; quoted in Rumford, “Uncommon Art,” 15.

Some of the Ogunquit artists were so impressed with Field's folk objects they themselves began collecting folk art. This desire to acquire American primitives expanded to New York artists outside the Ogunquit circle, and included Charles Sheeler (1883-1965) and Elie Nadelman (born in Poland, 1882-1946). Elie Nadelman, in particular, amassed a huge collection. In 1919 he married a wealthy widow and they "spent a half a million dollars acquiring nearly fifteen thousand of 'the more beautiful examples of folk art that came to their notice.'"⁹⁵



Fig. 48 Sculpture from the Elie Nadelman Folk Art Collection in the Henry Luce III Center for the Study of American Culture, New-York Historical Society, New York, N.Y.

In 1924, the first public display of folk art, organized by painter Henry Schnackenberg (1892-1970), was held at the Whitney Studio Club. He was invited to do so by the director, Juliana Force, who was also a keen collector of folk art. Many of the pieces in the show were loaned by artists, among them Sheeler and Kuniyoshi. The show touched off interest among dealers and collectors. Some of the gallery owners of that time who featured folk art were Isabel Wilde, Valentine Dudensing, and Edith Halpert (1900-1970).

After Field died in 1922, Robert Laurent inherited Field's estate and continued to run the school at Ogunquit. In 1925 Sam Halpert and his wife Edith Gregor Halpert summered there. The following year they brought a guest, Holger Cahill, who was on staff at the Newark Museum and who was building a contemporary collection there. He and Edith Halpert were very taken by the modern look of the 19th-century folk art Laurent had collected.

In 1926 Halpert opened the Downtown Gallery which represented works by contemporary American artists. She started selling folk art in 1929 once it was clear there was a market for it, and in 1931 added the American Folk Gallery. Cahill went on to organize two important shows at the Newark Museum in 1930 and 1931, another at MoMA, and then served as national director of the Federal Art Project from 1935-1943.

In October 1930, in conjunction with an exhibit of 19th-century folk paintings at the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a catalog published by Lincoln Kirstein (1907-1996), Edward Warburg (1908-1992), and John Walker (dates unknown), described folk art as "art, which springing from the common people is in essence unacademic, unrelated to established schools, and, generally speaking,

95. Rumford, "Uncommon Art," 16.

anonymous.”⁹⁶

Immediately after that show closed an exhibition organized by Cahill opened at the Newark Museum, in November 1930. Earlier that year Cahill convinced director Beatrice Winsor (1869-1947), successor to her late husband, to mount the first museum-sponsored exhibition of folk paintings along with an informative catalogue. Again, many of the lenders were Ogunquit collectors, including Laurent, Nadelman, and Zorach. A year later Cahill organized another show for the museum of folk art sculpture. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (1874-1948), a founder of the Museum of Modern Art, with the assistance of Cahill, Halpert and others, acquired an important collection of folk art of great range from children’s portraits to quilts. Cahill, who along with Herbert W. Hemphill, Jr. (1929-1998) are folk art’s most important advocate curators, is described in the *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art*:

Cahill chose for his model an ‘aesthetic’ or ‘fine arts’ approach and stressed instead the nature of the *artist’s training*. Through this approach, which to a considerable extent guides the field to this day, American folk art embraces many, generally unrelated, artistic expressions that flourish among gifted individuals who are inspired to create, but for the most part without formal academic training or sustained exposure to the fine arts.⁹⁷

In 1932, the show “American Folk Art, the Art of the Common Man” opened at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), organized by Cahill, then acting director. Mrs. Rockefeller lent all but one of the 175 items in the show but asked to remain anonymous. A 225-page catalogue accompanied the show. The show was generally well received with the exception of critic Malcolm Vaughan’s scathing review in the *American*: “...the most salient quality in folk art is the least important quality known to art, namely caution – caution of hand, mind, and spirit. In their every technical device, one recognizes the cautious hand of the amateur.”⁹⁸

Meanwhile, Mrs. Rockefeller’s collection had become so extensive she had run out of space to house it. In 1935 she loaned part of her collection to be exhibited at the Ludwell-Paradise House in Colonial Williamsburg, a restoration project she and her



Fig. 49 Unidentified artist, *Dover Baby*, c. 1815, probably New Jersey, oil on canvas.

96. “Exhibition of American Folk Painting in Connection with the Massachusetts Tercentenary Celebration,” Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Society for Contemporary Art, 1930, unpaginated; quoted in Rumford, “Uncommon Art,” 25.

97. Wertkin, *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art*, xxix.

98. Malcolm Vaughan, as quoted in *Art Digest* 7, no. 6, December 15, 1932, 14; quoted in Rumford, “Uncommon Art,” 37.

husband were deeply involved in.

Other Americans of great wealth who donated their folk art collections to institutions include Henry Ford, Electra Havemeyer Webb, Henry Francis du Pont, Maxim Karolik, and Clara Endicott Sears. Collectors of “modest means” who amassed important collections include Edward Duff Balken, J. Stuart Halladay, Herrel G. Thomas, Mrs. William J. Gunn, Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch, Mr. and Mrs. Bertram K. Little, and Herbert W. Hemphill, Jr.

The formulation of these public collections firmly established folk art as an accepted and recognized genre and inspired countless private collectors and dealers. As a result, most art museums now have some examples of folk art on view, variously displayed in period rooms, contemporary settings, or shown with American academic art of the same time frame.⁹⁹

In 1937, self-taught artist William Edmondson (1872-1951) was given a solo show at MoMA of stone sculptures, the first African American artist to be shown at MoMA.

Sidney Janis (1896-1989), an ex-dancer and shirt manufacturer, was an early collector of modern art and in 1934 Janis was invited to join the Advisory Committee of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). In the late 1930s Janis included work by Lawrence Lebduska (1894-1966) and Horace Pippin (1888-1946) in the 1938 “Masters of Popular Painting” show at MoMA, and included Morris Hirshfield (1872-1946) and Anna Mary Robertson “Grandma” Moses (1860-1961) in an 1939 exhibition called “Contemporary Unknown American Painters,” also at MoMA, which featured 20th-century artists Pippin, John Kane (1860-1934), Hirschfield, Lebduska, Emile Branchard (1881-1938), and Patrick J. Sullivan (1894-1967). In 1939 Janis decided to focus full-time on writing and lecturing and sold his shirt company.

In 1942 Janis published *They Taught Themselves: American Primitive Painters in the 20th-century*. Janis preferred the term self-taught to describe the over thirty artists he included rather than terms “naïve,” “primitive,” and “folk,” which he felt had negative connotations. Of the thirty artists, most are forgotten with the exception of Hirshfield, Kane, Lebduska, Pippin, Sullivan, Henry Church Jr. (1836-1908), Moses (1860-



Fig. 50 William Edmondson, *Untitled* (a monumental standing horse), 1925-1950, carved limestone.



Fig. 51 Morris Hirshfield, *Girl in a Mirror*, 1940, oil on canvas.

99. Rumford, “Uncommon Art,” 50.

1961), and Joseph Pickett (1848-1918). In the foreword to Janis' book, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. (1902-1981), Director of MoMA, writes, "Some of the painters in this book seem to me so obviously superior to others that I wish Mr. Janis had not been quite so generously inclusive."¹⁰⁰

The Museum of American Folk Art opened in 1961 in a townhouse just west of MoMA. An exhibit titled "Twentieth-century American Folk Art and Artists" was held at the Museum of American Folk Art, New York in Fall 1970. In the spirit of other exhibits which preceded it the focus was on 20th-century folk artists, not those of the 18th and 19th which the public and collectors associated with folk art.

In 1974 the show "The Flowering of American Folk Art 1776-1876," held at the Whitney Museum, produced a catalog by Jean Lipman and Alice Winchester that "expressed the view that folk art came to full maturity during colonial times and declined toward the end of the 19th-century, a span of approximately 100 years from 1776 to 1886."¹⁰¹

Counter to that view, in 1974 Herbert Hemphill, Jr. and Julia Weissman published their book *Twentieth-Century American Folk Art and Artists*, an outgrowth of the exhibit of the same name held at the Museum of American Folk Art. Their book "established unquestionably that folk artists were producing superb work at that very moment in the 20th-century."¹⁰²

The authors cite the advent of photography and mass-produced items leading to the demise of much local utilitarian craftmaking and itinerant portrait artists. But in its place rose a new tradition, that of 20th-century folk artists who produce art for art's sake.

In the introduction, the authors credit federal government-sponsored programs originating during the Depression, such as the WPA Art Project, continuing on to the present in the form of art classes at Ys, adult education classes, senior citizen centers, business employee art exhibits, etc., for their contribution to the recognition that art is "an important, even necessary community activity" and of "therapeutic value."¹⁰³



Fig. 52 Artist unknown, *The Plantation*, c. 1825, oil on wood.

100. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., foreword to *They Taught Themselves, American Primitive Painters of the 20th-century*, Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1942, xx.

101. Florence Laffal and Julius Laffal, *American Self-Taught Art: An Illustrated Analysis of 20th-century Artists and Trends with 1,319 Capsule Biographies*, Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003, 10.

102. Herbert W. Hemphill, Jr. and Julia Weissman, introduction of *Twentieth-Century American Folk Art and Artists*, New York, N.Y.: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1974, 10.

103. *Ibid.*, 17, 15.

Another observation the authors make is the stylistic consistency of each folk artist; they don't experiment with different styles as trained artists do. In fact, some are not aware that their style is not realistic: "Horace Pippin was convinced that his paintings were an exact copy of real life... Thus it is that Ralph Fasanella can read books on art, go to an exhibition now and then, and still remain artistically unaffected, working out his own problems of perspective, balance, and composition in his own unvarying and rather remarkable way, painting not what he sees is there but what he knows is there."¹⁰⁴

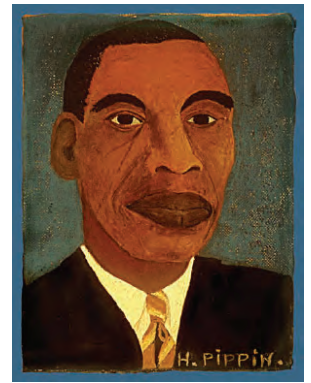


Fig. 53 Horace Pippin, *Self-Portrait*, 1944, oil on canvas, adhered to cardboard.

They note, although there are varying modes of expression and levels of technical competence, there are qualities that let us identify the works as folk art just as we are able to identify other styles such as "Japanese prints, Chinese scrolls, Dutch school, Renaissance art..."¹⁰⁵

They attribute this stylistic identity to "the unwitting and predictable eventuality of a certain stage in physiological and perceptual development," and cite the theories of German philosopher Gustaf Britsch (1879-1923) who led American Henry Schaefer-Simmern (1896-1978) to test these theories of artistic development in adults.¹⁰⁶ Thus folk artists, like children who are unimpeded by art training, unconsciously develop a style to express their emotions and ideas.

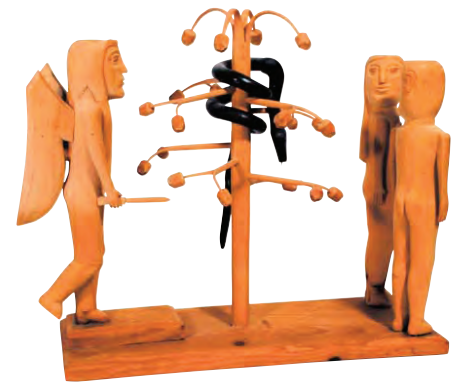


Fig. 54 Edgar Tolson (1904-1984), *Expulsion*, c. 1969, carved wood.

In other words, the adult who takes up pencil or crayon or brush or clay picks up personal style organization where he or she left it off in early years. Going beyond that stage will depend upon self-judgment as to its adequacy in expressing what the artist has in mind. If it functions satisfactorily, there may be no desire to alter or improve style, and there will be relatively little change. There have been instances of self-taught artists who have developed more awareness of style and theory and who have therefore attempted to and perhaps succeeded in moving away from the unconscious technique.¹⁰⁷

104. Ibid., 18.

105. Ibid., 19.

106. Henry Schaefer-Simmern, *The Unfolding of Artistic Activity*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1970; quoted in Hemphill, *Twentieth-Century American Folk Art*, 19.

107. Ibid., 19.

Further, distinguishing folk art from children's art Hemphill and Weissman write,

An adult's art is rich in content and reveals his life, the substances of its pasts, and its present. It will contain ideas and subject material children cannot have in their art. Folk artists will have been influenced by news media, by events, and will use materials and media that require a knowledge of the way things work. They will have read, they will have formed opinions, and their fantasies will have been fed by memories, experiences, and their personal creeds or beliefs. In presenting their visions without consideration of accepted theory or rules, their art is a splendid testament to the innate creativity present and recurring spontaneously in every generation – and even within us, the viewers, if we will but restore our intuitive perception.¹⁰⁸

After publication of Hemphill-Weissman's influential book, 20th-century folk art and folk artists gained wider exposure with representation in exhibitions, symposia, and publications.

Among the exhibitions, a particularly significant one, in 1982, was "Black Folk Art in America, 1930-1980" at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Early in 2009 Galerie St. Etienne in New York revisited Janis' "groundbreaking book," mounting the show "They Taught Themselves, American Self-Taught Painters Between the World Wars." Paintings by fifteen of the original thirty artists were exhibited. An excerpt from Ken Johnson's review in *The New York Times*:

In different ways, [Joseph] Pickett and [Patsy] Santo represent the self-taught artist as an assiduous craftsman...The weirder side of self-taught art is here too. The great Morris Hirshfield's pictures of women, animals and landscapes rendered in serpentine, linear patterns combine idiosyncratic style, erotic imagination and pantheistic spirit. And Patrick J. Sullivan's painting of two men burying a man they murdered, while a dwarf with maniacal features and monstrously elongated fingers and toes looks on, exudes a hair-raising, darkly comical mystery.¹⁰⁹ (See Figures 55 and 56.)



Fig. 55 Joseph Pickett, *Manchester Valley*, c. 1914-1918, medium unknown. Pickett's works were discovered by Katherine Coffey, Holger Cahill, and Elinor Robinson in 1930.



Fig. 56 Patrick J. Sullivan, *Man's Procrastinating Pastime*, 1936, medium unknown.

108. Ibid., 20.

109. Ken Johnson, "Art in Review," *New York Times*, February 27, 2009, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9405E0DE1F30F934A15751C0A96F9C8B63> (accessed September 25, 2009).

Outsider Art

In the United States outsider art is a category now used to describe self-taught artists. Its original meaning was more proscribed. First coined in 1972 by the publishers of British art historian Roger Cardinal's book, it was a rough translation of Dubuffet's term "art brut." The book *Outsider Art* is about Dubuffet, founder of the *Compagnie de l'Art Brut* in France in 1948. Dubuffet named the works in his collection "art brut" (literally translated, "raw art") – a collection of art of the "clinically insane" and "other artists of an authentically untutored, original, and extra-cultural nature." Dubuffet



Fig. 57 Grandma Moses, *The Quilting Bee*, 1950, oil on panel.

found "mainstream art had become a repetitive cultural exercise," and used the term art brut to identify "an unmediated expression of creativity: spontaneous and uncompromising."¹¹⁰ Go to *Raw Vision* magazine's website (www.rawvision.com) to view categories of outsider art. Also see Appendix B, page 154.



Fig. 58 Lorraine Fox, *Teens at Carnival Gymnasium*, c.1955, gouache on paper, illustration, *Seventeen* magazine. Fox's flattened figures and distorted perspective appear to be influenced by folk art (see Fig. 57 above) and/or children's art.

Three Naïve Artists: Grandma Moses, Ralph Fasanella, and Howard Finster

Anna Mary "Grandma" Robertson Moses (1860-1961), Ralph Fasanella (1914-1997), and Howard Finster (1915 or 1916-2001) all attained public recognition beyond the purview of museums, galleries and collectors to varying degrees.

The most famous of the three was Grandma Moses. Her paintings drew on memories of growing up on a farm in upstate New York and depicted "such simple farm activities as maple sugaring, soap-making, candle-making, haying, berrying and the making of apple butter," with "simple realism, nostalgic atmosphere and luminous color."¹¹¹ She took up painting in

110. Gerard C. Wertkin, Lee Koogan, eds, *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art*, New York: Routledge, 2004, 352-353.

111. Obituary, *New York Times*, December 14, 1961, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0907.html> (accessed September 25, 2009).

1936 when she was 76 after arthritis prevented her from pursuing her favorite pastime, embroidery. She lived to 101 and created over 1,000 paintings in that 25-year period. Her rise to national and international recognition was precipitous. An art collector spotted her work hanging in a drug store window in 1938. In 1939 three of her paintings were included in the group show “Contemporary, Unknown Painters” at MoMA, and in 1940 she had a one-person show at the newly opened Galerie St. Etienne owned by Otto Kallir. She had numerous solo shows and was included in group shows here and in Europe. “Her paintings were soon reproduced on Christmas cards, tiles and fabrics here and abroad.”¹¹² Americans also found her persona endearing and she made many public appearances. A description of Grandma Moses in her *New York Times* obituary: “In person, Grandma Moses charmed wherever she went. A tiny, lively woman with mischievous gray eyes and a quick wit, she could be sharp-tongued with a sycophant and stern with an errant grandchild.”¹¹³

Fasanella was born in the Bronx to a working class Italian family and grew up in Greenwich Village. He worked as a union organizer and machinist until he was blacklisted during the McCarthy era in the 1950s. His wife, a schoolteacher, supported him during those years. In 1972 Fasanella’s photo appeared on the cover of *New York Magazine* along with the headline: “This man pumps gas in the Bronx for a living. He may also be the best primitive painter since Grandma Moses.” He painted “teeming urban panoramas” of historical events, labor struggles, city landmarks, and everyday life.¹¹⁴ Artists of the social realist school, Phillip



Fig. 59 Ralph Fasanella, *Family Supper*, 1972, oil on canvas.



Fig. 60 Faith Ringgold, *Tar Beach Story Quilt*, 1988, fabric, dimensions unknown. Ringgold’s work has a similar composition and feel to Fasanella’s painting, above.

112. Obituary, *New York Times*, December 14, 1961.

113. *Ibid.*, 1961.

114. Roberta Smith, “Ralph Fasanella, 83, Primitive Painter, Dies,” December 18, 1997, *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/12/18/arts/ralph-fasanella-83-primitive-painter-dies.html> (accessed September 25, 2009).



Fig. 61 Howard Finster, title unknown, 1985, medium unknown, cover art for The Talking Heads “Little Creatures” album. It received an award for best album cover art for the year from *Rolling Stone Magazine*.



Fig. 62 Maira Kalman, *The Principles of Uncertainty*, 2007, page 183. Kalman, like Finster, above, integrates hand-lettered sentiments with her art, in her case personal reflections, in his religious sermons.

Evergood (1901-1973), Ben Shahn, and Robert Gwathmey (1903-1988), who showed at the social realist ACA Gallery, took him under their wing and he had a solo show there in 1948.¹¹⁵ As Fasanella’s reputation grew, Public Domain, created in 1988, raised monies to purchase Fasanella’s paintings from private collectors to donate to museums. Fasanella’s painting *Subway Riders* is exhibited at the Fifth Avenue and 53rd Street subway stop. Benjamin Genocchio, reviewing an exhibit on Long Island for *The New York Times*, writes, Fasanella “created bold, colorful compositions loaded with minute detail,” and cites their “peculiar beauty and charm...intricate and vibrant.”¹¹⁶

Finster was born either 1915 or 1916 on a small farm in Valley Head, Alabama. He “got” religion young and started preaching as a teenager. To support himself and his family he worked many jobs that required various skills, including machine repairman in a mill, furniture factory worker, carpenter, plumber, and bicycle repairman. In the 1960s he had a vision and cleared swampland behind his home to create a 2½-acre outdoor park made of found materials. Called by the locals Paradise Garden, it was “a complex environment teeming with sculptures, assemblages, hand-painted signs, walkways, small outbuildings, and flowering plants and trees...”¹¹⁷ In 1972 he had another vision – to create

“sacred art.” His paintings include hand-lettered “extensive biblical and personal texts, along with reflections on popular culture, history, and current events...”¹¹⁸ Tom Patterson,

115. Paul S. D’Ambrosio, *Ralph Fasanella’s America*, Cooperstown, N.Y.: New York State Historical Association, 2001, 60.

116. Benjamin Genocchio, “Art Review: Bold, Beautiful and Detailed,” *New York Times*, May 18, 2008 http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/18/nyregion/nyregionspecial2/18artsli.html?_r=1.

117. Stacey C. Hollander, Brooke Davis, and Gerard C. Wertkin, *American Anthem: Masterworks from the American Folk Art Museum*, New York, N.Y.: American Folk Art Museum in association with Harry N. Abrams, 2001, 394.

118. Hollander, *American Anthem*, 394.

author of *Howard Finster, Stranger from Another World*, writes, “The beginning of his career as a painter happened to coincide with sympathetic developments in art, music, and fashion: graffiti art, ‘fun’ and ‘Wild Style’ painting, punk rock (with its return to raw, primitive basics), ‘the new figuration,’ Neo-Expressionism, etc.”¹¹⁹ Finster received national recognition in the early 1980s when an art professor at the University of Georgia showed his work to Georgia band REM. REM filmed a video for their song “Radio Free Europe” in Paradise Garden in 1983, and in 1984 commissioned Finster to create a cover for their album *Reckoning*.¹²⁰

In 1984 Finster appeared on the Johnny Carson show, where he improvised a song about Hollywood and then sang another song he had written, “Just a Little Tack,” accompanying himself on the banjo.¹²¹

In 1985 David Byrne of The Talking Heads commissioned Finster to do a painting for the cover of their album *Little Creatures*. In the 1980s and 1990s Finster had shows at the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institute. He was featured in articles that appeared in *The New York Times*, *Time*, and *Life*. Finster was extremely prolific and by the time of his death in 2001 had painted over 46,000 works.

Current opportunities for viewing naïve art

At present naïve art may be viewed in galleries and museums throughout the United States. Venues in New York include Galerie St. Etienne, Phyllis Kind, Ricco/Maresca and the American Museum of Folk Art. Twentieth-century self-taught artists may be seen in the permanent collections at MoMA, the Whitney, and the Guggenheim. Every winter the weekend-long Outsider Art Fair is held in New York. Museums outside New York include the American Visionary Art Museum, Baltimore; Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, Chicago; Museum of Craft and Folk Art, San Francisco; and The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia.

119. Tom Patterson, *Howard Finster, Stranger from Another World: Man of Visions Now on This Earth*, New York: Abbeville Press, 1989, 16.

120. Encyclopedia of Alabama, “Howard Finster,” <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1414> (accessed September 25, 2009).

121. Howard Finster on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, 1984, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9dulNxZ3Xw&NR=1> (accessed September 25, 2009).

Chapter 2

James Thurber

James Thurber (1894-1961) was born in Columbus, Ohio, to parents Mary (Mame) and Charles Thurber – the middle child of three sons. His father held minor appointed positions in the local Republican party and ran without success for public office several times. His mother was a thwarted actress and, like Thurber, a practical joker. Thurber said of his mother, “I owe practically everything to her, because she was one of the finest comic talents I think I’ve ever known.”¹ In 1901, at age seven, Thurber was partially blinded when his older brother accidentally shot him in the left eye with an arrow. The eye was removed but not before infection spread to the right, causing partial loss of vision in that eye, a condition called sympathetic ophthalmia. “Although James on occasion would entertain the family with playlets or skits which he would act out in the living room, his relatives remember him as quiet and studious, reading a good deal and staying out of many of the neighborhood games because of his eyesight. His inner life, however, was hyper-active.”² 1913, Thurber attended Ohio State University in Columbus and became editor of the college newspaper *Sun-Dial*. He failed to graduate, unable to fulfill ROTC requirements due to his poor eyesight. Between 1918-1920 Thurber worked as a code clerk for the State Department, first in Washington, D.C., and then in Paris.

Before Thurber landed at *The New Yorker* he worked as a newspaper reporter and columnist for the *Columbus Dispatch*, *The Paris Review*, the Riviera edition of the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *New York Evening Post*. In 1922, back in Columbus, Thurber married Althea Adams, “a strong-minded young woman he had met the year before, when she was still an undergraduate at Ohio State.”³ It was she who convinced him to leave Columbus, first to France, where he tried but failed to write a novel, and then to New York. In 1927, E. B. White (1899-1985) and Thurber met at a party, and hit it off. This spurred White, who had a staff position at *The New Yorker*, to introduce Thurber to Harold Ross (1892-1951), the magazine’s editor. Ross initially hired Thurber for an administrative position but eventually let Thurber write for the magazine. Thurber apprenticed under White, with whom he shared cramped office space. Both wrote casuals – humorous pieces

1. Henry Brandon, “The Tulle and Taffeta Rut,” interview in Brandon, *As We Are*, Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday and Company, 1961, 266; quoted in Charles S. Holmes, *The Clocks of Columbus*, Kingsport, Tennessee: Kingsport Press, Inc., 1972, 8.

2. Charles S. Holmes, *The Clocks of Columbus*, Kingsport, Tennessee: Kingsport Press, Inc., 1972, 10-11.

3. Roger Gottlieb, “The Years with Thurber, The Man and His Letters,” *The New Yorker*, September 8, 2003, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/09/08/030908crat_atlarge (accessed March 26, 2010).

for “The Talk of the Town” and “Notes and Comment,” and it was their writing that “established the tone of the magazine’s prose: light, elegant, precise, and witty.”⁴ “They were very unlike. Thurber was gregarious, a prankster (Ross invariably fell for his fake phone calls in bizarre accents), almost a rowdy; White was cautious, dispassionate.”⁵ Thurber and Althea’s troubled marriage, marked by longer and longer periods of separation, lasted 12 years. In 1931, the birth of their daughter, Rosemary, brought about a short-lived reconciliation, but they finally divorced in 1935. That same year Thurber married Helen Wismer (1902-1986), an editor for pulp magazines (whom he famously referred to as his “seeing eye wife” after his eyesight failed), and left his staff position at the magazine to freelance.

Thurber went on to write 27 books, many of them compilations of stories and cartoons that first appeared in *The New Yorker*, including *My Life and Hard Times* (1933), *The Thurber Carnival* (1945), and *The Years with Ross* (1959); books of his cartoons, including *The Seal in the Bedroom and Other Predicaments* (1932), *Men, Women and Dogs* (1943), and *The Last Flower* (1939); several children’s books, including *Many Moons* (1943), *The White Deer* (1945), and *The Great Quillow* (1944); and the play *The Male Animal* (1940), co-written with college friend, Elliott Nugent, and produced on Broadway in 1940 and again in 1952. In 1952, an animation was made of his short story “The Unicorn in the Garden” and in 1942 a film was made of *The Male Animal*. Thurber did illustrations for books by other authors and even advertisements, including for French Line cruise ships and department stores. Thurber’s cartoons were exhibited widely in solo shows, including The Valentine Gallery in New York in 1934, and in group shows at galleries, universities and museums in the United States and Europe. He received many honors, including an invitation to join *Punch’s* Wednesday luncheon, the first American to be invited since Mark Twain. A series of eye operations, 1940-1941, failed to stem Thurber’s deteriorating eyesight. In 1943 he found he could draw with the aid of a Zeiss loupe, (a powerful magnification lens) using either black chalk on yellow paper or white chalk on black paper, later reversed out by the printer. He submitted his last cartoon to *The New Yorker* in 1947 and his last drawing, yellow chalk



Fig. 63 James Thurber, cover, 1951, yellow chalk on black paper, *Time* magazine, July 9, 1951.



Fig. 64 James Thurber drawing with the aid of a Zeiss loop, 1944.

4. Lee Lorenz, *The Art of the New Yorker, 1925-1995*, New York, N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996, 39.

5. *Ibid.*, 39.

on black paper, a profile of himself with dogs, appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1951 (see Figure 63). By the end of 1951 he was blind. In the intervening years until his death in 1966, Thurber dictated his stories to his wife and secretary. He died of pneumonia a month after he underwent surgery to remove a brain tumor.

In a review of *The Thurber Letters*, edited by Harrison Kinney, Robert Gottlieb (b. 1931), former editor at *The New Yorker*, doubts Thurber's writings will be widely read in years to come. He does affirm, however, that

The unquestionable achievement remains the amazing, outlandish cartoons and drawings, with their surreal captions: "I come from haunts of coot and hern," "With you I have known peace, Lida, and now you say you're going crazy," "That's my first wife up there, and this is the present Mrs. Harris," "She has the true Emily Dickinson spirit except that she gets fed up occasionally," "What have you done with Dr. Millmoss?," and, of course, "All right, have it your way—you heard a seal bark." These unique works of art still startle and amuse.⁶

If it wasn't for friend and officemate White, Thurber's drawings might never have come to light. Thurber, a compulsive doodler, "drew everywhere, on reams of yellow copy paper, on the desks, on the wastepaper baskets, on the floor, and on the walls..."⁷ White said, "They were funny doodles and they made me laugh. He had a great economy of line, like Clarence Day [1874-1935]. Thurber could do two drawings in one minute, and they would both be very funny, even brilliant."⁸ White retrieved one he particularly liked, inked it in and submitted it to the weekly art conference held on Tuesday afternoons. "It depicted a seal sitting on a rock, peering at two tiny spots in the distance and muttering, 'Hm, explorers'" It was rejected, accompanied by a sketch of a "correct seal's head" and a note, "This is the way a seal's whiskers go." White resubmitted the drawing along with his note: "This is the way a Thurber's seal's whiskers go."⁹ It was rejected again and Thurber threw it out.



Fig. 65 James Thurber, "I come from haunts of coot and hern!," August 19, 1939, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.

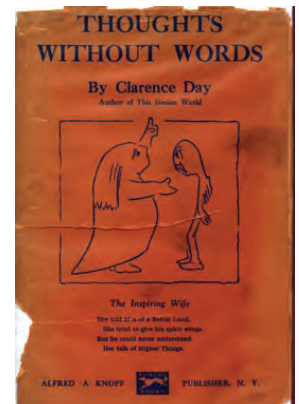


Fig. 66 Clarence Day, cover, 1928, pen and ink, *Thoughts Without Words*.

6. Gottlieb, "The Years with Thurber."

7. Neil A. Grauer, *Remember Laughter: A Life of James Thurber*, Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1994, 42.

8. Burton Bernstein, *Thurber*, New York, N.Y.: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1975, 184.

9. Grauer, *Remember Laughter*, 43.

Other drawings were similarly rejected. Lee Lorenz (b. 1933), *New Yorker* cartoon editor from 1973-1998, writes of Ross and his reluctance to publish the drawings: "I think we can fairly assume that Irvin [art editor Rea Irvin, 1881-1972] was, at best, indifferent to Thurber's style. This would have been enough to discourage Ross, who already felt that Thurber was trying to put something over on him."¹⁰

Thurber and White, writing alternate chapters, collaborated on *Is Sex Necessary?* (1929), a parody of sex manuals popular at the time. The book included captioned drawings by Thurber, which he completed in an evening.

It ridiculed pop psychoanalysis while kidding the conventions of modern courting rituals and matrimony; it was remarkably free of anything lewd, given its subject; and even more amazingly, it remains in print today...an extraordinary tribute to the quality of its humor, both in the prose and in the pictures.¹¹

After the book's success Ross "went into Thurber's office and glumly asked for 'that goddam seal drawing.' Told that it had been discarded casually upon repeated rejections, Ross exploded, 'Well, don't throw things away just because I reject them! Do it again.'"¹² 1930,

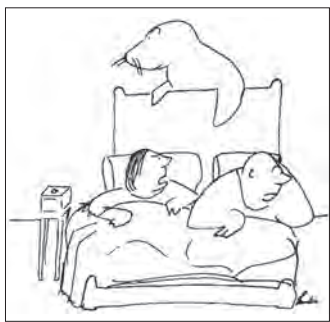


Fig. 69 James Thurber, "All right, have it your way – you heard a seal bark!" January 30, 1931, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.

Thurber's drawings for "The Pet Department," a spoof of the *New York Evening Post* pet advice column, were the first to be published in *The New Yorker*. Over the years *The New Yorker* printed hundreds of Thurber's cartoons. "Ross even defended them when a cartoonist complained about 'that fifth-rate artist.' Ross was severe. 'Third-rate,' he corrected."¹³

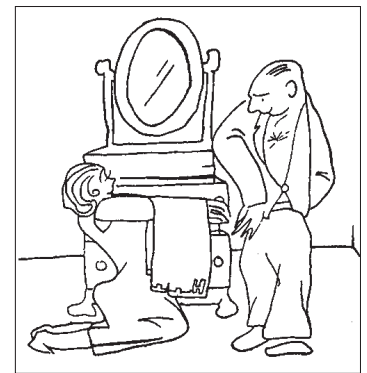


Fig. 67 James Thurber, "A wife should tell her husband in clear, simple language where guest towels come from," 1928, pencil, inked in, *Is Sex Necessary?* Biographer Morsberger says of these early drawings, "The figures are poorly proportioned and lack the distinct personality and lively expression of his later cartoon characters."

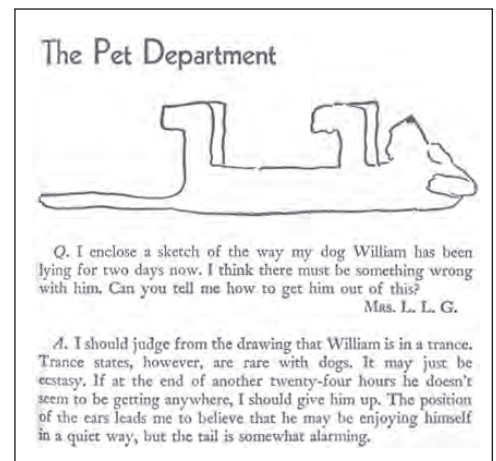


Fig. 68 James Thurber, "The Pet Department" 1930, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.

10. Lorenz, *The Art of The New Yorker*, 41.

11. Grauer, *Remember Laughter*, 44.

12. *Ibid.*, 46-47.

13. "Aphorist for an Anxious Age," *Time* magazine, November 10, 1961, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,938279,00.html> 9 (accessed March 26, 2010).

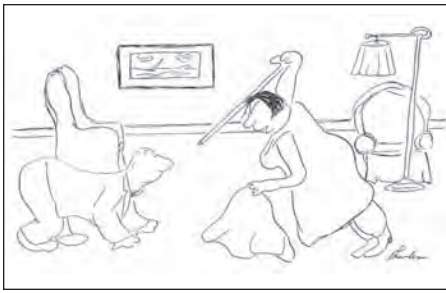


Fig. 70 James Thurber, “Now I’m going to go in over your horns!,” October 29, 1932, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine, caption by E. B. White.



Fig. 71 James Thurber, “It’s Lida Bascom’s husband – he’s frightfully unhappy,” May 27, 1933, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine, caption by E. B. White.

1931, Thurber attempted to redraw the seal cartoon. John Updike writes: “Some of his best-known cartoons, indeed, were the product of a carefree ineptitude: the one captioned “All right, have it your way – you heard a seal bark” came about, by his own testimony, when an attempt to draw a seal on a rock came out looking more like a seal on the headboard of a bed.”¹⁴ Humorist Robert Benchley (1889-1945) telegraphed Thurber the day the cartoon appeared in *The New Yorker*: “Thank you for the funniest drawing caption ever to appear in any magazine.”¹⁵

Lorenz discovered that White not only championed Thurber’s drawings, he also captioned many of the early ones. “According to Helen Stark, retired head of the library, these initials [EBW] indicate that the captions were actually created by White.”¹⁶ (See Figures 70 and 71.)

Biographer Neil A. Grauer presents the gist of an essay Thurber wrote about the creative origins of his cartoons:



Fig. 72 James Thurber, “House and Woman,” date unknown, pen and ink, *Thurber Carnival*. Thurber put this cartoon in the “Unconscious or Stream of Nervousness” category.

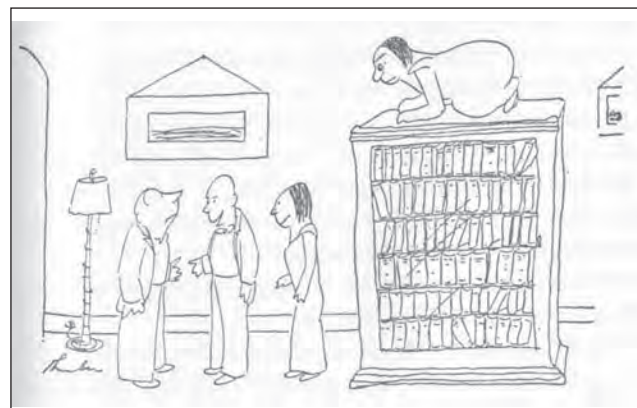


Fig. 73 James Thurber, “That’s my first wife up there, and this is the *present* Mrs. Harris,” March 16, 1935, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine. An example of Category No. 2: “Purely Accidental and Haphazard.”

14. John Updike, “Technically Challenged Carefree Ineptitude: James Thurber,” in *Cartoon America: Comic Art in the Library of Congress*, Harry Katz, ed., New York, N.Y.: Harry N. Abrams, 2006, 216.

15. Holmes, *The Clocks of Columbus*, 136.

16. Lorenz, *The Art of The New Yorker*, 41-42.

In a self-mocking but insightful analysis of his drawings, Thurber wrote that when classifying the creative origins of his cartoons, he found that they could be placed “into five separate and indistinct categories.” First there was the Unconscious or Stream of Nervousness category, represented by, among others, the drawing of a worried-looking man saying to a clearly distraught woman, “With you I have known peace, Lida, and now you say you’re going crazy.” Then Thurber discerned a Purely Accidental and Haphazard category, which included his renowned “Seal in the Bedroom” and “Lady on the Bookcase” cartoons, both the result, he insisted, of inept draftsmanship run amok. He said this also could be called the “Deliberate Accident or Conditional Mistake” category. A third grouping, Category No. 3, he solemnly described as “Perhaps a variant of Category No. 2; indeed they may even be identical.” He called the fourth category “Contributed Idea,” a group of drawings for which somebody else came up with the situation or caption but deemed him more suited to executing it. Among these was his famous drawing of one fencer neatly slicing off the head of another, saying simply, “Touché!” The final grouping, Thurber wrote, could be called “the Intentional or Thought-Up category,” featuring drawings for which the idea “just came to me and I sat down and made a sketch to fit the prepared caption.” This group would include the cartoon of a Thurber family: disconsolate husband slumped in a chair and patting the head of the family dog, a nondescript little boy, an annoyed wife, and a blank-faced daughter with a bow in her hair, to whom the mother is saying, “Well, I’m disenchanted, too. We’re all disenchanted.”¹⁷

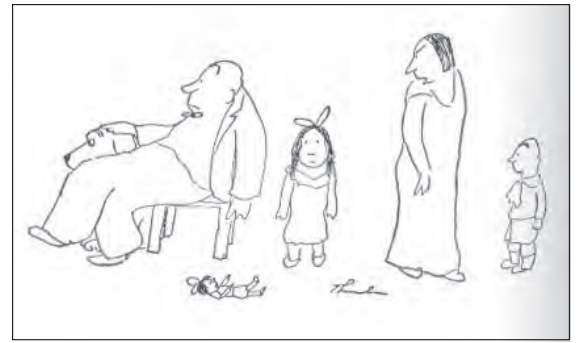


Fig. 74 James Thurber, “Well, I’m disenchanted, too. We’re all disenchanted,” February 2, 1935, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine. An example of Category No. 5: “The Intentional or Thought-up.”

Thurber’s naïve drawings have been compared to those of other author/illustrators, most especially Clarence Day and Edward Lear (1812-1888). Morsberger, however, notes, “any resemblance is coincidental, for Thurber said that he did not see Day’s drawings until 1933, nor Lear’s until 1937 – long after his own appeared in print.”¹⁸

Biographer Charles S. Holmes writes,

Much to Thurber’s annoyance, his first real fame derived from his drawings rather than his writing... He could never take the drawings seriously, because they came without effort... Nevertheless, his cartoons

17. James Thurber, “The Lady on the Bookcase,” *The Beast in Me and Other Animals*, Larchmont, N.Y.: Queens House, 1948, 66-75. *Remember Laughter: A Life of James Thurber*, by Neil A. Grauer, xvii-xviii.

18. Robert E. Morsberger, *James Thurber*, New York, N.Y.: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964, 161.

in *The New Yorker* reached out to a larger and more varied audience than his writing ever did. He was immediately taken up by serious art critics, who recognized the drastic simplification of style in Thurber as similar to the method of artists like Klee, Matisse, Picasso and some of the surrealists.¹⁹

Still, Thurber was pleased with the praise he received in Europe as well as America. In 1933, Smith College mounted an exhibit of drawings by Thurber and George Grosz; in 1934, Thurber had a solo show at The Valentine Gallery; and in 1936, a Thurber drawing was included in the Fantastic Art-Dada-Surrealism show at the Museum of Modern Art.

Paul Nash (1889-1946), English painter and critic, called Thurber, “‘a master of impressionistic line,’ comparing his style to early Matisse.”²⁰ George Grosz and Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) were fans. W. H. Auden (1907-1963) “was lavish with his praise. While quibbling that *The Last Flower* [an anti-war parable] was ‘at once too pessimistic and not pessimistic enough,’ Auden nevertheless wrote that ‘it would be as impertinent as it is unnecessary to praise Mr. Thurber’s work; everyone knows and loves it.’”²¹ Even Matisse, when asked by a friend of Thurber’s in 1946, “Who is the best American artist,” replied, “Thurber.”²² T. S. Eliot said of Thurber’s writings and illustrations, “It is a form of humor which is also a way of saying something serious.”²³ Al Hirschfeld (1903-2003), interviewed by Grauer, compared Thurber to writers Edward Lear and Clarence Day: “Lear and other writers who drew, they all seemed to draw the same way... They managed to keep that childlike creativity in their line.”²⁴ British illustrator Ronald Searle (b. 1920) said of Thurber’s work that “The sloppy refinement of his drawing was, in fact, both the admiration and the despair of better draughtsmen.”²⁵

Others were distinctly not impressed, including Winston Churchill (1874-1965), who called Thurber “that insane and



Fig. 75 James Thurber, “Nature Vivant aux Pommes,” date unknown, ink, Thurber & Company.



Fig. 76 Edward Lear, “Manypeeplia Upsidownia,” 1894, pen and ink, *Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany, and Alphabets*.

19. Holmes, *The Clocks of Columbus*, 131.

20. Morsberger, *James Thurber*, 166.

21. Grauer, *Remember Laughter*, 80.

22. *Ibid.*, 46.

23. “Books: Priceless Gift of Laughter,” *Time* magazine, July 9, 1951, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,806164,00.html> (accessed March 26, 2010).

24. Grauer, *Remember Laughter*, 46.

25. Morsberger, *James Thurber*, 167.

depraved artist”²⁶ and Randolph Hearst (1863-1951), who ordered the editor of his newspaper the *New York American* to, “Stop running those dogs on your page. I wouldn’t have them peeing on my cheapest rug.”²⁷ Gottlieb, otherwise an admirer, writes *The Last Flower* is “a maudlin antiwar parable in words and pictures.”²⁸

Holmes challenges Thurber’s reputation as a thoroughly naïve artist:

Thurber liked to say that he took up drawing only as an emergency measure when he was editor of the Ohio State *Sun-Dial*, and all the artists had gone to war, but this is clearly a part of the legend which he delighted in weaving into the historical facts of his career.²⁹

He writes how two drawings from that period are “elaborately shaded and cross-hatched, and have more than a little of art nouveau about them, suggesting that Thurber’s cartoons were not as accidental, primitive, and ‘natural’ as he liked to imply.”³⁰ (See Figure 77.)

The humorist and author Dorothy Parker (1893-1967) wrote in the introduction to *The Seal in the Bedroom* (1932), “It is yours to ponder how penguins get into drawing rooms and seals in bedchambers, for Mr. Thurber will only show them to you some little time after they have arrived there... He gives you a glimpse of the startling present and lets you go construct the astounding past.”³¹ (See Figure 78.)

Holmes says of Thurber’s women:

The women in Thurber’s cartoons are pictured with undisguised hostility. They are shapeless, dowdy, sexless. Their hair is straight and sparse, their noses are long, and their chins



Fig. 77 James Thurber, title unknown, c. 1917-18, ink, Thurber & Company.

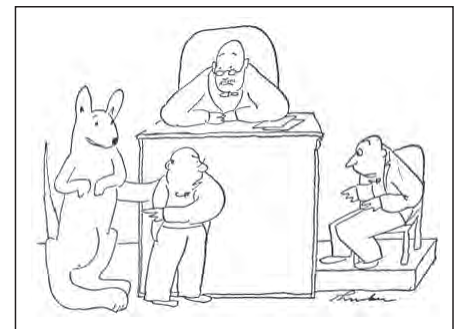


Fig. 78 James Thurber, “Perhaps this will refresh your memory,” April 6, 1935, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.



Fig. 79 James Thurber, “Well, don’t come and look at the rainbow then, you big ape!,” March 12, 1938, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.

26. James Thurber, letter to Harvey Breit, November 25, 1949; quoted in Morsberger, *James Thurber*, 168.

27. James Thurber, *The Years with Ross*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1959, 154.

28. Gottlieb, “The Years with Thurber.”

29. Holmes, *The Clocks of Columbus*, 11.

30. *Ibid.*, 36.

31. James Thurber, *The Seal in the Bedroom*, New York, N.Y.: Grosset & Dunlap, 1932.

recede. Young and old, their faces express disapproval, determination, and sometimes a kind of manic glee.³² (See Figure 79.)

Author John Updike (1932-2009) writes,

The illustrated utterances savor of his sexually vexed first marriage to the stately and ambitious Ohio beauty Althea Adams, and of its boozy dishevelment: “When I realize I once actually loved you I go cold all over;” “Everybody noticed it, You gawked at her all evening;”... “Which you am I talking to now?”³³

Thurber once said of Althea, “She always scared me.”³⁴

Holmes again: “Thurber’s men are essentially victims. They all have the baffled look of people who have somehow got themselves into situations they would like to get out of.”³⁵

In a letter to his friend Herman Miller, Thurber describes his men as, “given to bewilderment, vacillation, uncertainty, and downright fear.”³⁶

Thurber is defined by his cartoons of overbearing women and meek men but he also drew cartoons where men are seducers, even aggressors. He did a series that ran in *The New Yorker* in 1938 titled, “The Masculine Approach,” a compendium of different tacts men may try to woo (or seduce) a woman from “The Sudden Onslaught” to “The Continental Manner Technique.”

Besides men, women, and the occasional child, Thurber drew many creatures, real and imaginary, but the best known is the dog with the bloodhound head and body and short basset hound legs. Thurber said inspiration for this made-up breed could be

found in a lithograph of six hounds which hung in his grandfather’s house. The dogs are the most expertly rendered and stylistically consistent of his characters. (See Figure 81.)

Thurber’s crowd scenes possess a design sense not present in his other work, which Robert Morsberger notes. He also drew animals in nature in a decorative style.

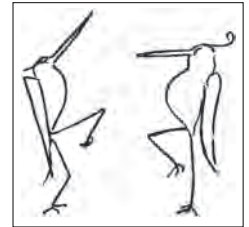


Fig. 80 James Thurber, “Martinets,” May 11, 1946, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.

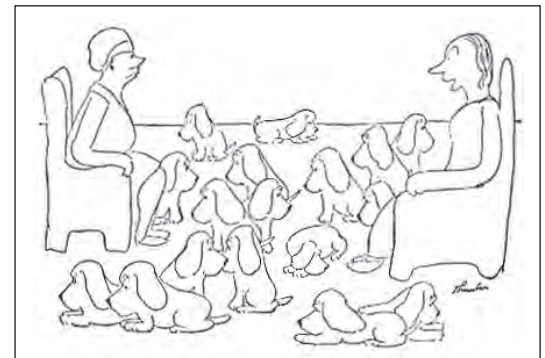


Fig. 81 James Thurber, “The father belongs to some people who were driving through in a Packard,” June 11, 1932, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.

32. Holmes, *The Clocks of Columbus*, 131-132.

33. John Updike, “Technically Challenged Carefree Ineptitude: James Thurber,” in *Cartoon America: Comic Art in the Library of Congress*, Harry Katz, ed., New York, N.Y.: Harry N. Abrams, 2006, 216.

34. Gottlieb, “The Years with Thurber.”

35. Holmes, *The Clocks of Columbus*, 133.

36. Undated letter to Herman Miller; quoted in Holmes, *The Clocks of Columbus*, 133.

Thurber's drawings were repeatedly compared to children's art throughout his life. Thurber told Alistair Cooke (1908-2004) in an interview in 1956, "[mothers] sent in their own children's drawings to *The New Yorker*, and I was told to write these ladies, and I would write them all the same letter: 'Your son can certainly draw as well as I can. The only trouble is he hasn't been through as much.'"³⁷

He drew constantly and quickly and gave his drawings away to friends at parties and to strangers in bars. "My best stuff is in pencil on yellow paper and it has never been published, but at least thirty people...own from forty to fifty done with pencil while cockeyed."³⁸ He drew a mural on the wall of Costello's, a saloon on Third Avenue frequented by *New Yorker* staff writers, to settle a tab. The owner, Tim Costello, liked the mural so much when he moved next store he had it transferred to the new location.

After his eyesight failed Thurber told Ross: "If I couldn't write, I couldn't breathe... but giving up drawing is only a little worse than giving up tossing cards in a hat." Thurber admits, "I may have been straining a point to cheer up Ross, but cheering up Ross was a good deed, like lighting a lamp."³⁹

Lorenz sums up Thurber's achievement:

Thurber's main players – men, women, and beasts – are by most measures anatomically challenged. By the sheer power of their body language, however, they have a reality that transcends mere illustration. Thurber's visual language was economical and concise. He was a master of gesture – the slump of a shoulder or the angle of an eyebrow said all that was necessary, and could convey the most subtle messages of aspiration, desperation, or resignation.⁴⁰

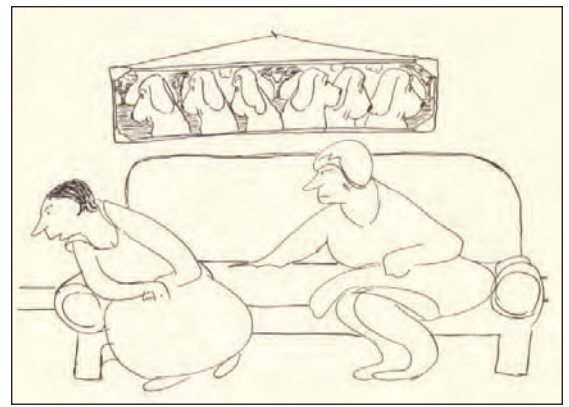


Fig. 82 James Thurber, "I yielded, yes – but I never led your husband on, Mrs. Fisher," April 2, 1932, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.



Fig. 83 James Thurber, "Love," date unknown, pen and ink, *Thurber & Company*.

37. "James Thurber in Conversation with Alistair Cooke," *The Atlantic*, CXCVIII, August 1956, 38; quoted in Morsberger, *James Thurber*, 172.

38. James Thurber, letter to Patricia Stone, July 14, 1948; quoted in Morsberger, *James Thurber*, 164.

39. Thurber, *The Years with Ross*, 66.

40. Lorenz, *The Art of The New Yorker*, 43.

And finally, Updike:

Thurber's drawing is winning in the way of a man who does not know a language very well but compensates by speaking it very fast; he can't be stopped. His technically challenged style delivered a shock amid the opulently finished, subtly washed, anatomically correct *New Yorker* cartoons of mostly, in those days, art-school graduates; his more crudely amateurish successors in minimalism demonstrate by contrast how dynamic and expressive, how oddly tender, Thurber's art was – a personal art that captured in innocent scrawls a modern man's bitter experience and nervous excess.⁴¹

Interview with Roger Angell (b. 1923), stepson of E. B. White, March 9, 2010

RA (Roger Angell): I just found this drawing, which I remember from my mother [shows me the cartoon "What did you do with Dr. Millmoss?" in the book *Men, Women and Dogs*]. I used to own that. My mother bought that drawing and gave it to me when I was in boarding school and, like a fool, I put it on the wall and somebody stole it. So, all these years somebody still owns Dr. Millmoss and has been racked with conscience for 75 years.

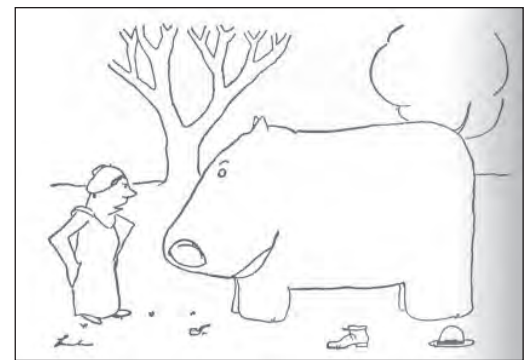


Fig. 84 James Thurber, "What have you done with Dr. Millmoss?," July 14, 1934, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.

AG (Amy Geller): [laughs] I have so many favorites. It's hard to choose.

RA: Yeah, these early ones are so spirited and so joyful. It's really great, fabulous, fabulously funny. I guess he'd get an idea and do it in 11 minutes. I don't know if that's true or not.

AG: He said three minutes.

RA: Three minutes. I remember him from those days, too, because he was a friend of my stepfather's. I used to see him down at my mother and stepfather's apartment on East 8th Street. He was a Ping Pong player. They put a Ping Pong table in another room and it was a lot of fun and games and young people from *The New Yorker* playing Ping Pong and Thurber's whacking away with his one eye.

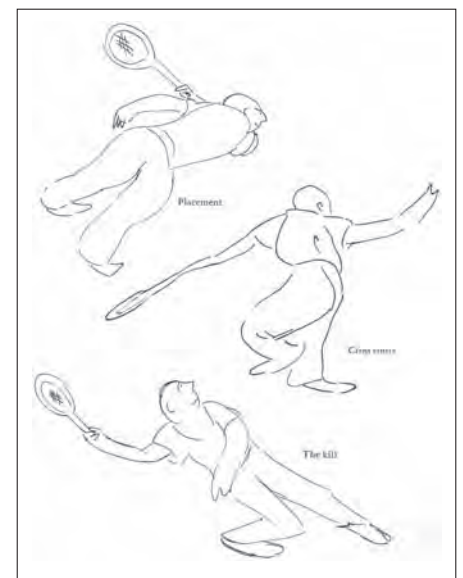


Fig. 85 James Thurber, title unknown, date unknown, pen and ink, *Thurber & Company*.

41. Updike, "Technically Challenged," 218.

AG: Was he good?

RA: He had one eye; he wasn't good but he sure enjoyed it, I remember that. Very exciting for a kid. So, I knew him from way back. I think talent just flowed right out of him. And I made an effort to remember what he was like back then because he was so miserable when he was older. I came here [to *The New Yorker*] in '56. I was in my thirties. I was assigned Thurber to edit because nobody else could stand him. I thought that he was great but it didn't take long before I quickly understood what a burden it was to be saddled with him. He was so sour, bad tempered and blind. A story I always tell – I never realized what people felt about him – I saw him coming down the hall with an attendant one day. Maxwell's assistant (and mine too), Elizabeth (Betty) Cullinan, a well brought-up Catholic girl and later an admired novelist, flattened herself against the wall and when he went by she went [Angell sticks out his tongue]. [William Maxwell, 1908-2000, was fiction editor.] He was blind so he couldn't see. Also it was unfortunate because – I forget when he died – I got in late in his life and he kept writing casuals, he never stopped but most of it wasn't very good, the stuff he wrote late in life. And I had to turn him down – it happened a lot, and I hated doing this and he hated it too... He was very aware of his own fame. He mentioned it many times. He sometimes said, "Do you know who I am?" And I said, "Yes, Jim I know who you are." There's a big difference with my stepfather – they broke up over Jim's obsession with fame. In the end White wrote in Thurber's obituary, "I knew him before blindness and fame." My stepfather was just the other way. He really was shy and didn't care about fame – he was proud of his work, but didn't care about his place in history. I remember Jim telling me about the lunch table at *Punch* magazine where they compared him to Mark Twain. [We look at more cartoons from *Men, Women and Dogs*.] There was a direct transfer of his own feelings right onto the page. There wasn't any "How will I do this?" He was kind of a primitive artist; I don't think there was any self-consciousness.

AG: Was he introspective at all?

RA: I don't think so. I mean he was smart and energetic and stuff flowed out of him and he had a lot of quirks and he thought he remembered every single date, everybody's birthdays, but actually, late in life, he didn't – he made mistakes. I think his drinking had a lot to do with his decline. He was blind and alcoholic, which is a bad combination. I saw him quite often because of our professional contact. There's a story about him I've told a lot, because it's so weird. I got a call from Shawn [*New Yorker* editor William Shawn, 1907-1992] one day. Thurber had been hectoring him over the telephone about

being rejected and Shawn was very upset about it. So, Shawn came to in see me and asked, "Have you been having trouble with Mr. Thurber?" and I said, "Yes," and he said, "Does he make threats?" and I said, "Yes, one time," and then he said, "Do you think he's crazy?," and I thought, "Yeah." And then Shawn got to the point and said, "Do you think he's crazy enough to come in here and shoot me?" [pause] I said, "Well, if he tried, Bill, it's very unlikely he'd hit you." He lightened up right away and said, "I never thought of that!" In his imagination this blind man would come in and shoot him right between the eyes... [looks again at book] I haven't looked at Thurber's later work but it didn't have the joyfulness of this stuff. This is early stuff, and it's so funny. There's just so much that's really funny. And they are not ironic. They're not contemporary *New Yorker* cartoons.

AG: I do enjoy Roz Chast's cartoons, though.

RA: I do too. But she's gotten so bitter. There's always somebody yelling and screaming. Her domestic stuff turned very angry. She's very funny, but I wish she was less angry all the time. There's a Chast which is great [points to card by desk] – a baseball card which I really like. [Looks at Thurber book] I loved these when they were new. I think he went on with it too long. It just occurred to me, in connection with Thurber, Clarence Day illustrated some of his own stuff. I think they were working simultaneously.

AG: I did read about that. Thurber said he didn't know of his work.

RA: No, I don't think there was any influence.

AG: Did White talk about Thurber?

RA: They had a falling out in the '40s and '50s – before the '50s, I would say. White talked about him all the time because they were such good friends. Andy [White] and my mother lived up in Maine so they didn't see him but they wrote back and forth.

AG: And your mother?

RA: I think she probably edited some things early on. I'm not sure. I don't remember, specifically, but I'm pretty sure she did.

AG: Did you ever meet John McNulty [1895-1956]?

RA: Oh sure, I knew John McNulty very well. He played the piano and he had a parlor trick he would do. To the tune of "My Gal Sal" he would recite the order of succession of the Presidency. Another heavy drinker and charmer. Man they drank. Everybody drank in those days.

AG: What did Thurber's family think?

RA: I never saw his family. I remember him with Helen, I don't remember him with Althea, except very vaguely. I didn't like Helen very much. A lot of stuff he wrote, a lot of

his humor was between men and women. A lot of the casual stuff.

AG: What was the source of it?

RA: I don't know about the source of his humor about women. I have no sense on that – I don't know any events from his past, about his childhood, or about his mother. Not much is a secret, though, because so much got written down on paper in one form or another. I thought about his children's books. I must sound very critical – they're okay, but I don't like them. The contrast between what he did and what my stepfather did – I think Jim wrote his children's books for adults. He had a child but I don't see how they were aimed at children. Andy's books are for smart kids *and* also for adults. There was a lot of content in his [White's] books. I was talking about this Saturday afternoon at the Y in Suffolk. Andy's were great stuff, amazingly wonderful, but Jim's weren't like that. They were romantic and not as artful. His earlier stuff is much lighter. I mean, *My Life and Hard Times* was really funny and wild. I've never forgotten the line when Thurber is in class and the teacher is explaining one of those fancy words for a device in literature, metonymy – “the container for the thing contained.” Thurber comes up with his variant, which is “the thing contained for the container”: when somebody in an argument grabs hold of a bottle of milk and says “I'm going to hit you with this milk.” He is very proud of his little discovery but the teacher, of course, dismisses it – pays no attention.

AG: And I thought that the writing for *Is Sex Necessary?* was charming.

RA: Yeah, those two had a lot of fun together.

AG: So wonderful. So different from his darker work. I thought the “Catbird Seat” was sadistic.

RA: I want to say again that I really admired him for keeping on when he was old and not functioning very well and still trying to write stuff for the magazine. That takes a lot of courage and he knew he wasn't doing well – he had all these rejections. And the stuff he sent me, it broke my heart, it really did – horrible. I hated to be the one to give him the bad news. He hated it too. It was a bad situation. That's always bad for writers when editors tell writers when they get older, “You can't do it anymore.” You can't lie.

AG: How was the writing bad?

RA: The ideas weren't very good, it was forced. It's supposed to be light and funny and it wasn't. It wasn't anything close to anything we could take.

AG: One of his biographers pointed out that even in the '30s and into the '40s he was still drawing women with '20s style cloche hats.

RA: Sure, he didn't change – he didn't have to keep up, he was Thurber. And of course

his drawings had become an art form that everyone recognized on sight. I grew up on *New Yorker* cartoons. When I was 7 or 8 years old my mother would bring home cartoons every day and put them out on the desk. They were part of her work, since she was a regular at the weekly art meetings at the magazine with Ross and Rea Irvin, the art director. When I was about 13 years old or so I said to my mother and Andy one day at breakfast that I could remember every cartoon the magazine had ever published. The magazine was about seven or eight years old by then, so that's hundreds or thousands. They doubted me but I did know them all, and when Andy or my mother got out some bound volumes of the magazine that they had there in Maine and showed me a bunch of cartoons to test me, I knew the captions, every one of them. This was no great feat – kids remember everything.

AG: That's also interesting. The captions could be written by someone other than the cartoonist.

RA: Yeah, better. Believe me, the captions were better. And they would try them out. They would print them out and on the back there would be 2 or 3 different captions.

AG: They're trying that out now on the back page of *The New Yorker*. But they're not so good – well, some of them are...I read E. B. White came up with that famous one. Spinach...

RA: "I say it's spinach and I say the hell with it."

AG: I didn't know that. I thought it was Hopkinson.

RA: He had a true humor. One of his main jobs was writing captions.

AG: Charles Addams also didn't write all his captions. Thurber?

RA: He probably wrote his own.

AG: Sometimes he'd do the drawing and the caption would come after.

RA: *The New Yorker* was very funny at one time. A weird coincidence to have so many at once. It will never happen again. It seemed normal in those days – so for years Ross, and then Shawn after him, asked, "Why aren't we funny anymore?" And the only time I can remember it was like that – when there was a rush of funny stuff – was after Nixon was re-elected. Everybody gave up and began being funny. For about six months we got a rush of funny casuals and funny cartoons and funny covers.

AG: For six months.

RA: Yeah.

AG: Well, America's produced a lot of humor.

RA: Yeah, but there's never been such a profusion of it. It's much less now. Maybe on television or the internet somewhere. Every editor at *The New Yorker* asks, "Why aren't we

funny anymore?”

Follow-up questions via e-mail, March 17, 2010

AG: As far as White’s appreciation of Thurber goes, if people like Clarence Day were out there publishing their drawings I guess it wasn’t a stretch for White to push for Thurber’s to be published.

RA: I think you keep getting EBW wrong. He wouldn’t need the Clarence Day examples to see something, and he wasn’t much influenced by trends or ideas. He worked in a fresh, confident way. If something was fresh and funny then it was great – so why not get it published? He was never formal or scholarly, but youthful and quick and original. But you’ve used the right word when you say “appreciate”: when he saw something he liked he would notice it and write about it or talk about it.

AG: One last thing; when you were a kid, did you like Thurber’s cartoons or are they more of an adult taste?

RA: I loved Thurber’s cartoons, of course. They were wild and funny-looking and wholly different from anybody else’s. Everybody loved them, starting with kids. And if some were about sex, or husbands and wives, or drinking, then they were all the more interesting to a kid. All this applies to *The New Yorker* then, as well. It was a very young magazine for a long time.

Chapter 3

Lorraine Fox

Lorraine Fox (1922-1976) was born in Brooklyn, New York, and attended high school in Queens, New York. Her parents and older brother, syndicated cartoonist Gill Fox (1919-2004), encouraged her artistic talent and, at the recommendation of Fox's high school teachers, she enrolled at Pratt Institute to study illustration. Fox and her future husband, Bernard D'Andrea (b. 1923), were in the same class. After graduating from Pratt in 1944, Fox first found work at Keiswetter advertising agency doing layouts and spot illustrations. She started freelancing for American Artists Group in 1957 where she created greeting card and stationery designs (see Figure 87). She joined Charles E. Cooper Studio c. 1952. In addition to Fox, Cooper Studio represented top illustrators Coby Whitmore (1913-1988), Jon Whitcomb (1906-1988), Joe DeMers (1910-1984), Joe Bowler (b. 1928), and Fox's husband, Bernard D'Andrea. She did spots and full page illustrations for *Seventeen*, *Charm*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Redbook*, *McCall's*, *Household*, and *Woman's Day* magazines. She illustrated three children's books: *The Nursery Book* (1960), *9 Magic*



Fig. 86 Lorraine Fox, cover, November 1952, gouache, *Household* magazine.



Fig. 87 Lorraine Fox, Christmas greeting card, c. 1950s, gouache, American Artists Group.



Fig. 88 Lorraine Fox, "Better Neighbors Make Better Parents," 1951, gouache, *Better Homes and Gardens*. D'Andrea says this was Fox's first two-color spread.

Wishes (1963) by Shirley Jackson (1916-1965), and *Somebody Came* (1966) by Mark Van Doren (1894-1972). Fox received a Gold Medal from the Society of Illustrators in 1962 and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1979. She died of lung cancer in 1976.

Illustrator Murray Tinkelman (b. 1933), in an article titled “Lorraine Fox: Illustrator, Painter, Teacher, Alchemist” for *American Artist* magazine in 1977, writes: “Unaware of sexist pitfalls, she entered a profession that was then dominated by men,” unlike the period preceding World War II.¹ Tinkelman also notes, “Although few people realized it at the time, illustration was entering a period of serious decline. Television was replacing print as both entertainment and the advertisers’ primary medium. The use of photography for magazine covers, fashion layouts, and for major advertising campaigns further eroded the market for illustrators.”²

Tinkelman describes Fox’s early illustrations:

They were frankly decorative in style and had a charming, naïve mood. They might best be described as sophisticated primitives. Pictorial space was kept flat and two dimensional, with special care and attention given to patterns, details, and textures.³

He writes how that style initially limited her to certain types of jobs:

At first, her highly stylized and personal approach to illustration was considered esoteric or just too ‘far out’ by some ‘realism’ oriented art directors. Consequently, she was often relegated to smaller, less important assignments, such as food or home decoration pieces. But when she illustrated them, these pieces became art.⁴

Tinkelman and D’Andrea concur; two illustrators in

1. Murray Tinkelman, “Lorraine Fox: Illustrator, Painter, Teacher, Alchemist,” *American Artist*, December 1977, 38.

2. *Ibid.*, 38.

3. *Ibid.*, 43.

4. *Ibid.*, 43.



Fig. 89 Lorraine Fox, “In Shades of Beauty,” August 1953, gouache, *Seventeen* magazine. It was selected for the 1954 Art Directors Club Annual.



Fig. 90 Lorraine Fox, “Nip Those Germs!,” February 1955, gouache, *Seventeen* magazine.



Fig. 91 Lorraine Fox, “Get Ready to Paint,” October 1954, gouache, *Seventeen* magazine.



Fig. 92 Jan Balet, interior illustration, 1945, medium unknown, *The Golden Ladle: How to be a Cook Without Using Fire*. This is Balet's style from the '40s.



Fig. 93 Jan Balet, "Out-of-This-World Party," November 1954, medium unknown, *Seventeen* magazine. This is an example of Balet's style from the '50s.



Fig. 94 Jan Balet, interior illustration, 1967, medium unknown, *Joanjo*. This style is from the '60s but it wasn't the only style he worked in at that time.

particular influenced Fox: Jan Balet (1913-2009) and illustrator/fine artist Doris Lee (1905-1983). Both Lee and Balet began their illustration careers in the 1930s.

Balet was born in Switzerland and studied at the schools of arts and crafts in Munich and Berlin and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. He came to the United States in 1938 on the eve of World War II to escape the German army draft. Balet did illustrations for editorial, advertising, and children's books. Leif Peng in a post on his illustration blog, Today's Inspiration, writes, "Balet referred to himself as 'a sophisticated primitive'... *American Artist* magazine called his work 'graphic whimsy,'" and, "He was an avid collector of folk art in all its forms from painting to sculpture, metalwork, weaving, pottery and music."⁵

Doris Lee was born in Illinois and studied fine art at Rockford College in Illinois, the Kansas City Art Institute in Missouri, and the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco. Lee was a fine artist as well as an illustrator. She was commissioned to do illustrations for magazines, including *Life* and



Fig. 95 Doris Lee, "Welcome Home Marie," April 1954, medium unknown, *Seventeen* magazine.



Fig. 96 Doris Lee, interior illustration, 1944, medium unknown, *The Great Quillow*, author James Thurber.

5. Leif Peng, "Jan Balet's 'Amos and the Moon' conclusion," Today's Inspiration, February 27, 2009, <http://todaysinspiration.blogspot.com/search?q=jan+balet&updated-max=2009-02-27T10%3A05%3A00-05%3A00&max-results=20> (accessed March 18, 2010).

Fortune, children's books, advertising, including Abbott Laboratories pharmaceuticals company, posters for Broadway musicals, including *Oklahoma*, and the *Rodgers and Hart Songbook*. She was the recipient of an Art Directors Club Gold Medal in 1957.

Often referred to as a primitive, Lee responded in an interview, "I am not a primitive. I am very conscious of what I am doing. Real primitives are rare. They are untrained and they paint spontaneously and with great honesty, the way Grandma Moses did."⁶

When questioned about doing illustration work, Lee, in the same interview, said, "I like to take a commission if it is something I can do and like to do. If I have the freedom to do as good a job as I can, then I don't mind whatever restrictions there are as to size, color, etc. In France, all the leading artists, Miró and Chagall and others, do commercial work."⁷ Of her art making she said, "I certainly don't copy nature. You can best express the authentic character of a thing by concentrating on the shape in your imagination rather than on the exact appearance before you."⁸

Bradley Merrithew writes of Doris Lee in a catalog for a show about Depression-era women artists, "It is the seemingly contradictory elements in her work – apparent naïveté and actual sophistication, surface simplicity and underlying complexity – which endow her art with its disarming subtlety."⁹

Tinkelman became aware of Fox's work when he was employed at American Artists Group. In a post on Peng's Today's Inspiration blog, Tinkelman says, "[In spite of having no formal illustration education] I knew enough that what Lorraine was doing was brilliant. Anybody could tell what Al Parker [1906-1985] did and what Norman Rockwell [1894-1978] did was brilliant. But Lorraine was doing brilliant stuff that didn't depend on the academic foundation of Parker or Rockwell."¹⁰

On the same post, Tinkelman, who also greatly admires Milton Glaser (b. 1929) as well as Fox, says, "In a way, he [Glaser] lived in that world that Lorraine lived in... that world of decorative illustration. It wasn't quite cartooning, it wasn't quite narrative illustration, it was a kind of symbolic illustration that depended on folk art as a root source."¹¹

Tinkelman joined Cooper Studio after seeing a drawing by D'Andrea in an ad in the 1956 Art Directors Club Annual. (See Figure 97.)

6. Mary Anne Guitar, *22 Famous Painters and Illustrators Tell How They Work*, New York, N.Y.: David McKay Company, Inc., 1964, 133.

7. *Ibid.*, 140.

8. *Ibid.*, 141.

9. Karal Ann Marling and Helen A. Harrison, curators, *7 American Women: The Depression Decade*, Vassar College Art Gallery, New York, N.Y.: A.I.R. Gallery, 1976, 33.

10. Leif Peng, "Murray Tinkelman: The One-Man Push Pin Studio," Today's Inspiration, May 6, 2006, <http://todaysinspiration.blogspot.com/search?q=tinkelman&updated-max=2009-05-06T10%3A47%3A00-04%3A00&max-results=20> (accessed March 18, 2010).

11. *Ibid.*

Peng writes, Tinkelman

...has often spoken about his great affection for Lorraine Fox and his admiration for her work. He has gone so far as to say “Lorraine Fox was my hero.” But when he first met her during his early days at Cooper he was surprised to discover that they were not exactly on the same page: “Lorraine was a very quiet, very reserved lady. And underline ‘lady.’ She was a Lady. Very elegant, a very handsome woman...and I was... disappointed by her lack of response to what I was doing. I was in the bullpen getting something matted. And Lorraine came in and she was getting something matted before she delivered it. She didn’t say my work was crap or anything, but she just looked a little cool about it.

“And I mentioned it to one of the other illustrators, Don Crowley [dates unknown], and he said, ‘Don’t worry about it. Lorraine has her own goody factory and maybe she just doesn’t understand.’

“What I was doing at that time was pretty rough. It had touches of abstract expressionism... ‘gallery painting’... pretty sloppy stuff.

“I was kind of disappointed that Lorraine wasn’t more responsive to what I did (and neither was her husband, Bernie D’Andrea – he looked at me like I had two heads). But Bob Levering [date unknown], and through Levering, Joe Bowler and Coby Whitmore and Joe DeMers became my support system.”¹²

Tinkelman had previously received a scholarship to study painting with Abstract Expressionist Reuben Tam (1916-1991) at the Brooklyn Museum. He introduced fellow Cooper Studio illustrators to Tam’s classes. Peng writes,

First to go with Murray were his early supporters, Bill Whittingham [dates unknown] and Bob Levering.... Gradually, one by one, others like Coby Whitmore, Joe DeMers and Lorraine Fox began visiting Tam’s class... Then they dragged a less-than-enthusiastic Bernie D’Andrea along (Murray still laughs as he quotes D’Andrea’s initial reaction: “Aaahh, what a

12. Ibid.

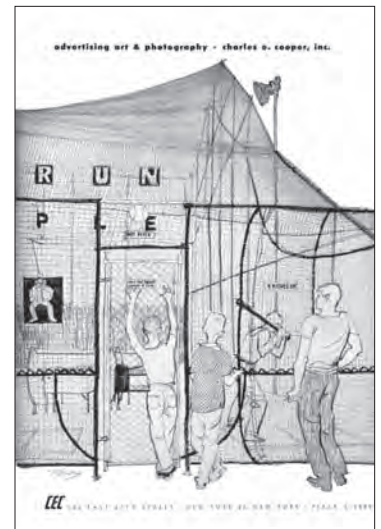


Fig. 97 Bernard D’Andrea, title unknown, c. 1956, medium unknown, Cooper Studio advertisement.

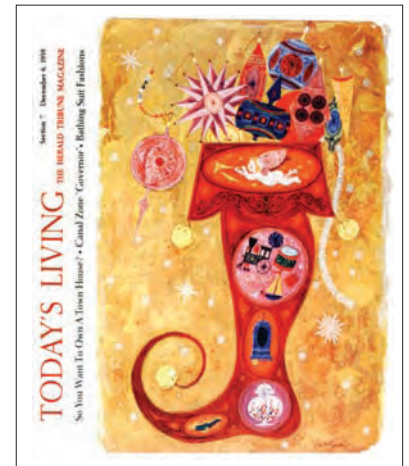


Fig. 98 Murray Tinkelman, cover, December 6, 1959, medium unknown, *The Herald Tribune Magazine*. Murray Tinkelman: “I became the second best Lorraine Fox in New York City.”

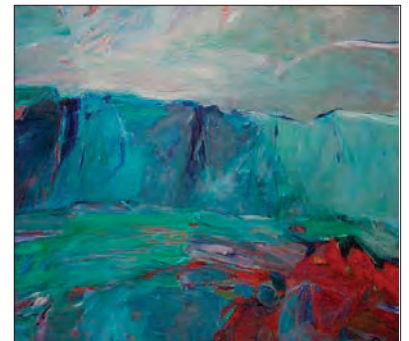


Fig. 99 Reuben Tam, *The Weathering of Kauai*, 1961, oil on canvas.

buncha shit!”).¹³

D’Andrea says of that experience, “Tam opened us both up. Lorraine overcame her fear of oils.”

A review of *The Nursery Book* (1960) illustrated by Fox appeared in *The New York Times*: “The full-page drawings, whimsically done by the well-known artist Lorraine Fox in gay colors, portray the main characters and highlight the stories’ themes.”¹⁴ *9 Magic Wishes* was included in “One Hundred Outstanding Books for Young Readers” and described as “gay fancies enlivened with brightly colored illustrations.”¹⁵

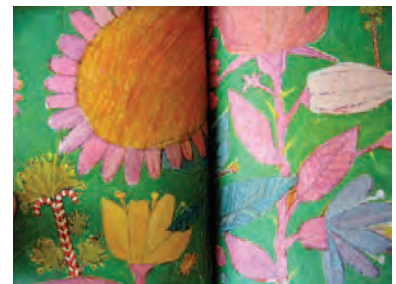
A review of *9 Magic Wishes* in the “New Volumes for the Younger Readers’ Library” section of *The New York Times* said:

Lorraine Fox’s fine, free childlike illustrations, in luscious colors, are a great addition to Shirley Jackson’s *9 Magic Wishes*, and it is nice to end on a positive note. This is the best book in the present collection [books for ages 6 to 7] – a story of a child who chooses such interesting things as an orange pony with a purple tail, a tiny zoo and a silver ship with sails of red. It is, to be sure, slight, and – unless one considers it as a counting book for a younger child – it lacks the continuity of a good narrative. Yet it has a gaiety of mood and sense of picturesque detail which are very engaging. And, in the end, the one magic wish left on a rock for someone else to find leaves children with something to think about.¹⁶ (See Figures 102-104.)

D’Andrea shared with me Fox’s illustration process and the media she used: “She’d do the underdrawing with charcoal pencil, then play around with NuPastels for texture.



Figs. 100 and 101 Lorraine Fox, cover and interior illustration, 1960, medium unknown, *The Nursery Book*.



Figs. 102, 103, 104 Lorraine Fox, interior illustrations, 1963, medium unknown, *9 Magic Wishes*, author Shirley Jackson.

13. Ibid.

14. “For Children,” ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The New York Times*, March 18, 1960, 28.

15. “One Hundred Outstanding Books for Young Readers,” ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The New York Times*, November 10, 1963, BR230.

16. Ellen Lewis Buell, “New Volumes for the Younger Readers’ Library,” ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The New York Times*, May 26, 1963, 299.

She would fix the drawing (her doctor thought that's what gave her cancer) and finish in oils, or she worked with gouache and oil washes.”

Fox joined the Famous Artists School (FAS) guiding faculty, based in Westport, Connecticut, in 1960. Guiding faculty included notable illustrators Norman Rockwell, Al Dorne (1904-1965), Austin Briggs (1908-1973), Fred Ludekens (1900-1982), and Robert Fawcett (1903-1967). D’Andrea was kind enough to fax me Fox’s philosophy on art making written for the FAS curricula c. 1961. Here are a few excerpts:

Your drawing marks are an emotional experience, therefore depend upon your emotional character...it is not style that is important, but the personal vision made by each individual... I paint almost all of the time that I am not working on actual commercial assignments. I draw from life to sharpen and discipline my draftsmanship and I paint to keep my knowledge of space breakup, color and other factors expanded...The figures you see are either drawn from life or photographs. I sometimes take a Polaroid shot of myself if I need a girl or woman, no matter what age. I never trace the photograph. I always draw from it. Sometimes I will just make up the figures.... No matter how small the illustration, accuracy is always required. If not absolute, realistic accuracy, then a kind of abstracted believability.... In order to compose in a more exciting, original way, one must know something about abstract design or the abstract use of space.... One way is to be aware of forms and shapes as they exist in space in their surrounding environment.

Fox’s illustrations from her early decorative period are scarce online and there have been no published compilations of her illustrations. In Appendix C, page 157, I’ve included more examples of Fox’s illustrations culled from online sites, including Today’s Inspiration, Flickr, Ward Schumaker, others mailed from Bernard D’Andrea and Murray Tinkelman, and color copies from bound *Seventeen* magazines for years 1953-1957 from The New York Public Library.



Figs. 105 and 106 Lorraine Fox, interior illustrations, 1966, medium unknown, *Somebody Came*, author Mark Van Doren. Note looser style beginning with *9 Magic Wishes*, that reflects her painting experience with Reuben Tam.

Phone interview with Murray Tinkelman, December 17, 2009

AG (Amy Geller): Would you characterize Lorraine's work as stylistically expressionist or naïve?

MT (Murray Tinkelman): Naïve. No question about it. In the early part of her career, or at least when I became familiar with her work in the early 1950s – 1950-1951, it was definitely naïve, but it was what I term sophisticated naïve. It was obvious to me that she knew what she was doing. It was faux-naïf, and it was absolutely charming, delicate and beautiful.

AG: And what kind of work was she doing? For what kind of publications?

MT: I became familiar with her work through the greeting card world. I had a couple of jobs in the greeting card business very early in my alleged career [laugh]. I had a staff job at a place called American Artists Group – I think they're still in business – and I had a job doing really dumb work – paste-ups and mechanicals, running errands and a little bit of board work. Lorraine had designed and painted a series of note paper cards around '53-'54, and they were absolutely stunning. I was ordered by the art director to do some comps of Lorraine's paintings and we had the paintings there so I was copying them. The comps should have taken 20-25 minutes apiece – I worked on this thing all day – I fell in love, emulating her style, and he started screaming at me. I just walked out of the room and went into the men's room, came back about a half an hour later and he didn't say a word. But I was just absolutely, totally smitten with her work. And then around '57, '58 I was accepted into Charles E. Cooper Studio and that's when I met Lorraine and we became very good friends. I absolutely loved her. I became the second best Lorraine Fox in New York City.

AG: [laugh] I remember you saying that.

MT: I emulated her work shamelessly.

AG: Was she flattered?

MT: She never said a word. Yea, Nay, or anything. We just remained friends, went out for coffee. She and her husband, Bernie D'Andrea, invited us – Carol [Tinkelman's wife] and me – to their home for parties and stuff. But then – I'm not really going far afield now – I was an abstract painter also. During this time I had previously gotten a scholarship at the Brooklyn Museum and I studied with a man named Reuben Tam. And Lorraine was very, very interested in what I was doing as an abstract painter. She liked the gesture, the drips, the expressionist quality of my work, which was so alien to what she did. And then she and Bernie, her husband, came to visit me. I was visiting the class that I used to attend, just to say hello to Reuben, who I loved dearly, and Bernie and Lorraine came along,

and Joe Bowler and Coby Whitmore. All of these hot shot Cooper Studio illustrators came along and Bernie and Lorraine signed up at the school. They went. They were enormously successful illustrators and they signed up for one night a week, a painting class with Reuben Tam at the Brooklyn Museum. So, that's when she fell in love with the expressionist quality of paint rather than the purely decorative manner of painting.

AG: And was that reflected in her illustrations?

MT: It did manifest itself in her illustration. But she was undergoing a sea change also. Her work became less pleasant, or less charming. Her personal work I'm talking about, became less charming and more prophetic. She became interested in, oh God, nuclear winter, world problems, and she started expressing them in a very surreal, expressionist manner.

AG: And didn't some of that style enter her later work?

MT: Yes. But her earlier work was influenced by Doris Lee and Jan Balet. He was a European artist. I would say Balet and Doris Lee are her two strongest influences.

AG: Okay. And was she part of a tradition or an iconoclast?

MT: I wouldn't say she was an iconoclast. I've already identified two people, Balet and...

AG: Right. And were there others?

MT: Yeah. There were some other sophisticated naïves, which is what I used to call them. I can't think of them off the top of head but it stemmed from Grandma Moses, who was a genuine naïve, and then picked up by some illustrators.

AG: Right. Okay. So the fifth question – would you characterize her work as unique when she first arrived on the scene – so no, there were others doing...

MT: It wasn't unique, but it was very personal. And it reflected her love of Victorian decoration. *9 Magic Wishes*. That book was influenced by Reuben Tam. That was a Shirley Jackson book. I have one of the originals – the galleon floating over a town with a dark blue background.

AG: And with the stylized Victorian architecture.

MT: Carol and I were visiting and she had just gotten out of the hospital for her lung cancer surgery. And one thing led to... we were just talking about a lot of random stuff and I mentioned the book, how beautiful it was. She sent Bernie up to this little crawl space in their absolutely gorgeous home. Her home looked like she had created it in paint. In Great Neck, Long Island. Really beautiful, beautiful home. So she sent Bernie up to the crawl space to bring down the originals and let me pick one. I picked the sailing ship and I said, "Would you sign it for me?" and she kind of laboriously got up, went into her

studio. Then she called Bernie into the studio and I wondered what the hell was going on. But I saw their reflection in a mirror and she didn't have enough strength in her hands to sign, so Bernie signed it, forged her signature absolutely perfectly. It was such a touching thing. I have it hanging in my home. I absolutely love it. And she died shortly after. She was in her early 50s.

Do you understand my distinction between personal artist as opposed to being totally unique? She was relatively unique because she was so talented. There aren't that many people of her brilliance. But the style was not something that came, presented itself in a full blown way out of nothing. Hers was the logical continuation of a school of art.

AG: Unlike someone like Thurber who was an iconoclast.

MT: Exactly right.

AG: How did her family, maybe you don't know this, but how did her family and life experiences affect the kind of work she did?

MT: I would say very much. She had a close relationship with her family. I never heard her say anything negative in her background. But she had a great relationship with Bernie. Bernie is on one hand a typical Italian stallion – a real macho and over the top – but he was always incredibly supportive of Lorraine. They shared a studio for many, many years and then Bernie moved out of the studio. Bernie set up his studio in another part of the house to give her more room and this way he had more room. But he would do bills, cook very often. Bernie was a great cook. Still is, by the way. He's alive and well. He lives on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. He's remarried. He married a jewelry maker who at one time was a painter. Her name is Jean Stark and she's a world-class jeweler. She's just a genius.

AG: Is he still doing illustration?

MT: No, he's doing painting. So, he was just wonderfully supportive of Lorraine. And she was one of the very, very few – I mean it was just a handful of women that were visible in the late '40s and through the 1950s. There were a few but Lorraine was way up there on the list of successful, high-profile women – well respected by all the art directors, all the magazines, and well respected by her peers. The romance illustrators at Cooper Studio absolutely loved her. They just loved her work.

AG: It's kind of hard to find examples of her work.

MT: I know she has some stuff in the Society. She won a gold medal but it's a very expressionistic piece. It's something she did based on going to Pompeii – really a raw painting. But she must have some decorative pieces in the early annuals.

AG: What was her background? Where did she come from, where did she go to school?

MT: I believe Brooklyn. She went to Pratt Institute. That's where she met her husband. They traveled quite a bit. There was a period in the '60s when they went to Capri every summer for quite a while. She was a very sophisticated and a lovely person.

AG: You're a big fan.

MT: She's one of my favorite people in the world. I cherished my friendship with her.

AG: Did Bernie do work like hers or was it very different?

MT: Oh Bernie. Absolutely different. Bernie started out as a straight ahead action adventure illustrator who did very competent romance illustration. But he would bristle if you called him a romance illustrator. He wasn't as good as Coby Whitmore or Joe Bowler in that genre but very versatile and his work was nothing at all like Lorraine's. And towards the end of his career, he, too, was influenced by the Tam phenomenon and his work got very expressionistic. He had a museum show at the Telfair Museum in Savannah of his work. Really powerful, powerful stuff.

Bernard D'Andrea's response to questionnaire via mail

AG (Amy Geller): Murray Tinkelman mentioned Doris Lee in addition to Jan Balet as an influence. Would you agree? Did you know Lee and Balet personally?

BD (Bernard D'Andrea): Lorraine was influenced first by her older brother Gill Fox who did a weekly cartoon panel for about 1,500 newspapers with one of the cartoonist syndicates. She loved *Seventeen* magazine and thus Jan Balet. It was a brand new magazine. She admired Doris Lee, whose keen observation and situational setups in her decorative style Lorraine remembered.

AG: Was Lorraine influenced directly by any folk artists? Grandma Moses, for instance? Any others?

BD: Grandma Moses, naïve and primitive style, were all a part of Lorraine's sensibility. Anything that seemed nostalgic and warmed her childhood spirit – Victoriana and her love for her Grandmother "Gussi." Clothes, hairstyle, the mood of Victoriana obsessed her. Children at play, another favorite.

AG: How did Lorraine arrive at her decorative style? High school, Pratt, after Pratt? What years did you and Lorraine attend Pratt?

BD: An intuitive, decorative intrinsic design and color sense poured out just as if she were writing a letter. Her "letter" soon gave her work and a very, very personal identity she never lost. She respected this.

AG: What year did you and Lorraine join Cooper Studio? When did you leave Cooper Studio?

BD: My arrival at Cooper Studio was in the latter part of 1948. Lorraine entered the studio 1952-53. I left Cooper in 1965; Lorraine left 1962-63 to freelance on her own.

AG: Where did Lorraine work before she joined Cooper Studio?

BD: Keiswetter advertising agency (Madison and 41st Street) hired Lorraine as a layout artist where she also did spot illustration in the beginnings of her inimitable decorative style, 1943-1947.

AG: How long did Lorraine work in a decorative style? 1940s through 1950s? 1960s?

BD: Lorraine's decorative style evolved slowly from one phase to another, becoming more complex as she began to illustrate editorial stories where it was necessary for representational depictions to be more substantially developed (see Figure 107). This evolution always was in play through the '50s, '60s and '70s. Toward the late '60s and '70s her work advanced to a high rendition of magic realism that she incorporated in her most distinct and personal style of drawing and painting for editorial and advertising art.

AG: I know she illustrated two children's books: *9 Magic Wishes* and *Somebody Came* – which I love. Did she illustrate any others?

BD: Lorraine's book illustration was entered upon at the request of an art director hoping she would do it. *9 Magic Wishes* and *Somebody Came* were masterpieces. She did do some secondary books but was unable to do more because of heavy commitments to the editorials she was doing for the magazines and advertising, such as CBS, doing very complex record covers.

AG: I was thinking of cultural influences in the 1960s. You mentioned Victoriana as an influence and I thought of the Caswell Massey catalogues. There was the Finnish design firm Marimekko (est. 1951) and designer Alexander Giraud (1907-1993), as well, and their decorative aesthetic of super-saturated flat colors, and in Giraud's case the influence of Mexican folk art. Did these designers influence Lorraine?

BD: No! Victoriana was her pet era because of the shapes that the clothes gave her to play with. (See Figure 108.) Lorraine's color sense was highly personal and always intuitive, derived from her love of nature and was always in "good taste." She was very selective yet always open to new discoveries in drawing and color rendition. She excelled



Fig. 107 Lorraine Fox, "Whose Friends Are Those?," October 1956, gouache, *Woman's Day* magazine.

in all mediums and mixed them, or not, at will. The unexpected was always welcome. She looked at early Renaissance artists like Giotto (1267-1337). Ben Shahn was an influence.

AG: Murray mentioned you both studied with Reuben Tam at the Brooklyn

Museum. How did he influence Lorraine's illustration style?

BD: Ruben Tam for both of us. He was quite a revelation for both of us. For me, it became an explosion and for Lorraine, a release of her undisclosed psyche. Her work became cerebral at just the right time. The American culture was at a crossroads of change.

Writers were immersed in social change and war; values were being challenged. The era of the handsome boy and girl was challenged. New publications appeared, new avant-garde illustration was in play. It became a dramatic time to be part of. Milton Glaser started *New York* magazine. Joan Fenton [dates unknown] at *Seventeen* was great fun to work with. The slicks began to accept more adventurous concepts. Lorraine took on the mantle and produced a memorable body of work, painting up a storm in her personal work, and then she was diagnosed with lung cancer. She died... 1976.

AG: Where was Lorraine born? Murray Tinkelman thought Brooklyn; is that correct?

Where did she go to high school? What did her family do, what's her family background?

BD: Lorraine was born in 1922 in Brooklyn, New York. She attended high school in Queens. She excelled and on the recommendation of her teachers, her parents sent her to Pratt Institute, Brooklyn. At Pratt she was a top student. In an interview we had for the *Saturday Evening Post*, she said, "I didn't like him [D'Andrea]. He was my stiffest competition. I decided, why fight it? I married my competition." We were married soon after my discharge from the U.S. Army in 1951.

Her father was a New York-born representative for the Borden Milk Products Corp. Her mother was a feisty, loving mother, and an enthusiast for Lorraine. Lorraine's older brother was a successful cartoonist living in Connecticut with his family. He was a great enthusiast also of his very talented sister. He was Lorraine's motivator from the beginning.

AG: I went through *Seventeen* magazines from the 1950s this weekend and found examples



Fig. 108 Lorraine Fox, "How to be a Girl," 1952, gouache, *Woman's Day* magazine.



Fig. 109 Victorian riding costumes c. 1860s, *Victoriana* magazine, date unknown.

of Lorraine's work – fantastic stuff! It seems there were a number of illustrators working in a decorative style – Mary Suzuki [dates unknown], Bill Charmatz [b. 1925], Joe Kaufman [dates unknown], Jerome Snyder [1916-1967], Milton Glaser, Seymour Chwast [b. 1931], Naiad Einsel [b. 1927], to name a few. Was Lorraine, in addition to Lee and Balet, among the first or were there others?

BD: A longtime major client for Lorraine's work was *Seventeen* magazine. Lorraine worked for them along with Jan Balet and Doris Lee, all under the direction of Cipe Pineles [1909?-1991] and, later, Joan Fenton – two of the greatest art directors ever in the business in the 1950s and 1960s. Cipe's husband was a famous graphic designer educated in the Bauhaus in Germany. He was our teacher – one of the avant-garde who we had at Pratt. We began to get the indoctrination of the cerebral for our concepts. Will Burtin [1908-1972] had to leave Germany, as many did, because of the persecutions by the Nazis [Burtin's wife was Jewish]. Will was one of the best, as well as Cipe, his wife. They personified the future in many ways. After Will died Cipe left it and another great followed – Joan Fenton, a jewel of an art director. Artists of high caliber were given great leeway to develop their concepts.

Lorraine knew most of the people on your list of decorative artists; most notably she was great friends with Mary Suzuki and Naiad Einsel (who had a great, great collection of folk art painting and sculpture in Westport, Connecticut). Lorraine's friend Andy Warhol [1928-1987] used to exchange drawings with her. Then he disappeared – the rest is history.

AG: When did you meet?

BD: Lorraine and I met while in attendance at Pratt Institute – we were in the same class together. 1943 I was drafted out of school and became a U.S. Army artist designing posters and illustrating army manuals. I was discharged in 1947, got my belated diploma from Pratt, and married Lorraine in 1950.

AG: How long did Lorraine teach at Parsons School of Design? What did she teach there?

BD: At Parsons School of Design Lorraine was a member of the faculty for 12 years. She taught illustration. For a period, later, we both taught a class as a duo teaching team, giving our students two points of view.

AG: I see you, yourself, worked in many different styles including an expressive style I saw on the Today's Inspiration blog by Leif Peng. Who were your influences? Were you influenced by Lorraine or visa versa?

BD: Working in a studio like Cooper's alongside famous illustrators such as Coby

Whitmore, Jon Whitcomb, both pretty girl artists, and also George Hughes [1907-1990] – a more masculine illustrator who did not excel in the women’s magazines, doing romance and lightweight situational illustrations – I was able to do both as my clientele and editorial manuscripts demanded. I appreciated both camps but never could accept doing the pretty girl as my forte. I needed a broader focus. Consequently, when editorial changes took place I was able to work a wider field, exploit it and achieve success.

Lorraine nor I ever crossed paths regarding our illustration. I respected and upheld my wife’s decisions to the fullest. We talked a lot and respected firmly our individual talents. Lorraine died in 1976 at the height of a still burgeoning career. She was inducted into the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame, along with Frederic Remington [1861-1909]. She was a blessing and I miss her shining spirit.

Interview via e-mail with Leif Peng, March 30, 2010

AG (Amy Geller): In an article Murray Tinkelman wrote for *American Artists* magazine in 1977 about Lorraine Fox he says she was one of the few women in a man’s world. Now I see from your blog that a lot of women were working in the field, including Margaret Fleming [dates unknown], Jane Oliver [b. 1921], Margaret Nielsen [dates unknown], Gwen Fremlin [dates unknown], Jane Miller [dates unknown], Ginnie Hofmann [dates unknown], Mary Suzuki [dates unknown], Naiad Einsel [b. 1927]. Plus there were a lot of women children’s book illustrators. My question to you is, were these women contemporaries of Fox, younger, older, the same age? Murray has already cited Doris Lee and Jan Balet as influences, but if these women illustrators were also working when she started out what distinguishes her from the others? She is decorative but so is Suzuki. And there were a lot of male illustrators at that time who were also working in a decorative style: Joe Kaufman, Jerome Snyder, even Andy Warhol.

LP (Leif Peng): I think you need to examine Lorraine Fox in a broader context than you have so far. You need to take a look at the state of illustration and the illustration industry (two very distinctly different things) as it was generally accepted at the time: by the public, by the vast majority of art directors and designers, by the salesmen and owners of the large art studios, by the clients whose ads sported illustration as their main visual “draw”... all of these factors, once you come to understand them better, make Murray’s point in regard to Lorraine Fox abundantly clear. Yes, she was one of relatively many (and relatively few) female illustrators. Yes, she was one of relatively many (and relatively few) decorative illustrators. What sets her apart – makes her an anomaly – is where and with whom she

worked and in what specific time period. Her profile was far and away above any of these others you mentioned – she enjoyed a status that pretty much any other female illustrator (and a helluva lotta male illustrators) would have killed for.

AG: I see what you're driving at. I was looking through *Seventeen* magazines from the early to mid 1950s and Fox would score a full-page illustration like Lee and Balet, whereas the others were limited to black and white spots. Fox did lots of spots, too, but the fact that she also was up there with Lee and Balet means her prestige was greater. She deserves a thesis just devoted to her. That whole period deserves a book.

LP: In brief, Lorraine Fox was the only female illustrator who was doing highly stylized work for major magazines (and advertising clients) with the full support of the most powerful and high profile art studio in America – and at a time when her work was FAR from the accepted norm (the accepted norm was being done by her husband and his fellow Cooper studio artist associates, Coby Whitmore, Joe DeMers, Joe Bowler, etc.). To be at Cooper was to have so much caché during the early-to-mid-'50s that, for instance, Frank Kilker, the art director at the *Saturday Evening Post* came to them to hand out assignments, not the other way around. It was the center of the commercial art universe. And Fox was there and being fully represented by the salesmen. She had carved out her own niche and it was entirely hers – she stood head and shoulders above pretty much all other “stylists.” So, for example, when Murray came along, although his work was also very stylized, the salesmen pretty much ignored him. They didn't know what to make of his stuff... it was a weird disconnect. Most other stylized illustrators (male or female) had a similar experience. Fox was the exception, as was Jan Balet. And there were other female illustrators at Cooper: Barbara Bradley ([1927-2008], Sheilah Beckett [b. 1913] – and others at other studios, like Barbara Schwinn [b. 1907] and Dorothy Monet [date unknown] – but none did stylized work like Fox. They all did more mainstream work... hers was truly avant-garde. This was a time of very rapid transition. There was a stretch of 5 to 10 years in there where mid-century literal realism (as designed by Al Parker and then “massaged” into idealized realism by the Cooper artists) really reigned supreme as the pinnacle of aspirational pop culture imagery in American print media. Those Cooper artists were to print what Hollywood was to film and what Elvis was to music – you get what I mean? Those artists really were rock stars... and there was Lorraine Fox, at the center of all that – but doing her own thing – and not being marginalized at all! Jerome Snyder, Joe Kaufman, and just about everybody else you could name (except Jan Balet – he's another story), none of them would have had any more luck at Cooper than Murray did.

Chapter 4

R. O. Blechman

R.O. Blechman (b. 1930) was born in Flatbush, Brooklyn and moved with his family to Manhattan when he was 12. His father owned a 10-story dry goods store and his mother was a talented amateur pianist. At his mother's urging he applied to the High School of Music and Art where he studied art. Other alumni from the High School of Music and Art include Maira Kalman, Milton Glaser, and Isaac Mizrahi (b. 1961). His school friend and later graphic design firm partner, Tony Palladino (b. 1930), also went there. Blechman entered Oberlin College in Ohio in 1948 and majored in history, minored in English, and drew political cartoons for the school newspaper. In his third year he transferred to a newly created graphics department at Columbia University, but by his senior year he was back at Oberlin and graduated from there in 1952. After graduation he took his illustration portfolio around.

I decided to spend my time doing what I wanted to, however impractical. Nothing could have been more impractical than becoming a professional illustrator. My style – such as it was – had no precedents... The pendulum was swinging away from Norman Rockwell and other *Saturday Evening Post* illustrators toward more stylized looks. Typical of these was the 'stitched' line, a jagged, or barbed, highly self-conscious line... It was on this cresting wave of concept and stylization that I moved into the illustration world. My very inability to draw easily...made me put more demands on content and humor, qualities that were to serve me well.¹

In 1953 his book *The Juggler of Our Lady: A Medieval Tale*, based on a French miracle story, was published by Henry Holt to high acclaim (an animated version, narrated by Boris Karloff, was produced by Terrytoons in 1957). Blechman was drafted into the army, served two years stateside and, upon his discharge, was hired by animator John Hubley (1914-1977), who had seen *The Juggler of Our Lady*, to do storyboards at Hubley's new company, Storyboard, Inc. So began a celebrated career.

Blechman has contributed illustrations to numerous publications, including *The New*

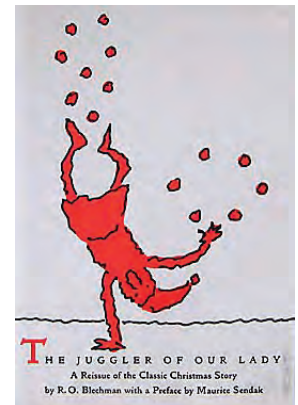


Fig. 110 R. O. Blechman, cover, republished in 1997, medium unknown, *Juggler of Our Lady: A Medieval Tale*.



Fig. 111 R. O. Blechman, cover, 1979, ink and watercolor, *The New Yorker* magazine.

1. R. O. Blechman, *Behind the Lines*, New York, N.Y.: Hudson Hills Press, Inc., 1980, 21-22.

York Times and *Rolling Stone*, 14 covers for *The New Yorker*, animations for major corporations, including Alka Seltzer, Ivory Soap, Sears, MTV, and Perrier ads. He created two animations for PBS, *Simple Gifts* (1978) and the Emmy award winner, *A Soldier's Tale* (1984). He has published books of his own material, including *Onion Soup and Other Fables* (1964) and more recently, *Talking Lines* (2009) and *Dear James, Letters to a Young Illustrator* (2009), and several children's books. He has received many industry honors and awards, including *Adweek's* Illustrator of the Year in 1983, and was inducted into the Art Directors Club Hall of Fame in 1999. He founded his own animation studio, The Ink Tank, which operated from 1979 to 2004. In 2003 a retrospective of his animations was held at The Museum of Modern Art. Blechman's political cartoons are posted on the Huffington Post website. He and his wife Moisha moved from New York City in 2003 and live in Ancram, New York. They have two sons, Max and Nicholas, former *Times* Op-Ed art director and current *Times* Book Review art director.

Blechman is known for his squiggly line (also described as jagged, tremulous and quavery) and minimalist, concept-driven humorous drawings. In his book *Behind the Lines* (1980), Blechman readily acknowledges that his line lacked fluidity and, further, that his style was unique. He writes of the advent in the 1950s of the "flat stylizations of a California school of artists recently based in New York [Jack Potter, 1927-2002, and Phil Hays, 1931-2005]," and that "Alongside this highly decorative illustration my minimalist drawings began to appear. Mine were less illustrations, however, than a kind of notation, a means of rendering ideas as concisely as possible with little concern for their visual aspects." At the same time he admits to perfectionist tendencies which he attributes to his "tentative and self-doubting nature."² Blechman's drawings, far from spontaneous, are actually collages – tracings of squiggly lines positioned and repositioned and finally rubber cemented down.

Jerelle Kraus (dates unknown), art director of the *Times* Op-Ed for 13 years and author of *All the Art That's Fit to Print (And Some That Wasn't)*, writes of Blechman's painstaking

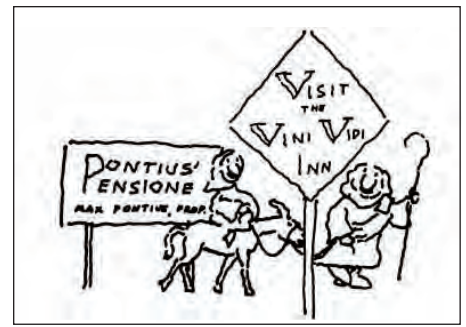


Fig. 112 R. O. Blechman, frame from "No Room at the Inn," 1977, pen and ink, from *Simple Gifts* animation for PBS.



Fig. 113 R. O. Blechman, frame from *A Soldier's Tale*, 1984, ink and watercolor, animation for PBS.

2. Blechman, *Behind the Lines*, 27.

creative process. Blechman's drawings, "...look tossed off. Yet they're the products of countless revisions... This artist based a political campaign drawing on the notion of thrown hats. Each hat is a tiny rendering that the artist inked in, then razored out, and repeatedly repositioned until he found the perfect spot and angle."³

Blechman's style has evolved. His squiggly lines have gotten squigglier over the years and he has refined his drawing style.

My indifference to drawing showed in the way I drew eyes: the method was a variant of the cartoonist's convention of a circle with a shifting dot for an eyeball. It was to take a full decade before I realized that eyes could be rendered as simple dots, no thicker than the rest of the drawing, which were more artful than the sunnyside-up versions I rendered, and equally expressive.⁴

Draper Hill, in a review of Blechman's *Behind the Lines*, takes a dim view of some of Blechman's assertions:

...there are hyperbolic excesses at the typewriter of the sort he would never allow at the drawing board, as when he notes that "his style had no precedents" and that "there was no road because nobody had preceded me on the journey I was to take.

Still, on the whole Hill finds Blechman's book "appealingly candid."⁵

In his latest book, *Dear James*, Blechman expresses some regrets over the elevation of concept in the 1950s:

...the change was not entirely good. Our gain was also a loss. The literal approach to text implied a literalness of technique and a high level of draftsmanship. There was great value in something well observed and carefully delineated. If the head and heart were often absent, there was

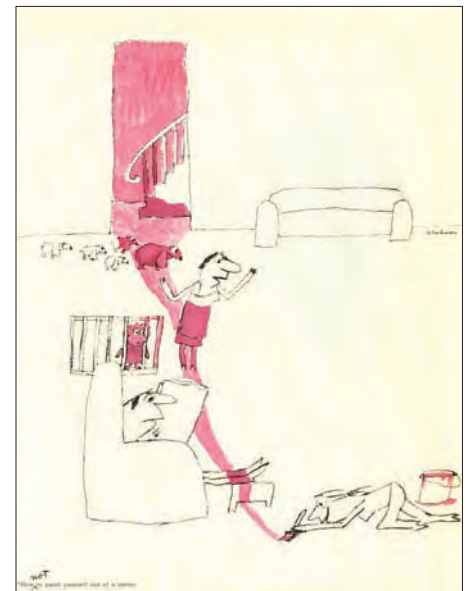


Fig. 114 R. O. Blechman, "How to Paint Yourself Out of a Corner," March 1957, medium unknown, *Seventeen* magazine. An example of his early work, this illustration appeared in the 1958 Art Director Club Annual.

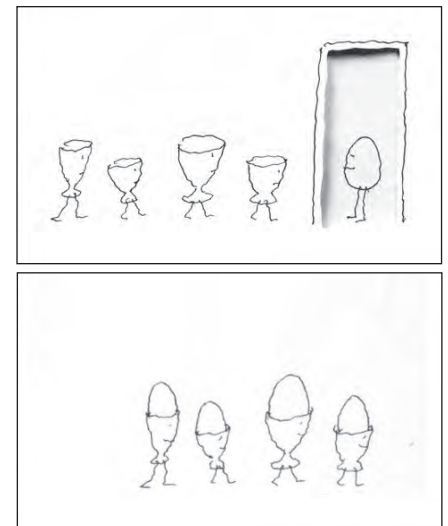


Fig. 115 R. O. Blechman, front and back covers illustrations, 1973, pen and ink, catalog for The New School.

3. Jerelle Kraus, *All the Art That's Fit to Print (And Some That Wasn't)*, New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2009, 126.

4. *Ibid.*, 27.

5. Draper Hill, "Funny Lines," *The New York Times*, December 14, 1980, 18.

something to be said for the presence of a hand.⁶

Blechman's line might be lacking but his facility with watercolor is not. In high school he was introduced to watercolor and he writes glowingly about this difficult-to-control medium – “a medium that has remained a lifelong delight”:

Unique among the visual mediums, watercolor requires instant decisions. Once made, they cannot be unmade. As soon as the wash is put down, it has to be left, moved, mixed, thinned, blended, or collected to form an accent – all within seconds, before the color dries permanently. To a repressed boy, this possibility of spontaneous action afforded precious bursts of freedom. To an indecisive boy, it was a joy to have to act without the possibility of reconsideration or revision. Besides the spontaneity of watercolor, I cherish its translucence, its brilliance, its exquisitely subtle and startlingly dramatic modulations from light to dark, wet to dry, bright to dull, limpid to dense, all of which no other medium can obtain.⁷

Blechman is also a political cartoonist. Steven Heller (b. 1950) in his book *Man Bites Man* writes:

At a young age he [Blechman] discovered that he had a need to dissent, a need best articulated through cartooning... No matter how deficient his graphic prowess appeared, Blechman believed that the desire to speak out on the issues of the day would eventually find the proper graphic vehicle.⁸ (See Figure 118.)

In 2006 illustrator Zina Saunders (b. 1953) interviewed Blechman for her blog on Drawger.com:

“I always felt that my skills, such as they are, are as much literary as visual – maybe even more literary than visual, because I always enjoyed language a lot. As for my drawing

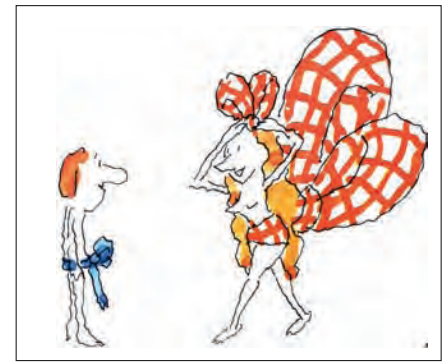


Fig. 116 R. O. Blechman, “She’s a Woman,” 1969, ink and watercolor, *The Beatles Illustrated Lyrics*.



Fig. 117 R. O. Blechman, “Sony Tape. Full Color Sound,” 1979, ink and watercolor, advertisement for Sony.



Fig. 118 R. O. Blechman, “The Supreme Court Weighs In,” 1969, pen and ink, *The Huffington Post* website.

6. R. O. Blechman, *Dear James: Letters to a Young Illustrator*, New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 2009, 2-3.

7. *Ibid.*, 18.

8. Steven Heller ed., *Man Bites Man: Two Decades of Drawings and Cartoons by 22 Comic and Satiric Artists, 1960 to 1980*, New York, N.Y.: A & W Publishers, 1981, 19.

skills, if I work hard I can do very well. But I am very lazy, and I am not interested in art very much. I'm really not. I mean, I love it, but unless somebody says, 'Go do,' I don't."⁹

Blechman is like Thurber in this regard – he views himself as more of a writer than an illustrator. Unlike Thurber, however, who drew for relaxation, Blechman confesses he only draws when he has to.

Illustrator Ed Sorel (b. 1929), who also wrote the Hall of Fame tribute to Blechman on the Art Directors Club website, describes Blechman's style admiringly in a *Times* review of a solo show.

An ironist of a very different order, R. O. Blechman uses a line so delicate and tremulous as to hint that he is an illustrator *maudit* [accursed], able to work but a few minutes a day and then only if propped up on pillows in a corklined room....Fastidiousness and economy are nonetheless his great virtues. Frequently he uses only about a fifth of the space at his disposal and rarely fails to place his designs perfectly. Most often, they involve his archetypal figure – a spindly little man with a big nose – in subtle and tenuous situations....¹⁰

In an interview with Joe Strike for Animation World Network in 2007, Blechman, when asked how he came up with his style, responds:

"I suppose I was playing with different styles and I kind of liked one particular look, so I started developing it. It's not as if I was born with it... I think any artist creates his or her own style – it's natural and unnatural; natural in the sense that it came rather effortlessly, but then you perfect it. Even now I sometimes see my stuff is either too loose or too tight."¹¹

Blechman's animated cartoons are done by professional animators, not himself. He says of this process: "It's interesting that when my work is animated it's enhanced by the animators. They give it a fluidity and emotion, and not merely the motion my work doesn't have when it's a still drawing – when I'm lucky and work with the right people."¹²

In the same interview Blechman shares about two popular commercial animations – the Alka Seltzer commercial and the



Fig. 119 R. O. Blechman, frame from Alka-Seltzer commercial, 1967.

9. Ibid.

10. Edward Sorel, "Art: Edward Sorel – A Pen That Bites," *The New York Times*, June 9, 1978, C17.

11. Joe Strike, "The R. O. Blechman Interview," Animation World Network, posted April 23, 2007, <http://www.awn.com/articles/profiles/ro-blechman-interview> (accessed March 20, 2010).

12. Ibid.

CBS Christmas greeting. About the Alka Seltzer commercial Strike says, “It’s one of those images that no one who was around at the time can forget.” Blechman:

“The ad agency [Jack Tinker and Partners] came up with the concept and I did the storyboard; it was animated at Elektra. Of course the concept was a brilliant one, the whole idea of a guy arguing with his stomach, give me a break – [Quoting the commercial:] ‘You’ve always hated my mother’... It was very beautiful and it had a marvelous soundtrack. I suppose it was the artless look of the animation that endeared itself to people, because commercials generally had a more finished, polished look and there was something I guess intriguing and appealing about it.”¹³



Fig. 120 R. O. Blechman, frame from “Seasons Greetings from CBS,” 1968, animated television commercial, CBS.

Another popular Blechman animation is the 1968 CBS Christmas greeting, originally created for a “New York theater chain that CBS picked up and ran on the network. Forget about them doing a thing like this now. What public relations that was, that was fantastic, to wish people a merry Christmas and peace on Earth.”¹⁴ (See Figure 120.)

In the same interview Blechman voices his dislike of 3-D computer animation: “Animation should be a highly expressive art – you should feel the artist behind it, which of course was what Hubley exemplified in his work.”¹⁵

Phone interview with R. O. Blechman, December 16, 2009

ROB (R. O. Blechman): As I understand naïve, there are two qualities associated with it: one is self-taught, the other is non-academic. And I would say that on both scores I would qualify as a naïve artist. But you know, these terms are very misleading because they’re so constricting, they’re cut off from so many other qualities. For example, I think of my work as sophisticated. So how can I be a naïve sophisticate? Or sophisticatedly naïve? Like any artist, I absorb so much around me. I often think that we, as artists, absorb almost osmotically. We’re not in direct contact with so much but it still enters our consciousness, it’s around us. So I wouldn’t put a label on my work at all.

AG (Amy Geller): Okay.

ROB: I think it’s a terrible thing anyway when any artist in any field is labeled, is cubby-holed. So if you’re a character actor you can’t be romantic, if you’re a matinee idol, you can’t be a character actor – all that nonsense. I mean if you can act, you can act. If you can

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

do art, you can do art. Almost any form, there's something almost arbitrary in the fact that you prefer one way of doing things to other ways, but that doesn't preclude your ability to work in any number of ways. Early on I was crosshatching...

AG: Interesting. I would like to see that.

ROB: When I was growing up, the important American artist was Ben Shahn and there were commercial knockoffs, like David Stone Martin [1913-1992]. And as I mentioned in my book, Andy Warhol had a Ben Shahn line.

AG: I saw that.

ROB: Okay. So what artists/illustrators have inspired/influenced me? Wow. I really don't know who influenced me initially. I will say that some still influence me and I can't quite get rid of them – like Steinberg. In my book *Talking Lines* I hated the cover – well that's an overstatement – I didn't like the cover, I didn't do it, believe it or not. Drawings of mine were taken by the art director and the art director actually did the blues. The only thing I did were, obviously, the two characters, taken from one of my stories, and then where the little guy answers the man with the mass of balloons I turned the balloon upside down – I mean that was my contribution. But I frankly couldn't come up with a better cover and I like the cover. But I was uncomfortable with the fact that it was Steinberg inspired. You know the guy had an enormous vocabulary and it's so hard to escape it. Now and then I reject an idea of mine because it's too close to something he has done.

Now, this is interesting, I was thinking of this question last night. Seymour Chwast influenced me in that I had always done my line in black. It never occurred to me to do my lines in color. But then when I saw some of Chwast's stuff for my film that I did in 1983, *The Soldier's Tale*, a lot of the artwork is done with lines of different colors. Bet you didn't notice that. Lines in red or blue – this is something that I learned from him. Astonishingly, he once told me that he had once learned something from me. Boy, I'd love to find out what that was. I can't imagine. He didn't say and I never asked, but one of these days when I see him I'll ask, "Hey, Seymour, what did you ever learn from me?" He may have forgotten. But be that as it may, we all learn from each other and we also learn from different fields. I'm inspired by literature, painting, music, theater, film. It all somehow translates into my media. There are lessons I've learned from other media.

AG: Do you see yourself as part of a tradition or as an iconoclast?

ROB: Yes and no. I guess I'm somewhat similar to Thurber, somewhat



Fig. 121 Hendrik Willem van Loon, title unknown, 1921, medium unknown, *The Story of Mankind*.

similar to an artist I grew up with in the 1930s, Hendrik Willem van Loon [1882-1944].

(See Figure 121.)

AG: I'm not familiar with his work.

ROB: No, he's one of these guys who is lost to art history. It's a shame. His stuff is great, really wonderful. Google him. I think you'll like his work a lot.

AG: Had you seen Thurber's work when you were young?

ROB: Yes, I guess when I was starting out in my...when does an artist start out? But professionally, in my early 20s, sure – no, even before then. I knew Thurber's work as a teenager. But I don't think it directly influenced me. I think it showed me how a drawing style so utterly simple could be considered art, and could be commercial, though it was only in my 20s that I thought of becoming a commercial artist. [See Figures 122 and 123.]

Before that, I suppose the only linkage to what I do now is that I would love to do picture stories. For example, as a kid I went to Nantucket, and I'd never been there before and

I was blown away by the experience. So, I did a little booklet of text and drawings. So, there's that continuity in my career. And I always loved stories, I loved telling stories.

AG: So, did you think your work was very different when you first started out?

ROB: No, I didn't think it was any good. And in many ways it wasn't. I mean the artwork was terrible. It was well into my career before I paid attention to the look of things and I compensated for the fact that I wasn't all that artful or visual by being very bright and very funny – and it was all compensatory.

AG: Would you have characterized your work as unique when you first arrived, first started working?

ROB: No, that would have been presumptuous and pretentious of me.

AG: Well, compared to what was going on at that time?

ROB: No, I didn't think of myself in those terms. Other people did. I was quite successful starting out.

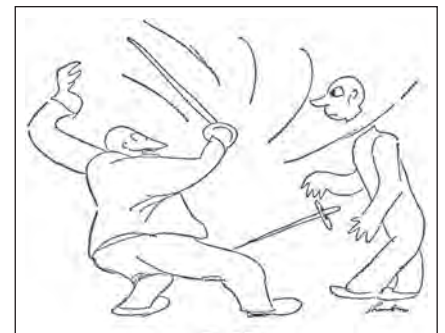


Fig. 122 James Thurber, "Touché!," 1943, ink, *Men, Women and Dogs*. Cartoonist Carl Rose (1903-1971) submitted the idea for this cartoon to Thurber knowing he could pull it off and make it funny, not gruesome. It looks like Blechman, taking his cue from Thurber, has that light touch too (see below). (Holmes, *Clocks of Columbus*, 142.)

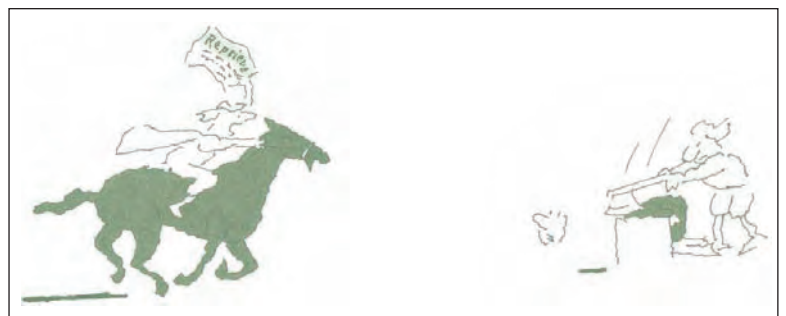


Fig. 123 R. O. Blechman, "Tardiness," 1998, medium unknown, *Coined by Shakespeare*.

But, you know, if you have a different approach then people are attracted to it because it's different, it's fresh. It didn't really have to be good. I didn't think of it as being special in any way except it was shockingly different. I began my career in 1953.

AG: With your book, *Juggler of our Lady*?

ROB: Exactly. But even right after that there was a lot of commercial work. Would that I had the same amount of commercial work now, Amy. It doesn't work that way.

AG: Right. Your work still looks fresh, I think.

ROB: I'm not getting the kind of commissions that I did. Well, I'm not complaining...well, I am complaining. Why shouldn't I complain? No, I had a lot of advertising accounts that I no longer have. I mean I look at things like the Geico lizard and I think, "Good God, that animal is so characterless!" No personality, no warmth, no charm, no brightness...so dumb.

AG: The animation trends right now are very realistic.

ROB: And there's no call for me to do 2D animation, which I did a lot of. But we're all cut out for this 3D nonsense. Will you hold just a minute? I have another call. And maybe it's the Geico lizard people offering me to draw...So, ideas. I find that I get a lot of them when I'm away from my desk and I can be on a train, I could be in bed, I can be in the bath, and I always have to quickly jot it down. The next day I realize how wonderful or awful they are. Who knows where ideas come from? You don't know, you just don't know. I don't think anybody can honestly answer that. They come or they don't come. They're great or they're mediocre or awful. I find that when I'm away from my desk the ideas tend to come when I'm not thinking of it – just bursts upon me because my unconscious is working on it.

AG: And how did your family and life experiences affect the kind of work you do?

ROB: I didn't have the best childhood... but I don't think I was the best child – probably drove my parents up the wall and they reciprocated. There's kind of a sad element to a lot of my stuff.

AG: It's touching.

ROB: I think my childhood must have affected me in that way – how? why? – beats me. My mother was something of a nut and my father was cut off. They weren't mean – there was something worse than that. They were inconsistent. So, you can adjust to one pattern in your life but you can't adjust to a changing pattern. You have to change and you think, hey, maybe I'm responsible for this behavior on the part of my parents. But I was probably a difficult kid as well.

AG: Were they humorous?

ROB: No. I don't really know. I know my uncle was a cartoonist – not a professional one – and he was something of a painter, so there must have been a visual quality in the family. My brother and I would fight over his cartoons. Poor guy would have to keep drawing and drawing. Did he inspire me? Yeah, maybe he did. It's possible.

AG: Any teachers, your schooling?

ROB: I went to Music and Art High School. But I never thought of becoming an artist.

AG: So, your specialty was music or art?

ROB: It was art. You know, interestingly, Maira Kalman went to Music and Art.

AG: Yes, I found that out in my research. Were you taken to museums?

ROB: No. My parents were not...they were not uncultured but they were not theatergoers. Though, that's not quite true. My mother was an immensely talented pianist. I mean immensely talented. So, my parents never took me to museums but it's just as well. I would have complained and asked to get the hell out of there.

Phone interview with Tony Palladino, February 16, 2010

TP (Tony Palladino): R.O. is brilliant. We were partners because we were allies in our thinking. It was a time when concepts were just first getting popular. The agency Doyle Dane Bernbach and that whole kind of thinking was a lot of what was happening about ideas behind work. And his little scratches – you had to see the original art. It was beautiful. It was like a collage.

AG (Amy Geller): Did he just use pen and ink?

TP: Yeah.

AG: Would he do it oversized, or was it pretty much same size?

TP: Oversize. R. O., he has a very good sense of history. He likes ancient times and that sensibility, I think, we see a lot of that in his work, don't we? There's a genuineness to his work. It's just amazing. And his whole attitude about work is that way. Honesty, pure genuine manner. A great person. I don't see him so much 'cause he lives up in the country.

AG: Where did you go after you graduated from high school?

TP: I never went beyond high school. I didn't even finish high school. I went right out there. I had a place on 5th Avenue. I was sharing some space with some professional designers, admen, whatever you want to call them. And that's how I met R. O. 'cause he went to that wonderful

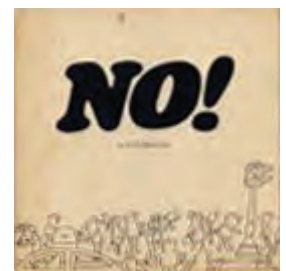


Fig. 124 R. O. Blechman, cover, 1962, pen and ink, *No!*. Blechman in an e-mail told me he regretted the type was not hand drawn.

college, even today it's a beauty – Oberlin. Then I met him again after high school, a couple of years – 4-5 years later. He had a book in hand. It was called “No.” It was wonderful. And he wanted me to help him with it. Design it, working with how it looked, the ideas, everything. There was a big N-O in Cooper Black on the cover. It was just so great. I think it had to do with society's no's, the junk, that kind of stuff, those values without any genuine values; he was already into that. And then we became friends, more so than when we were going to school. We used to hang out together, go to the Y, go to the gym. And it was so sweet because there was Bob Gill [b. 1931] also. You know Robert Brownjohn [1925-1970]?

AG: No.

TP: Ivan Chermayeff's [1900-1996] partner, with Tom Geismar [b. 1931].

AG: And did you meet his wife, Moisha?

TP: Of course. We used to have dinner together. We were very close. She looks like one of his drawings. We met her parents, as a matter of fact; that's how close we were all together. I think her dad or mother was also an artist.

AG: Was Blechman's work unique when he first arrived on the scene?

TP: Oh yeah, he was really unique.

Chapter 5

Faith Ringgold

Faith Ringgold (b. 1930), neé Jones, was born in Harlem, New York. Her mother, a seamstress and later a dress designer, and her father, a sanitation truck driver, both came to New York from Florida in their teens. Ringgold was the youngest of three children (a brother died of pneumonia before she was born). In 1942 the family moved to Edgecombe Street in Sugar Hill, Harlem, home to many famous African Americans,



Fig. 125 Robert Gwathmey, *Portrait of Farmer's Wife*, c. 1951, oil on canvas.

including Thurgood Marshall (1908-1993), W. E. B. DuBois (1868-1963), Duke Ellington (1899-1974), Lena Horne (1917-2010), and her friend Sonny Rollins (b. 1930). She entered college in 1948 and studied art with Robert Gwathmey (1903-1988) and Yasuo Kuniyoshi at The City College of New York. She received a BS from there in 1955 and taught art in New York City public schools until 1973. She received an MA from City College in 1959. Ringgold has written and illustrated 17 children's books, including *Tar Beach*, her first book, published in 1991. It was the winner of 11 awards, including Caldecott Honor Book for 1992 and *New York Times* Best Illustrated Book. She is also a fine artist known for her painted story quilts that combine painting, quilted fabric and storytelling. Her work has been exhibited in major museums worldwide and is in the permanent collections of the Guggenheim Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, among others. She was a professor of art at the University of California in San Diego from 1987 to 2007. She has received numerous honorary doctorates. She married in 1950 and had two daughters, Michele and Barbara. That marriage ended in divorce. She married again in 1962 to Burdette Ringgold. They have lived in Engelwood, New Jersey since 1992.

Ringgold suffered from asthma as a child and her mother, out of concern for her daughter's health, kept her home and

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She received a BS from there in 1955 and taught art in New York City public schools until 1973.

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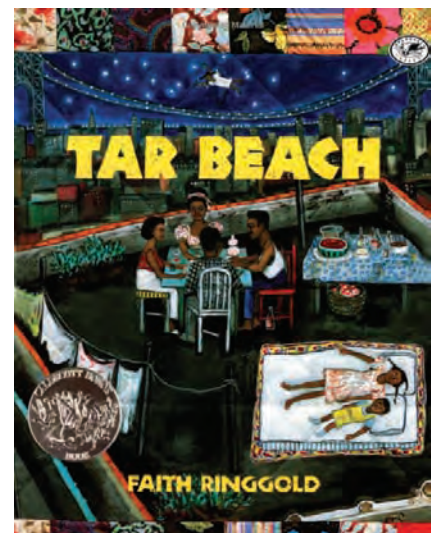


Fig. 126 Faith Ringgold, cover, 1991, acrylic on canvas paper, *Tar Beach*. Original story quilt is on page 35 in the Historical Overview, Chapter 1.



Fig. 127 Faith Ringgold, interior illustration, 1991 acrylic on canvas paper, *Tar Beach*.

she missed first grade. Her mother provided Ringgold with crayons, paper, and fabric to keep her occupied. In the 1960s, Ringgold became active in the feminist and civil rights movements. In 1972 Ringgold saw an exhibition of Tibetan thangkas (paintings on cloth) in Amsterdam. She was always interested in fabrics and upon her return to the United States she and her mother began collaborating on story quilts, her signature innovation. Ringgold's painted canvases and her mother Willi Posey's quilted borders integrated traditional women's needlework with Western art. She also added texts, drawing on the tradition of African American narrative quilts (see Figure 128) and her own family's tradition – on her mother's side, Ringgold's great grandmother and great great grandmother were former slaves and quilters. Ringgold's mother died in 1981. By then Ringgold had learned to quilt and she herself stitches the quilted borders in her pieces.



Fig. 128 Harriet Powers (1837-1910), *Bible Quilt*, 1886, fabric.

Tar Beach is based on Ringgold's story quilt of the same name that appears on the front cover. It draws on Ringgold's own childhood memories of going up to tar-paper rooftops – tar beach – on hot summer evenings and the party-like atmosphere, lying on a mattress, looking up at the sky and at the lights on the George Washington Bridge nearby. The girl, Cassie, dreams she can fly and right all the things that are wrong in the world.

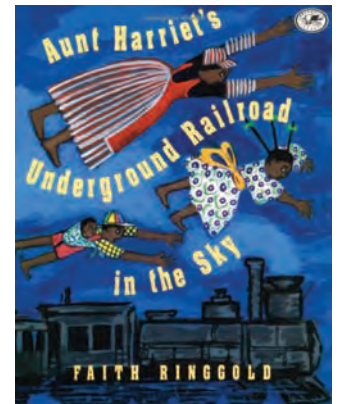


Fig. 129 Faith Ringgold, cover, 1992, acrylic on canvas paper, *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*.

Cassie is making stunning new use of a folktale motif of willed flight that we've met before in the Afro-American tradition, in such writers as Toni Morrison [b. 1931] and in slave narratives, which gave people a satisfying escape from their deadly restraints, a way to rise above them, literally, into an ineffably beautiful freedom. For a child of the 1930s (and for all too many children even now), to be able to say she'll be "free to go wherever I want for the rest of my life" is to speak, by indirection, of all the places she cannot actually expect to go. But Cassie has such perfect confidence that no one would dream of contradicting her when she says generously, "Anyone can fly. All you need is somewhere to go that you can't get to any other way."¹

1. Rosellen Brown, "Children's Books," *The New York Times*, February 24, 1991, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/02/24/books/children-s-books-990391.html?scp=21&sq=faith%20ringgold&st=cse&pagewanted=print> (accessed March 17, 2010).

Two of Ringgold's other books, *The Invisible Princess* and *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House*, are also based on story quilts. There's an element of fantasy in many of her books, even her books about historical figures Martin Luther King (1929-1968), Harriet Tubman (1820?-1913), and Rosa Parks (1913-2005). Ringgold writes, "These children's books seek to explain to children some of the hard facts of slavery and racial prejudice, issues that are difficult but crucial to their education. But my books are even more about children having dreams, and instilling in them a belief that they can change things."²

Ringgold bristles at having her art described as naïve (see interview), yet admiring reviewers of her children's books, and even of her fine art, consistently use terms like naïve, pseudo naïve, quasi-primitive or, in one instance, Outsiderish, to describe her work: "The paintings made for the book, with quilted borders at the lower edge of the page, are exuberant and richly colored, sophisticated versions of what a child herself might paint;"³ "The illustrations painted for the book version [*Tar Beach*] are done in the same colorful, naïve style as the quilt;"⁴ "The naïve, folk-art quality of the quilts is part of Ringgold's scheme to emphasize narrative over style, to convey information rather than to dazzle with elaborate technique."⁵

In an essay in *Dancing at the Louvre: Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other Story Quilts*, art historian Ann Gibson attempts to place Ringgold's story quilts in an art historical context, covering some of the same material as in the thesis Historical Overview:

Her representation is constructed not only through crafts techniques and collage, but also acrylic paint, with which she renders figures, furniture, fabric. Naturalistic but not academic, Ringgold's techniques are somewhat reminiscent of artists such as Horace Pippin,



Fig. 130 Faith Ringgold, interior illustration, 1995, acrylic on canvas paper, *My Dream of Martin Luther King*.

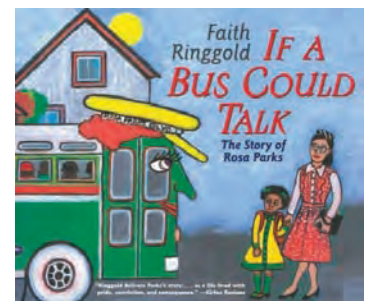


Fig. 131 Faith Ringgold, cover, 1999, acrylic on canvas paper, *If a Bus Could Talk*.

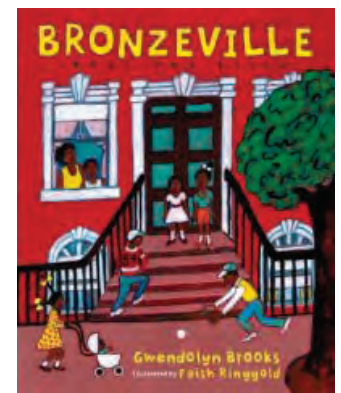


Fig. 132 Faith Ringgold, cover, 2007, acrylic on canvas paper, *Bronzeville*.

2. Faith Ringgold, *We Flew Over the Bridge*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005, 261.

3. Rosellen Brown, "Children's Books."

4. Shirley Wilton, "Tar Beach," *School Library Journal*, <http://www.amazon.com/Tar-Beach-Faith-Ringgold/dp/0517885441> (accessed March 17, 2010).

5. Nancy Spector, "Faith Ringgold," Guggenheim Museum, <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/show-full/piece/?search=Faith%20Ringgold%20Tar%20Beach%20Part%20I%20from%20the%20Woman%20on%20a%20Bridge%20series%29&page=&f=Title&object=88.3620> (accessed March 17, 2010).

whose untutored style was sometimes called “primitive.” Ringgold, however is not untutored... “I’m using whatever method I need to use,” she has commented. “It’s not that I don’t know how to do it another way.”⁶ Her “neo-primitive” style, then, might be more appropriately likened to that of other trained artists such as William H. Johnson [1901-1970], whose choice of an untutored technique has prompted critics to use this designation.⁷

Gibson then distinguishes Ringgold from modernist avant-garde masters:

Significantly, Picasso and Matisse, both of whom attempted to escape Europe’s academic beaux-arts heritage via alliances with colonized nations’ art and what were prevalently understood as its “natural” art techniques, have not been seen as “neo-primitives,” but as “avant-garde.” In choosing this style, Ringgold might be seen as following them; but as Poggioli remarked, avant-gardists are opposed “to the principle of spiritual and cultural inheritance,” and their favorite myth is “the annihilation of all the past, precedent and tradition.”⁸

Gibson concludes that Ringgold does have “...allegiances to the formal experiments and some of the cultural aspirations of the historical avant-garde. But through her feminist critique of the dominant culture and her postcolonial deconstruction of the racializing practices of the European and American avant-gardes, Ringgold moves beyond their limits.”⁹

Here is a much more comprehensive description of Ringgold’s story quilt style than appears in other book reviews:

Combining painted images, handwritten texts, and quilting techniques, Ringgold weaves together modernist painting; feminist critique; postmodernist strategies of appropriation, parody, and montage; and



Fig. 133 Horace Pippin, *Harmonizing*, 1944, oil on canvas.



Fig. 134 William H. Johnson, *Three Friends*, c. 1944-1945, serigraph on paper.

6. Faith Ringgold with Eleanor Flomenhaft, “Interviewing Faith Ringgold: A Contemporary Heroine,” in *Faith Ringgold, A Twenty-five Year Survey*, Hempstead, N.Y.: Fine Arts Museum of Long Island, 1990), 7; in Ann Gibson, “Faith Ringgold’s Picasso’s Studio,” in *Dancing at the Louvre*, ed. by Dan Cameron, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998, 69.

7. Ann Gibson, “Faith Ringgold’s Picasso’s Studio,” in *Dancing at the Louvre*, ed. by Dan Cameron, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998, 69.

8. Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, 203; in Ann Gibson, “Faith Ringgold’s Picasso’s Studio,” 69.

9. Gibson, “Faith Ringgold’s Picasso’s Studio,” 72.

personal memoir in a remarkable synthesis that takes on European modernism, African American folk art, and the “black aesthetic” of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁰

On the Metropolitan Museum website, “Modern Storytellers: Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, Faith Ringgold,” the three African American artists are linked:

[They] were well trained in art history and technique, and each assimilated historical art, modernism (European, American, and also the modernism of the Mexican muralists), African art, and craft or folk traditions in developing their own personal expressions...the formal structure carries the story: it is never secondary. These modern storytellers have realized their signature styles through nontraditional media, and all three artists use imagery that is deliberately naïve in style.¹¹

In the beginning of my interview with Ringgold, she took strong exception to the label naïve to describe her work. Later in the interview, however, in addition to crediting Lawrence as a mentor, she cited the influence of African tribal art and children’s art on her work.

In the video “The Last Story Quilt,” Ringgold says, “Children, they’re the best at art. And I taught in public school for 18½ years. I attribute a lot of my learning to paint from teaching art. Think of Marc Chagall. Think of Miró. Think of Picasso. Those people know what I’m talking about, they had obviously achieved it as mature artists – the freedom that children have in painting.”¹²

Author Lisa Farrington in her book about Ringgold writes of her impetus to tell stories: “Ringgold’s story quilts and published works have allowed the artist, in her own words, to ‘shed light on who I am as an African-American woman outside of the limitations that people’s stereotypes place on me. I don’t want to argue about it. I just want to re-tell the story.’”¹³

Phone interview with Faith Ringgold, January 5, 2010

AG (Amy Geller): Would you characterize your art as stylistically expressionist or naïve?

10. Google Books, “Book Overview,” http://books.google.com/books?id=LWXCe6iKotUC&dq=ringgold+naïve+painting&source=gbs_navlinks_s (accessed March 17, 2010).

11. Stella Paul, “Modern Storytellers: Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, Faith Ringgold,” Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/most/hd_most.htm (accessed March 17, 2010).

12. Faith Ringgold, “The Last Story Quilt, Portrait of an Artist,” VHS, created and produced by Linda Freeman, A Public Media Incorporated Release, 1991.

13. Lisa E. Farrington, *Faith Ringgold*, Petaluma, CA: Pomegranate Communications, 2004, 99.



Fig. 135 Faith Ringgold, cover, 1993, acrylic on canvas paper, *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House*.

FR (Faith Ringgold): Naïve? No. To me, naïve work is done by people who have had no training. Their work looks like it does because they don't see it any differently, or cannot manipulate it any differently than the way they have it. Now, those of us who break the rules of perspective and chiaroscuro, which is basically what I do – I make things flat when they are not and I ignore perspective because it doesn't fit in with my concept of design. That's not because I don't know how to do it like that. I don't like the way that looks. It doesn't serve me. If you notice, most black artists get rid of chiaroscuro.

AG: That's the modeling?

FR: Right. Chiaroscuro, black and white, dark shading around faces. For white people, this serves their purpose because they're light and then the shading will be darker. But when you shade a black person it loses its punch. Unless you shade them, like I do sometimes, with lighter colors. Like with a light blue, or something like that. Then the dark face with the light blue shadows is dramatic, exciting. Jacob Lawrence [1917-2000], he just makes people black black. So does Romie Beardon [1911-1988]. Not that they don't know any better – that's what they have to do in order to create art that has the kind of beautiful color that they admire and like, and want and so on. Now in children's work, that shading goes nowhere. Because children don't see that. Of course, if you ask them, which looks more natural, they'll say, the one that looks more like the photograph. But children like bright colors, they love design, fabulous composition. They're brilliant when it comes to color and composition. Of course, until about age 8, 9, 10, and then they start trying to do those photographs, trying to have the chiaroscuro and the perspective. Those are the two things that mark the work of most modern artists – Picasso, everybody, got rid of those things. But that doesn't mean I'm naïve. For most people it means uneducated, untrained. And a lot of people, when they see black images they immediately, you know that's part of their...

AG: So then what term would you use then... modernist?

FR: I would say what it is. My work is political. I would say you're going to see work that has an edge to it. I'm saying something, I'm trying to make a point. You know, I haven't looked at the people you picked. That's one of the things I do want to look at. Because there are a lot of naïve artists who are naïve artists and you can tell they're naïve artists.

AG: I picked Sue Coe, James Thurber, Maira Kalman...

FR: Sue Coe I know.

AG: People have told me her work is more expressionist than naïve. Anyway... I understand what you're saying.

FR: I'm just giving you a point of view. I haven't really talked about this with many people because not many people call me naïve. And normally when it happens I'm not in a position to say anything to them about it. But, I can tell you how I feel about it and that's why I'm telling you. Let's move on. It's not faux-naïf either, whatever that is.

AG: It means someone who is basically a modernist, like you mentioned, Matisse, Picasso. Because if you notice, a lot of illustrators don't work that way and I appreciate that look...

FR: I've noticed that... Okay, I'm not going to talk about that that much. But I know that my illustrations for my children are different from my paintings, normally. And the illustrations I do for the children are very simple. Because I'm trying to connect with them, with what they do. I'm trying to be like them. So I make it something that they like. And it's what I got from them. I know that children are wonderful artists and I've always been inspired by that. When I'm going to do a book that's for them I like to bring their way of seeing into it. And, of course, I've brought their way of seeing into my own art. But when I open up one of these books with all that shading and stuff in it for children, I say, hmm. I like beautiful color and composition, strong ways of seeing things. Now, Sue Coe I know. Haven't seen anything of hers in a little while but I'm almost positive I know her work. Let me get a look at one thing and I'll tell you right away. Sue Coe... [looks on Web] Okay, yes, she's very political. She is not naïve at all. No, she's got the full range of picture making. She's good at cartoons and making people look kind of funny. She's an animal rights activist and artist and she is a vegan also. Well, that goes in with the animal rights. Yeah, lovely work. I'm looking at a whole page of it right now. Beautiful.

AG: So I wanted to ask you, which artists and illustrators have inspired and/or influenced you?

FR: Well, I haven't been inspired by many illustrators, if any, in the strict sense of illustrator, although a lot of artists are also illustrators like me. I never even thought of illustrating anything until I did my first children's book. I did a quilt, a painting called *Tar Beach*. That was a painting first and it was bought by a woman named Judith Lieber who does these expensive, jeweled bags. She was a good friend of Bernice Steinbaum, my old dealer in the '80s. Judith Lieber came to the gallery one day and saw *Tar Beach*, my new painting for a show that was coming up in 1988. And she loved the painting and then she asked Bernice, "What can I do for Faith? Just buying the painting is nice but is there anything else I can do?" So Bernice says, "We're trying to get Faith into some important collections so why don't you donate this to a museum. How about the Guggenheim?" So Bernice came and told me about this exchange she and Judith Lieber had. I said, well, I know a lot about the Guggenheim and I know they don't have any work by any African

American women, or Americans for that matter, back then. They have collected more now. So she said, “Okay, well what can I do?” I said a letter from the director might be interesting but other than that I don’t want to hear about it. And the next thing I knew I was getting a letter in the mail from the director of the Guggenheim. They had acquired this work from Judith Lieber. And I said, oh my God.

AG: Fantastic.

FR: So I’m out in California and my phone rings and it’s the editor from Random House telling me she wants to make a children’s book out of the story that she’s reading. Bernice made posters. Big, beautiful posters and sold them and distributed them to her friends all over the city. So, they were in a lot of big offices. And you could read the text. I had started writing text on my work because I had written my autobiography and couldn’t get it published. And I wanted to do more, and more, and more, and more writing instead of stopping writing, you understand? That’s why I said I better start writing on my work, ’cause I’ve got stories to tell and these people are going to stop me from telling them. So I started writing on my art. So this woman [Andrea Cascardi, children’s editor at Random House] reads it and says this is a perfect children’s story. I say, really? I didn’t know it was a children’s story. If someone had asked me could I do a children’s book I would have said, well, I don’t know. I tried to do some things for my kids when they were little but I didn’t think they were very good.

AG: Well, she thought differently.

FR: It wasn’t the same thing. I didn’t know I was writing a children’s story. I thought I was just writing a story. Before, with my kids, I was trying to write a children’s story. With this I was just trying to write a story. And she said it was a wonderful children’s story. But I think the reason why it happened that way is because my daughter, who is a writer, Michele Wallace...

AG: What has she written?

FR: She has written the definitive text on black feminism – *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*. It was published in 1979 when she was 27. It was a little raw but it was a very important book. And she’s a professor, she’s a Ph.D. in writing. She teaches at the City University. She’s a brilliant writer. And she told me you’re writing all these stories, but, she says, you need a voice. In order to write you must have a voice. And I said, really? I said, so as an artist you need to have a vision and now I’ve got the vision and now I’ve got to have a voice too? That’s a lot. Well, she said, I’m just telling you. So, I’m thinking, that is interesting. This voice business. Okay, let me see what I can do about this voice as I write. So, I’m writing this story about myself, not necessarily about me, but childhood on tar

beach. So I'm doing this child's voice and that's exactly what you need to do when you're doing a children's story. But I didn't connect it with being a children's story. Okay, so she [Andrea Cascardi] asks would you like to illustrate a children's book? Because we have the story here but would you like to illustrate it. I said, sure, I would love to. So, I did.

AG: It's a fabulous book.

FR: It was just easy. I just backed right into it. Then after that, they suggested another one. And another one, and another one...and another one – I've done 14 books since 1990. So, that has been easy as pie. I mean I just walked into that...and, really, it came out of the rejection of my autobiography. I finally got the autobiography published in 1995. Like I said, I was not going to stop writing. Because usually when you're rejected from something people want you to just go away. But I was determined, I was not going away. Every time they looked they were going to see some writing by me. And that's the way you become a good writer anyway. You have to keep doing it, like painting or anything else. So, that's my story about the book. Get into a children's frame of mind. And I know they want to see pictures of themselves, to see stories about themselves. They love all of that. Sometimes people ask me, not too much anymore, oh you've given up painting... No, I haven't given up anything. I'm doing all of it. You can illustrate and paint pictures. But I think the art world is a little funny about that.

AG: Getting back to which artists or illustrators have inspired or influenced you?

FR: Okay, I have been primarily inspired by African art. By the shapes and repetition, the patterns of African masks and design. And before that from my studies at the City College in New York. I went to college in 1948. Back in the '40s they taught us how to copy the European masters. We learned to paint from copying Matisse, Picasso, the great masters of European art, because the center of the art world didn't come to be here until World War II when a lot of people had to leave Europe, getting away from Hitler. And a lot of those people were artists. And so they brought the art world here and inspired the Americans who were here. And now here comes Jackson Pollack and all those people doing this wonderful new work inspired by those Europeans. Okay, but now the center is in America, but most of the colleges and universities are still focused on Europe. And also they're somewhat backward in their teaching in that they're still teaching us to copy them. Which means that a lot of people who went to school with me in City College, potentially wonderful artists, didn't become artists because you have to get rid of that. You cannot copy other peoples' culture. I'm not coming from Europe, period. Anyway, I managed to get rid of that and focus my attention on African Americans, my own culture.

So, Picasso was very strong in the beginning. And then I said what am I copying him for? He was the one who got inspired by African masks. Why don't I go straight to the source? It's my source. So bam, I did. And then Jacob Lawrence, whom I never even heard of until I was out of college in 1959. They never taught me anything about him. And we're living in the same neighborhood. Jacob Lawrence, Romie Beardon, Aaron Douglas [1899-1979], those people live in my neighborhood. So what is this? I couldn't find them myself, and my teachers were not interested in parlaying that information to me. So I found those people on my own after, but they helped me to define myself. Because that's what artists need. They need to be able to see their own culture reflected in different forms of art. So, I would say Jacob Lawrence has been my greatest influence.

AG: Okay. And do you see yourself as part of a tradition or an iconoclast? As far as illustration goes.

FR: Part of a tradition. Well, I think that a lot of illustrators do work that is very simple and straight out forward.

Although I don't know very much about illustrators. The two worlds are so separate. When I go to an illustrator opening, it's so different from an art opening. And I don't know the people that well. So I can't say which ones I'm

really inspired by. I do love Dr. Seuss [1904-1991]. Fabulous. Goes straight to the point.

Oh, he's wonderful. I mean, his stuff is still out there. It's like he's still alive. He's been dead for years. As a matter of fact he gave 4 million dollars to the USCD's library when I was there and they never did anything with that. When it first happened, I had offered to teach a class in illustration. They had no classes in illustration at USCD. We have something between the changes of the quarters so I did it for that time. I did it maybe 2-3 times for that time. But there was never a full course. And there were a lot of kids who were good, who were interested.

When I think of illustrators I think of children's books, but, of course, there are other kinds of illustrators. And I've done other kinds of illustration, by the way. Children's magazines, primarily. So I guess it's more just children's illustration but I've done a few... I did a cartoon for *Nation*. It was a little bit too political. It went too far. And I said, boy, I



Fig. 136 Jacob Lawrence, *Pool Parlor*, 1942, watercolor and gouache on paper.



Fig. 137 Romare Beardon, *The Woodshed*, 1969, cut and pasted paper, cloth, and pencil on Masonite.

didn't know you could go too far with *Nation*. But they paid me.

AG: Would you characterize your work as unique when you first started illustrating?

FR: I'm not consciously trying to be unique or different. I am simply trying to make my point. In the case of children, I'm trying to make something that children will love. In the case of adults, I'm not thinking about whether they're going to love it or not. I'm thinking about whether I love it.

AG: So those story quilts that you had been doing, did those also become books?

FR: I wrote a book called *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* that's based somewhat on a quilt I'd done. *The Invisible Princess* is based on a quilt I did called *Born in the Cotton Fields* from my *American People* series. And there might be another one. But basically no. They're really two separate means of expression. My painting, and I've done sculptures too, those are adult forms of art, and the children's books are a separate entity. All of my children's books, the originals are framed, and they're crated and they go out on their own exhibitions. I don't put them together. I know some illustrators, they have it mixed and they pull them apart and do all kinds of things. I don't do that. It's really two forms of work that I do. One is very big and the other is very small.

AG: What medium do you use for your illustrations?

FR: I use acrylic on canvas paper.

AG: So it has a textured quality?

FR: Yes. It has a little texture to it. And another thing I do, which most illustrators don't do – I make all the images the size of the book page. We do the words first – that's the most challenging for me. So we work on the story and go backwards and forwards with the editing of the story. Okay, I get my story done and then they take the story and they take this 32-page dummy book and they lay the story out on the pages, where they want the words to go, and I simply go through it and illustrate those words.

AG: What's your process for coming up with ideas?

FR: I always go from my own experience. We went up on tar beach when I was a child, so I know about that kind of family experience. I'm also inspired by what's going on here in America. And so I use my own experience here as an African American person, woman. That's what I use to power my art.

AG: Well, I think you already answered this, but how did your family and life experiences influence and affect the kind of work you do?

FR: Well, my family, like most families, did not want me to be an artist. They're worried. They heard about these artists and how everything falls apart. And they knew being black

and a woman was no good. And they wanted – I come from a family of teachers – and they wanted me to do something safe, because that’s what made sense to them.

AG: And you did teach.

FR: Yes. But I got to teach because when I went to the City College of New York to apply, which is where I had planned to go for my whole life – they said I could not get a bachelor of liberal arts there because it was an all boys school. I lived very close to there. I figured I’d just walk down the street and I’d be at school. Plus I loved the place. I used to see the boys come up out of the subway at 145th Street, climbing up that hill and going down to the City College. And I asked my mother, where are they going? And she said they’re going to the City College. And I said, hm, when I grow up I want to go there. Cause I’d always been told as a child I was going to go to college when I grew up. So here I am now, I’m out of high school at 17 and the college I’m going to is the City College, but now I find out I can’t get my BA. So I was very upset. They said I could go to Hunter and I said no. I don’t want to go to Hunter, or Brooklyn – I want to go to the City College, right here. So they say, if you want to major in art – because you want to be an artist, right? – well ,why don’t you major in art, minor in education and then we can give you a BS. Really? Yes, and you can teach art *and* you can be an artist. My family will like that. So I went home and told my mother and she still wasn’t crazy about the art part, although she’s an artist! She went to FIT! I was going to do it anyway. I said, you can’t live my life for me. I’m going to be an artist and that’s it. I’m not going to be one of these kids who get a degree in something else for their parents. So I had their encouragement because all my life as a child my mother bought me crayons and paints and paper, gave me the time and place to create art. And I had art in school in those days. And I had asthma, and I was often at home doing my art. So I had art all through my life. And definitely it was inspired by them but they did not think it was serious until I came up with, “I’m going to college to be an artist.”

AG: Yeah, that does take a lot of courage ’cause you want to be practical.

FR: Well, you know, you don’t want your kid to be rejected. That total and complete rejection. What is the possibility that this will work? Zero. Especially then. So no, I understand exactly what they’re talking about. But I was determined. And that’s what it takes. It takes an all-fire determination to prevail. And a lot of hard work. Unending. And then there’s no happier feeling than being able to achieve your dream.

AG: And you knew what you wanted so young.

FR: But, you know, I’d been doing it all my life. And in school I was always the class artist. I was the one who did the mural and I was the one who was called upon if there was some

special art project to do. So I had that. I had all the encouragement but, still, that didn't mean...a lot of people go to art school but they don't become artists. Even get a degree in art and still don't become artists. It's a very difficult field and most people don't prevail. It's very sexist and racist. Highly, perversely. And that's enough to turn even the strongest person away. Very, very, very, very difficult in those ways and every other way.

Phone interview with Andrea Cascardi, February 18, 2010

AG (Amy Geller): What appealed to you when you saw Faith's story quilt, *Tar Beach*?

AC (Andrea Cascardi): Actually, what I saw was an incredible story woven in with art that dealt with a subject that has been written about a lot but in a very different way. I was approaching it not only from the art but also the story.

AG: Right, right. Do you see her as part of a tradition or an iconoclast?

AC: Well, in a way she's both. I mean she took something from the tradition of African American history and did something completely different with it that nobody had done before. She took the slave tradition – that's what an iconoclast does, takes something in a completely different direction in the sense that she just didn't invent it from nothing. In a sense she's not a true iconoclast because she acknowledges what came before her.

AG: As an illustrator, was her work unusual – different from other children's books?

AC: Yes. It was very different because she didn't come into the publishing end of things from the straight illustration training, learning how to make a book. She came as a fine artist. It looked completely different. And that was one of the things that attracted me. I'd never seen art like that before. And yet it seemed quite well-suited for children's books. People have come into children's books from fine art but there's usually a, for lack of a better word, grandiose perspective on it. There was always a more painterly, sophisticated style to it that, to me, often was a little bit cold. But I think that very few people at the time were coming in from other ends of the art world. An exception to that would be David McCall, who came from architecture. Faith just came with something completely different than I had been seeing in children's art. And what I said was, I'd love her to do a children's book; it wasn't that she was trying to create a children's book. So, I think we were all sort of conscious of trying to pull people in from different avenues to enliven the industry and to find people who would bring a fresh perspective and she was just somebody who was perfectly suited to it.

AG: Oh, definitely. Well, this question you already answered – would you characterize her work as unique when she first arrived on the scene?

AC: Yes, definitely.

AG: So, did you ever suggest an idea or did she come up with them, solely?

AC: We did suggest ideas, but it was based on her original work. So we suggested other stories about Cassie, for example. But not, why don't you try a book about this or about that.

AG: How did her family and life experiences influence/affect the kind of work she did?

AC: Again, I'm not the person to speak about that. I mean I think her coming out of the African American culture greatly affected it and specifically effected *Tar Beach* because it's a story that takes a lot of elements from places she lived and her childhood but melds them with fantasy. But beyond that I think she used the things that she's interested in in the world around her, uses her own story and her family's stories and incorporates them into her work. That would be one way, I guess.

AG: This is another question – how did you initially come across the story quilt, *Tar Beach*?

AC: I actually saw a poster of it in the office I worked for, Crown Publishers. The editors on the children's end of the business and the adult end of the business were side by side and one of the other editors who worked on the art books and the lifestyle books had the poster in her office and I just went, "Oh my God, that's amazing – I'd love to make that into a book." It was really serendipitous.

AG: What did you see in her work that made you think it would be a good children's book?

AC: Well, first of all it had a children's character. And it had a story. And it had a very strong image that clearly could stand out among the competition and it had an indefinable quality that I would say just pulled me in. In a way I felt very compelled by it. The question was, could she develop more images other than the one central image and not just repeat it. So, that is always the question with anybody, as an artist can they...the difference between single image art and art for a book is that the character has to be the same but progress through 32 pages. And the artist has to be able to develop that character but not change the character. And so those were the initial discussions we had with Faith, what it takes to make a book and how Cassie could not just be that central image with the story around it like she'd done on the quilt. We used the exact text, or very close to it, but she had to develop more images to tell the story visually.

AG: Was there a lot of back and forth or was it resolved pretty quickly?

AC: In the early stages it was a process; there was back and forth. We went to her studio, she sent stuff to us. At a certain point she took it back and just did it.

Chapter 6

Maira Kalman

Maira Kalman, neé Berman (b. 1949) was born in Tel Aviv, Israel, to parents who had emigrated there from Russia in 1933. In 1954, at age four, she and her family moved to Riverdale, New York in the Bronx. Of her upbringing, Kalman said at a lecture at the New York Public Library’s Celeste Bartos Forum, May 2001, “I had piano lessons, and I had ballet lessons, and lessons, lessons, and more lessons. We were a very cultured family.” She attended the High School of Music and Art for music where, in an interview, Kalman said she learned “that an artist is a real thing to be.”¹ She entered New York University in 1967 where she majored in English and, she says, wrote “bad poetry.”² There she met future husband Tibor Kalman (1949-1999), who was studying journalism and history and was, as Kalman said at a TED Conference presentation, “trying to blow up the math building.”³

After Maira graduated she abandoned writing and did production work at *National Lampoon* magazine. While there she “provided her wandering mind with an outlet in the form of small, childlike ink drawings.”⁴ Together Tibor and Maira founded M&Co design studio



Fig. 140 Maira Kalman, cover, November 5, 2000, gouache, *The New York Times Style* magazine.

in 1979 (the “M” stands for Maira). They married in 1981 and had two children, Lulu and Alexander. Tibor Kalman died of cancer in 1999. In an obituary that appeared in *The Guardian*, Mark Porter writes of Tibor’s legacy: “The work of Tibor Kalman blurred the boundaries between design, journalism, art and politics, but, above all, he trusted the power of the image. He had a vast impact on a generation of designers.



Fig. 138 Maira Kalman, “Misery Day Parade,” December 10, 2001, gouache, cover, *The New Yorker* magazine.



Fig. 139 Maira Kalman and Rick Meyerowitz, “NewYorkistan,” December 10, 2001, medium unknown, cover, *The New Yorker* magazine.



Fig. 141 Maira Kalman, watch face design for M&Co.

1. Eleanor Traubman, “Maira Kalman, Creative Heroine,” Creative Times Blog, entry posted July 25, 2008, <http://creativetimes.blogspot.com/2008/07/maira-kalman-creative-heroine.html> (accessed March 20, 2010).

2. TED Conference, “Maira Kalman, The Illustrated Woman,” TED Conference, filmed March 2007, posted October 2007, http://www.ted.com/talks/maira_kalman_the_illustrated_woman.html (accessed March 20, 2010).

3. Ibid.

4. Tibor Kalman, Peter Hall, Michael Beirut, eds., *Tibor Kalman: Perverse Optimist*, New York, N.Y.: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998, 160.

His work also generated mainstream controversy.”⁵

Maira Kalman has written and illustrated over 12 children’s books, illustrated numerous *New Yorker* articles and covers including “New Yorkistan” (conceived with Rick Meyerowitz (b. 1943), post 9/11), and a cover for *The New York Times Style* magazine (see Figures 138 and 139). She has designed sets for choreographer Mark Morris’ “Four Saints, Three Acts” by Gertrude Stein, created murals for Grand Central Station while it was being restored, created illustrations for bags and other accessories for Kate Spade (see Figure 142), and designed fabrics for Isaac Mizrahi, among other projects. She teaches graduate courses on design at the School of Visual Arts. She has been represented by the Julie Saul Gallery in New York since 2003 and, to date, has had four shows there. The gallery website states, Kalman “has worked as a designer, author, illustrator and artist for more than thirty years without formal training. Her work is a narrative journal of her life and all its absurdities.”⁶ Kalman was elected to the Art Directors Club Hall of Fame in 2008.



Fig. 142 Maira Kalman, bag illustration for Kate Spade.



Fig. 143 Maira Kalman, “Three Big Songs,” 1981, medium unknown, David Byrne EP album cover.

In 1981, in a meeting with David Byrne (b. 1952), lead singer and primary composer for the Talking Heads, to discuss a cover for the solo EP *Three Big Songs*, Tibor Kalman suggested that Maira Kalman’s doodles be used. Byrne recalls, “He [Tibor Kalman]

presented them as if they were sketches...Of course, we both realized he was saying they were the finished art.”⁷ (See Figure 143.)

For Maira Kalman’s first children’s book *Stay Up Late* (1985), she illustrated the lyrics of the song by that name from the Talking Heads *Little Creatures* album. Of the book, Maira Kalman says,

I was painting before then but Tibor had the idea that I should collaborate on a book with David Byrne. People in our age group were just beginning to have kids – we’d had a really



Fig. 144 Maira Kalman, cover, 1985, gouache on paper, *Stay Up Late*.

5. Mark Porter, “Tibor Kalman: Bold images that blurred design, journalism, art and politics,” *The Guardian*, May 7, 1999, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/1999/may/07/guardianobituaries.markporter> (accessed March 20, 2010).

6. Julie Saul Gallery statement, “Maira Kalman,” Julie Saul Gallery, <http://www.saulgallery.com/kalman/statement.html> (accessed March 20, 2010).

7. Tibor Kalman, Peter Hall, Michael Beirut, eds., *Tibor Kalman: Perverse Optimist*, New York, N.Y.: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998, 160.

belated adolescence right into our thirties. I wanted to create books that were interesting for both adults and children. Books that were eccentric and full of humor and showed the world as I saw it: a kind of divine madness.⁸

Tibor Kalman also describes the process:

Collaborating with Maira, she would write the text and start to sketch, and I would sketch type over her pencil drawings.... We'd go back and forth, and she'd have to cut copy or I'd say, this type could go here and it'd be nice if this character could raise their arms so we could tuck the type in their armpit. It was a completely integrated process, and there was a lot of trust. We would not use the computer until the production stage because we develop an idea and then use whatever production tool is most appropriate...it was Byrne's name which helped get it published. After that Maira was able to do all these other projects that were much further out.⁹

Of *Stay Up Late*, Steven Heller, in the preface to an interview with Kalman in 2003 for the British magazine *Eye*, notes, the "...array of colourful primitive-looking characters and expressive type treatment designed by M&Co."¹⁰ Of *Hey Willy, See the Pyramids*, Kalman's second children's book which she both authored and illustrated, Heller writes:

The sarcastic wit, absurd non-sequiturs and eclectic diversions, not to mention the naïve drawing and painting style of this and later books, particularly appealed to the ageing baby-boomer's 'inner child.' Maira helped found a new genre of picture books that employed kinetic type composition as an expressive means of marrying word and image.¹¹



Fig. 145 Maira Kalman, interior illustration, 1988, gouache, *Hey Willy, See the Pyramids*.

Kalman is the one illustrator I interviewed who didn't take offense to the term "naïve" to describe her illustration style. In interviews, reviews and critiques, both print and online, writers feel free to describe her work as naïve, primitive, childlike. Some writers take note that there are varying kinds of naïveté in her work dependent on whether she's painting from memory or imagination, from life or from photographs, but mostly the writers stay clear of any analysis of her style and adopt a light, breezy tone in keeping with Kalman's own writing style.

8. Liz Farrelly, *Tibor Kalman Design and Undesign*, New York, N.Y.: Watson-Guption Publications, 1998, 22.

9. *Ibid.*, 22.

10. Steven Heller, "Maira Kalman, The Surviving Spirit of M&Co.," *Eye*, Issue 47, Spring 2003, <http://www.eyemagazine.com/backissues.php?start=24>.

11. *Ibid.*

Heller McAlpin, in his review of *The Principles of Uncertainty* for the *Los Angeles Times*, is an exception:

Her paintbrush reveals as much agility as her mind, ranging from the flattened, childlike primitives of her dozen children's books to Matissean pink-infused still lifes and penetrating portraiture. Her draftsmanship is remarkable; she captures architectural interiors with the panache of a set designer.¹²

Whereas in Maira's first books the drawing style was consistently naïve, over the years Maira has incorporated a combination of straight-out naïve and photograph-based illustrations. Her color sense was always sophisticated but it has become even more so.

Children's books by Kalman, in addition to the ones already cited, include: *Sayonara, Mrs. Kackelman* (1989), *Max Makes a Million* (1990), *Roar!*, *Calder's Circus* (1991), *Ooh-la-la, Max in Love* (1991), *Max in Hollywood, Baby* (1992), *Chicken Soup, Boots* (1993), *Swami on Rye: Max in India* (1995), *Max Deluxe* (1996), *Next Stop, Grand Central* (1999), *What Pete Ate From A to Z* (2001), *Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey* (2002), and *Smartypants (Pete in School)* (2003).

Ooh-la-la (Max in Love) was chosen as one of *The New York Times'* ten best illustrated children's books for 1991 and *Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey* was the 2003 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award winner for children's non-fiction. Heller writes of *Fireboat*, "the decommissioned boat that fought fires at Ground Zero after 9/11, reveals a growing interest in fusing real life and art into an entertaining, though poignant form of social commentary."¹³

In an interview for *Paper* magazine, David Hershkovits asks Kalman, "Early in your adult life, around 1969, you decided you didn't want to write anymore, you wanted to draw," and Kalman responds,

I didn't know that I could draw, but I had that combo of naïve optimism and terror, and a very short attention span, not wanting to learn anything. I thought, 'I've been around art, I can do this; I can draw.' My sister is a painter. I went to the High School of Music and Art for music, so it wasn't some alien occupation to me.¹⁴

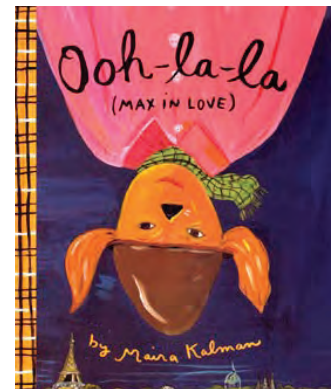


Fig. 146 Maira Kalman, cover, 1994, gouache, *Ooh-la-la (Max in Love)*.

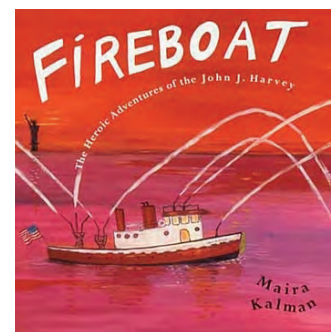


Fig. 147 Maira Kalman, cover, 2002, gouache, *Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey*.

12. Heller McAlpin, "A Year in the Life," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 2007, <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/oct/28/books/bk-mcalpin28> (accessed March 5, 2010).

13. Heller, "Maira Kalman, The Surviving Spirit of M&Co."

14. David Hershkovits, "Guru, Maira Kalman," *Paper*, Spring 2010, Volume 25, No. 5, 59.

Of the impetus to do children's books Kalman says,

So I was able to do really idiotic stories, about my family, and about my cousin Ervin, who has a green face, and about his mother, who has small ears but hears everything. And what started developing was that I was able to take the surreal and the absurd moments that happened to me in my life and put them in my stories. I didn't have to have a real plot. I despise plots. I was able to look at my life and say, Okay, what's making me laugh? What's really fantastic? How can I just present this without trying to make it fit for a child?¹⁵

In a rare departure from the usual critical acclaim for Kalman's books, Ariel Levy, contributing editor at *New York Magazine* and author, writes how Kalman's books "...have been criticized over the years. Irked reviewers and baffled kids have found them too hip and worldly-wise for humans too young to grasp a reference to, say, Swiftly Lazar."¹⁶

In an article titled "Guileless and Gutsy" that appeared in the October 2009 issue of *Artist's Magazine*, Kalman shares her process: "I wake up and, from the very first minute, I'm writing down my dreams, thoughts or sentences or images or fragments of images. The day continues like that...I'm really just accumulating this scrapbook of the week – all the ephemera of the week."¹⁷

In an interview in the October 2005 issue of *W* magazine, Kalman describes what she likes about being an illustrator (as opposed to an artist): "Wonderful illustration tells a story and makes you think about things...Artists usually take themselves more seriously. You're allowed to be more of a jerk when you're an illustrator – 'I'm an illustrator! I didn't know any better!'"¹⁸

In 2005, a new release of *The Elements of Style* with illustrations by Kalman was published. An article in *W* magazine describes how Kalman came across the famous writing manual, first written by William Strunk, Jr. in 1918 and updated by E. B. White in 1959, and chose to illustrate it. "Kalman, who had never used it in school herself, says that she plunked herself down and read it almost cover to cover. She was immediately taken not only by the book's sage rules



Fig. 148 Maira Kalman, "Somebody else's umbrella," 2005, gouache, interior illustration, *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White.

15. Maira Kalman, "How to Conquer Stupidity," slideshow, *The New Yorker*, 2002?, from lecture at the New York Public Library's Celeste Bartos Forum Public Education Program, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2001/05/07/slideshow_010506#slide=1 (accessed March 5, 2010).

16. Ariel Levy, "Painted Whimsies," *The New York Times*, February 17, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/17/books/review/Levy-t.html> (accessed March 5, 2010).

17. Holly Davis, "Guileless and Gutsy," *The Artist's Magazine*, October 2009, 40.

18. Catherine Hong, "Mad About Maira," *W*, October 2005, http://www.wmagazine.com/artdesign/archive/maira_kalman.

nebbish, a noodle, a fool. And now you're Mr. Big Time with you own private pool. No order too tall, no excess that can vex us. We'll treat you like a king, as long as you're a winnah. But if your flick's a flop you'll be whistling for your dinnah.²³

Levy, in a mixed review of *The Principles of Uncertainty*, writes, "There's a fine line between celebrating loveliness and commodity fetishism, but Kalman's tastes are eclectic — she is as entranced by old sponges as by the tassels on Parisian drapes." And on Kalman's upbeat take on life:

All this whimsy rings a bit Hallmark-ian at times... But then no one is saying you have to eat this whole bag of jellybeans in one sitting. Consume one here, one there, bypass the sickly-sweet ones, and the pages of this book add up to the kind of thing Kalman likes so much to paint: an odd treasure.²⁴

The Pursuit of Happiness, Kalman's second online column for the *Times*, ran from 2008-2009 and the book based on the column is scheduled to be published Fall 2010. Asked what prompted Kalman to do the column, she says, "When Obama was elected, it seemed like there was a new world greeting us, and it was something that was compelling, so I thought I would do something that I never had any interest in before: politics and government and history."²⁵ And in an interview for *Paper*, Kalman comments on the change of focus – at the time, she thought, "there is no way I want to come back and talk about myself anymore, that would be horrifying."²⁶

A retrospective of Kalman's work, *Various Illuminations (of a Crazy World)*, is currently on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (January 15–June 6, 2010). The exhibit will travel to the Contemporary Jewish Museum,



Fig. 150 Maira Kalman, "The Watermelon Man Still Sells Watermelons from his Cart," 2007, gouache, *The Principles of Uncertainty*.

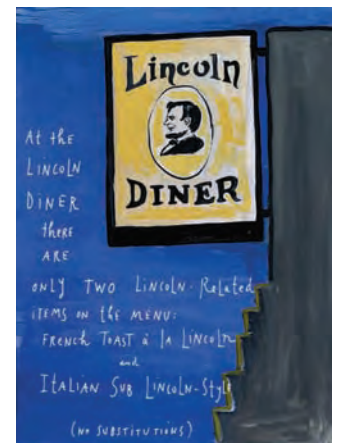


Fig. 151 Maira Kalman, "Lincoln Diner," February 26, 2009, gouache, *New York Times* Select website.

23. Maira Kalman, *Max in Hollywood, Baby*, New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1992.

24. Levy, "Painted Whimsies."

25. Kevin Nguyen, "The Life Pursuit: An Interview with Maira Kalman," *The Bygone Bureau, Journal of Modern Thought*, September 7, 2009, <http://bygonebureau.com/2009/09/07/the-life-pursuit-an-interview-with-maira-kalman/> (accessed March 5, 2010).

26. Hershkovits, "Guru, Maira Kalman."

San Francisco (July 1–October 26, 2010); the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles (November 16, 2010–February 13, 2011); and to The Jewish Museum, New York (March 11–July 31, 2011).

Maira Kalman’s responses to questionnaire via e-mail, November 10, 2009

AG (Amy Geller): Would you characterize your art as stylistically naïve or faux-naïf?

MK (Maira Kalman): I am a mix of naïve and alert. Having not trained as an artist, I have relied on a mishmash of styles. But I do respond to the person who does not rely on technique.

AG: Which artists/illustrators have inspired and/or influenced you?

MK: Matisse. Charlotte Salomon [1917-1943]. Ludwig Bemelmans [1898-1962]. Duchamp [Marcel Duchamp, 1887-1968].

AG: Do you see yourself as a part of a tradition or an iconoclast?

MK: I don’t see myself as anything. I just try to tell my story in a combination of writing and painting, which has been done many times before.

AG: Would you characterize your work as unique when you first arrived on the scene?

MK: I was lucky to begin working during a time when illustration started breaking out of more classic boundaries. New wave and punk allowed a freedom and experimentation in the work. Typography was also a tool that became fun to play with. So I was part of a new group of lyrical illustrators, with a sense of humor.

AG: Please describe your process for coming up with ideas.

MK: There is no one process for coming up with ideas. I walk around with a camera and a sketchbook and I take a lot of walks, and look at people. I read a lot and listen to music and watch movies and go to operas. I go to sleep and dream. I read the obituaries. Somewhere in between all of those activities, ideas arrive.

AG: How did your family and life experiences influence/affect the kind of work you do?

MK: The people in my family were a bit eccentric and funny. We traveled a lot. The family is close-knit and there are many stories told about relatives crazy and not crazy. My work tells their story.

AG: Is there anything more you would like to add?

MK: Assignments and deadlines are very inspiring. Given a subject, it is interesting to look at it and try to tell the story in a not-boring way. I like this kind of visual journalism. It has



Fig. 152 Ludwig Bemelmans (1898-1962), cover, 1939, medium unknown, *Madeline*.

a fast tempo and allows emotions to fill in the gaps.

Maira Kalman's responses to follow-up questions, November 12, 2009

AG: Re influences: I definitely see Charlotte Salomon as an influence.

I saw the show of her work at the Jewish Museum in 2001. Such beautiful work and so unbearably sad how her life ended. Were you aware of her work before that show? I also see Matisse and Bemelmans as influences. Less obvious is Duchamp. Perhaps a certain insouciance? How would you say he influenced you?

MK: Yes, I knew and loved Charlotte Salomon's work before that. But seeing the show with all the work on the walls was epic for me. Completely epic. (I am going to have a retrospective that begins in the Philadelphia ICA and ends up at the Jewish Museum in NYC, occupying the same rooms that Charlotte had.) About Duchamp. The influence is about the question – what is art and what is not. Where is the intersection of personal fleeting moments in a life and documenting those moments. The questioning of everything. The answers with a particular humor.

AG: Who are some of the other lyrical artists in the new group you mention?

MK: Henrik Drescher [b. 1955]. Sue Coe.

AG: Did you meet with any resistance from editors or was your illustration style well received from the beginning?

MK: There was definitely interest, but a questioning of how it could be used. Most editors responded to the narrative and humor in a very good way. It just took some time before I started getting work. But that is to be expected.

AG: How did you meet David Byrne and come to collaborate with him on your first book?

MK: My husband had founded a design studio, M&Co. The Talking Heads were clients (record covers, posters, etc. Their album *Little Creatures* had just come out. *Stay Up Late* felt like a natural way to make a transition to a bigger project with someone whose name would get me a book contract.

AG: Were you influenced by outsider artists like Howard Finster, to name one?

MK: I became familiar with him through the Talking Heads, but he was not such a strong influence.



Fig. 153 Charlotte Salomon, untitled, 1936-1938, gouache, from "Life? or Theatre?"



Fig. 154 Henrik Drescher, cover, 1983, medium unknown, *Simon's Book*.

AG: Has your illustration been compared to children's art?

MK: No. Not really. It is always considered the work of an adult looking at things askew.

AG: I detect two-three subtly distinct styles in your work – those based on photographs, those based on your sketches and, I guess, a third, those from your imagination/memory. Do you agree?

MK: Yes. And there is a fourth, I think. A combination of all of those. Taking bits and pieces from photographs, dreams, encounters, sketches, etc.

AG: I would characterize your work as upbeat, cynical-free, which is very refreshing. Do you agree?

MK: Yes, I cannot help it. An optimist with a sprinkling of despair, of course.

AG: In your last book, *Principles of Uncertainty*, there is a more mournful sensibility that comes through, dealing as you are with the aftermath of your mother's death, which I found very touching. Can you describe your philosophical outlook a bit?

MK: I do float between joy and despair. That must be everyone's lot. The idea that death will overtake us is too impossible to handle. Grief is impossible to handle. Loneliness is impossible to handle. But I believe that NOT thinking and just working is the answer to many unanswerable questions.

AG: Do you share an affinity with any of the other illustrators in my thesis?

MK: I feel an affinity with Roz Chast and Sue Coe. The angst/humor combination.

Chapter 7

Sue Coe

Sue Coe (b. 1951) was born to a working-class family in Tamworth, England, near Birmingham. Her family relocated a few days after her birth to a working class neighborhood in south London. From 1960 to 1967 her family lived in the London suburb Hershman and, later, Walton on Thames. She studied commercial art and illustration for a year at the Guildford School of Art, and received a BA at the Chelsea College of Art and Design, London (1968-1970), and an MA at the Royal College of Art (RCA), London (1970-1973). She moved to New York in 1972. Immediately upon her arrival she started doing editorial illustrations for *The New York Times* Op-Ed section. She has contributed illustrations to many publications, including newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Village Voice*, and magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, *Esquire*, *Time* and *Newsweek*. She taught at the School of Visual Arts until 1978. Her work has appeared in European and American illustration annuals. She has also published five books and is represented by Galerie St. Etienne in New York. Her work has been exhibited in museums, galleries, and colleges throughout the United States and abroad and is in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 1994 the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C. mounted the retrospective *Directions*. Coe moved from New York City to upstate New York in 2001.

In an interview in 1983, Coe, when asked by curator Sally Baker why she came to the United States, replied,

I came to America because after working through magazines in England since the age of sixteen, the sources were drying up fast, and all the publications were slowly being bought up by American companies. *Nova* [a British magazine] went out of business, and I wanted to continue working and having my drawings published, so I decided I'd try New York.¹

In the same interview, Coe says that by 1983 95 percent of her work was not



Fig. 155 Sue Coe, “Doctors Kill and Maim Patients,” 1986, pencil, *The New York Times* Op-Ed. Op-Ed art director Jerelle Kraus notes of this piece, “She [Coe] delivered her irony this time with a rare humorous approach.”

1. Sally Baker, ed., *British Artists in New York: Richard Ballard, Sue Coe, Garth Evans, Richard Kidd, Graham Nickson, Hugh O'Donnell*, exhibition catalog, Newhouse Gallery, Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Staten Island, 1983, 8.



Fig. 156 Francisco Goya, *The Shootings of May 3, 1808 in Madrid*, 1814, oil on canvas.



Fig. 157 Kathe Kollwitz, *Poverty*, 1893, etching and drypoint.

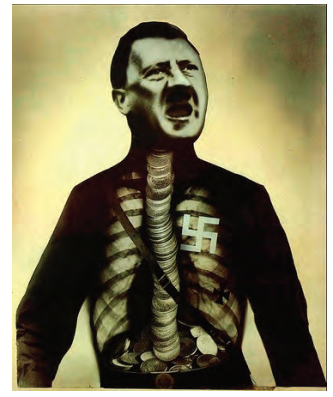


Fig. 158 John Heartfield (1891-1968), *Adolph the Superman*, 1932, collage.

commissioned. “I finish a current series of work, find a journalist who is interested in the subject, and then get it published.”²

Many sources cite the influence on Coe’s work, for both style and content, of German Expressionists Grosz, Dix, John Heartfield (1891-1968), Spanish painter Francisco Goya (1746-1828) and German painter, printmaker and sculptor Kathe Kollwitz (1867-1945).

Steven Heller, *New York Times* Op-Ed art director from 1974-1976, was the first to hire Coe in 1972. In an interview with her in 1987 Heller asks Coe, “Where did this work stylistically come from?” She replies,

People have said David Hockney or George Grosz or Richard Lindner. But I don’t think so – all German Expressionism and Soviet art have influenced me, and most especially Goya and Kathe Kollwitz. My roots basically go to the tradition of caricature in England and to black-and-white illustration of the *London Illustrated News*. And, of course, all the people who taught me filtered through.³ (See Figures 156-160.)

In an article for *Eye* magazine (summer 1996), Heller names two RCA teachers – “exemplars of art brut” – Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005) and Peter Blake, and former RCA students, David Hockney (b. 1937) and R. B. Kitaj (1932-2007) as mentors for Coe and fellow RCA students Stewart Mackinnon, Terry Dowling, and the Quay Brothers. Heller



Fig. 159 Eduardo Paolozzi, *BUNK!*, 1971, screenprint.



Fig. 160 David Hockney, *A Rake’s Progress: The Arrival*, 1961, plate 1 from portfolio, etching.

2. Ibid., 8.

3. Steven Heller, *Innovators of American Illustration*, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1986, 215.



Fig. 161 Richard Lindner, *On*, 1968, lithograph.



Fig. 162 Sue Coe, "Recruiting Mercenaries," 1976, tempera on board, *Weekend* magazine.



Fig. 163 Sue Coe, interior illustration, detail, 1986, medium unknown, *X*.

quotes Coe on Hockney's *Rake's Progress*: "His draftsmanship was very working-class... It wasn't just a few abstract smears that middle-class people could get away with. It was so laboured over, it was inherent there was some content."⁴

Heller goes on to describe Coe's "early editorial illustrations as a cross between

Georg Grosz and Richard Lindner [1901-1978]" and continues, though "American art directors appreciated her raw style," they found "her solutions were often too conceptually complex for the editorial problems at hand."⁵

Coe's work is motivated by outrage and ranges in subject matter from a pictorial biography of Malcolm X to graphic illustrations depicting mistreatment of animals in scientific experiments and the food industry.

On Grove Art Online her work is described as "using an exaggerated, sometimes caricatured realism."⁶



Fig. 164 Sue Coe, "El Salvador," August 1981, colored pencil and watercolor, *Redaktion Pardon*.



Fig. 165 Sue Coe, "The State of the Union 1980," August 1980, collage and oils, *Esquire* magazine.

4. Steven Heller, "Sue Coe: Eyewitness," *Eye*, Issue 21, Summer 1997, <http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature.php?id=28&fid=244> (accessed March 5, 2010).

5. *Ibid.*

6. Grove Art Online, 2009 Oxford University Press, "About the Artist," Museum of Modern Art, http://www.moma.org/collection/artist.php?artist_id=1170 (accessed March 5, 2010).

In a *New York Times* review of Coe's first show in 1985 at the East Village P.P.O.W Gallery, art critic Michael Brenson writes,

The sense of black and white, good and evil, blessed and damned is as emphatic as it is in doctrinaire and religious art. The 'bad' – Ronald Reagan, the State, Capitalism – are grotesquely evil. Their victims are martyred and angelic... Her mixed-media works on paper and canvas are filled with black-and-white contrasts, abruptly shifting perspectives and human and spatial dislocations. The nearly naturalistic is juxtaposed with the satirical... Coe's subjects include police brutality, exploitation by landlords, teen-age prostitution, capital punishment, vivisection, violence in Northern Ireland, apartheid, the Central Intelligence Agency and the nuclear arms industry.⁷

A year later, in a review of a show at P.S.1 of illustrations from the book *X*, Brenson, though still impatient with the unnuanced content, finds, "Coe is one of the most inventive and gifted graphic artists around."⁸

Marshall Arisman in the foreword to *Paintings and Drawings by Sue Coe* (1985) objects to pigeonholing Coe "as a radical political artist," and writes:

Sue Coe paints what she sees and attempts to put it on canvas with the feeling that the seeing evokes. She is convinced, as I am, that the emotion is recognized by the viewer... This is not art that embraces the cult of the individual. It is, in fact, in direct opposition to that prevailing concept. Sue Coe paints to share experiences she knows are as personal to the viewer as they are to her... I believe that what Sue Coe is doing with her talent is pursuing a spiritual quest. That process has little to do with politics.⁹

RAW, an alternative comics magazine published from 1980 to 1991 and founded by Françoise Mouly (b. 1955), art director at *The New Yorker* magazine since 1993, and Art Spiegelman (b. 1948), comics artist and author of



Fig. 166 Sue Coe, cover, 1984, mixed media, *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*.



Fig. 167 Sue Coe, interior illustration, 1984, medium unknown, *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*.

7. Michael Brenson, "East Village Galleries; Art of Protest Attempts to Shock and Mobilize," *The New York Times*, April 19, 1985, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/19/arts/east-village-galleries-art-of-protest-attempts-to-shock-and-mobilize.html?&pagewanted=print> (accessed March 22, 2010).

8. Michael Brenson, review Malcolm X exhibition at P.S. 1, *The New York Times*, November 14, 1986, <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/11/14/arts/art-john-mccracken-20-years-of-sculpture.html?&pagewanted=print> (accessed March 22, 2010).

9. Jacqueline Morreau, ed., *Paintings and Drawings by Sue Coe*, foreword by Marshall Arisman and introduction by Russell Mills, Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1985, vii.

Maus, published Coe’s first two illustrated books under the imprimatur Raw Books One-Shots. The first book, *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa* (1983) with text by Holly Metz, became a key source used by anti-apartheid forces to spur governments to divest from South African business stocks. The title refers ironically to South Africa’s practice of shifting blame for prison deaths to the victims. The second book, *X* (1986), with text by Coe, Spiegelman and Judith Moore, combines images of capitalist, racist and sexist outrages with biographical material on the hounding of Malcolm X by the FBI and his assassination.

Heller in his article for *Eye*, cites Coe’s adoption of more compassionate elements in her work and Spiegelman’s criticism of it:

With *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, she [Coe] recalls that editors Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly convinced her that the humanist pictures were unnecessary. “That wouldn’t happen now, I am much more self-assured,” she insists. Spiegelman, however, describes Coe’s humanistic pictures as “the Keane eyes problem,” referring to the schmaltzy 1950s painter of doe-eyed children. “Sue does not want to be admired only in her negativity,” he says. “So she comes up with the soulful victim infused with all the warmth she can muster. The fact is, she’s better fighting against sentimentality; when you deal with the angry stuff, the honest sentiment comes out.”¹⁰



Fig. 168 Sue Coe, interior illustration spread, 1986, mixed media, *X*.



Fig. 169 Georg Grosz, cover, 1921, lithograph, *Die Räuber*.

10. Heller, “Sue Coe: Eyewitness.”

Police State (1987), an exhibition catalog for a show at the Anderson Gallery at the Virginia Commonwealth University, features Coe's editorial work for publications with text by Coe's sister, Mandy Coe, and essays by art critic Donald Kuspit (b. 1935) and curator Marilyn A. Zeitlin.

Kuspit writes,

The abysmal abstract blackness of her space, and the way her scenes tend to exist as snatches of representation which seem about to sink into the blackness as if into quicksand – a slime of nightmarish hallucinations which floats to the surface of the Styx of the personal and collective unconscious – convey the visionary substance of Coe's works. Like the German Expressionists, and such Dadaist/Neue Sachlichkeit artists as George Grosz, Coe's dark vision is grounded in her obsession with social misery... Coe's pictures spew black bile and spit blood in an Expressionist scream of agony and anger. Brechtian in their didacticism – their repetitive hammering home of certain themes... [but] it is their images of inconsolable suffering which in the end seems most significant, both as art and as social truth.¹¹

In 2001, Susan Vaughn, special to the *Los Angeles Times*, writes, "Her [Coe's] subject matter is ugly: war, rape, homelessness, hunger, AIDS, apartheid and animal abuse. But her images often are hauntingly beautiful."¹² Vaughn continues,

By the mid-1980s, Coe had turned her attention to the plight of animals, particularly those killed for human consumption. For six years, Coe researched the subject and visited slaughterhouses and hatcheries throughout the United States. She said she saw cows and sheep languishing on hooks, de-beakings, dismemberments and live chicks plowed into the ground as fertilizer.¹³

This project culminated in the exhibit *Porkopolis* (1989) followed by the book *Dead Meat* (1996).

In an autobiographical essay which appears in *Dead Meat*, Coe describes her grim



Fig. 170 Sue Coe, "My Mother and I Watched a Pig Escape from a Slaughterhouse," 2004, medium unknown, *The New Yorker* magazine, November 9, 2009.

11. Sue Coe, *Police State*, text by Mandy Coe, essays by Donald Kuspit and Marilyn Zeitlin, exhibition catalog, Richmond, VA: Anderson Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1987, x.

12. Susan Vaughn, "Staying True to a Unique Vision of Art," *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 2001, Graphic Witness, <http://www.graphicwitness.org/coe/latimes.htm> (accessed March 5, 2010).

13. *Ibid.*



Fig. 171 Sue Coe, interior illustration, 2000, medium unknown, *Pit's Letter*.



Fig. 172 Sue Coe, interior illustration, 2000, medium unknown, *Pit's Letter*.



Fig. 173 Sue Coe, interior illustration, 2000, medium unknown, *Pit's Letter*.

childhood years in Hershams, 1960-1967, and the hog farm and slaughterhouse behind her home:

The smell of hogs seeped into everything – clothes and hair... Slaughtering started at 4 A.M. We all woke up with the dog barking. The pigs created the most awful racket – screaming, piercing cries, sounds like screams in an echo chamber. There would be a crashing of steel. Then toward morning, there was the heavy smell of blood, which hung in the air for two days. As a child, I thought they would slaughter all the pigs they had, then stop. I didn't understand the regularity of it.¹⁴ (See Figure 170.)

The book *Pit's Letter* (2000), written and illustrated by Coe, is a story told from a pit bull's point of view. It is a powerful, heartbreaking work. *Bully! Master of the Global Merry-Go-Round* (2004) by Coe and Judith Brody, is about George W. Bush, published the summer of Bush's fall bid for a second term. *Sheep of Fools* (2005), a *Blab!* "picto-novelette," also by Coe and Brody, describes the practice of transporting sheep live via boat from Australia to the Middle East under appalling conditions.

Since 2003, Coe's illustrations have also appeared in each issue of the illustration annual *Blab!*.

In a single body of work Coe's style varies widely from gross caricature to naturalism; awkward, distorted figures to "vivid likenesses"; from expressive chiaroscuro to flattened, graphic shapes. See Figures 171-173 which range from naturalistic to cartoony to Bosch-like surrealistic.

Elephants We Must Never Forget (2008), Coe's most recent show at Galerie St. Etienne, was inspired by a trip to Sri Lanka in 1998, where she experienced elephants up close.

14. Sue Coe, *Dead Meat*, intro. Alexander Cockburn, New York, N.Y.: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1986, 37.

Among the paintings exhibited is one of the tragic death of circus elephant Jumbo and another of the frightful electrocution of Topsy by Thomas Edison in his demonstration of AC power. An essay on the gallery's website notes style changes in this recent body of work:

Coe began to rethink her prejudice against color after seeing at first hand the work of the muralists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco on a 2007 trip to Mexico City. Unlike Europeans, the Mexicans saw no conflict between color and social content; on the contrary, they used color skillfully to heighten the impact of their messages.... Though the paintings are still comparatively muted, they are very varied in tone. Essentially, Coe uses two distinct palettes: bright and cheery colors represent the fantasy of the circus, and musty brownish-black hues evoke the reality of the elephant's urban-industrial surroundings.¹⁵

In 1994, Coe, at the invitation of The University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, Texas, did a series of drawings of the AIDS Ward there. The visual essay, "Wait a Moment. I Don't Want to Die This Afternoon. Scenes from AIDS Ward" ran in *The Village Voice*. Illustrator Stephen Kroninger posted text and images from the story on the illustrators' website Drawger.com in 2008. He wrote, "Sue Coe is perhaps the greatest political artist of her generation. I can't think of anyone who comes close."¹⁶

Phone interview with Steve Heller, November 12, 2009

AG (Amy Geller): So the first question was, would you characterize Sue Coe's work as stylistically naïve, faux-naïf?

SH (Steve Heller): No. It is anything but naïve. It's an expressionist sensibility. She was



Fig. 174 Sue Coe, *Blind Children Feel Elephant*, 2008, oil on canvas.



Fig. 175 Sue Coe, cover, February 23, 1994, medium unknown, *The Village Voice*.

15. Galerie St. Etienne, "Elephants We Must Never Forget," exhibition essay Galerie St. Etienne, 2008, <http://www.gseart.com/exhibitions.asp?ExhID=508> (accessed March 20, 2010).

16. Stephen Kroninger, "Sue Coe," Drawger Blog, entry posted January 7, 2008, http://www.drawger.com/kroninger/?article_id=4758 (accessed March 20, 2010).

influenced by Richard Lindner. She was influenced by the German Expressionists and Dadaists. If you want to say that it's primitive it's partly true but it was less primitive.... I mean when I think of primitive I think of Howard Finster. I think of those people who were really never trained. Now you're talking about people who were faux primitive. I don't think there's anything faux about what Sue Coe does, Maira does, what Blechman does. I think those are simply voices or styles that they developed, not with the intention of being faux, but with the intention of being expressive. And I think there's a very big difference. There were the Art Brutists who were naïve in their own way and developed a different title for what they did. They gave up all the niceties of art and created highly expressionistic works which often came out of mental illness. But they were honest, they were true, they weren't faux. Or, I think, for example in Sue's case, as I said, I would just toss that one right out. She works in an expressive manner. I know her work going back thirty years, forty years even, and it came out of this Richard Lindner and Neue Sachlichkeit [New Objectivity] tradition. So she was influenced by art movements. Those art movements may have been influenced by primitivism. But then she's made it her own vocabulary. I think there are people out there that do faux primitivism. Paula Scher, for example, was very influenced by Howard Finster in the beginning. Developed her painting style based on Finster and then she kind of evolved it into her own voice. So it's no longer faux, it's no longer just totally influenced by Finster or some of the other, Grandma Moses, or whatever you want to call them. But I think there are people who do it just as a conceit. And that's the difference. I don't think any of these people do it as a conceit.

AG: Which artists or illustrators have inspired or influenced Coe?

SH: Well, George Grosz and Otto Dix.

AG: Right. Do you see Coe as part of a tradition or an iconoclast?

SH: Well, she's part of a tradition but she's definitely an iconoclast. Again, if you try and generalize, put a label on her, you're not going to make those labels stick. She's coming out of a tradition of polemical art that goes back to Goya. And you can see elements of Goya in her work. And probably go back even further than that. So there's the tradition. She's an iconoclast because she just grabs onto ideas and she doesn't let go. I mean I don't eat red meat because of her. She has her beliefs and she sticks to them. I saw her only about a month and a half ago and it's wonderful that she has her soft side but her hard side has always stayed there.

AG: That comes across in that interview and other interviews. Would you characterize

Coe's work as unique when she first began illustrating?

SH: Well, there was a whole school that came out of the Royal College of Art. And there were a number of artists who were not exactly the same but working in a similar vein.

AG: But not here in the United States.

SH: Well, she came to the United States and influenced others. There was also an art director who introduced a lot of that kind of work to the United States, Robert Priest. I'm not sure where he is anymore. He was the art director of *Saturday Night* in Canada and then came here as the art director of *Esquire* and so introduced a lot of what was going on from the Royal College. I don't think I was the first person to publish her, but I was one of the first in *The New York Times* and, you know, that had an influence of course.

AG: Okay. And how did Coe's family and life experiences affect the kind of work she does?

SH: I don't know. I mean...she only told me the other day, or the last time I saw her, that, I think, her father was Jewish and I never even knew that. But she could have been putting me on. She said Coe was short for Cohen but don't hold me to that. But, you know, she comes from a working class British lifestyle that was very trade unionist and I think that influenced her and then life just had its way of washing over her and she absorbed a lot of it. But I really don't know how, I mean I've obviously interviewed her a few times, but I can't recall what she said about her early life.

AG: Is there anything more you'd like to add about her?

SH: She's just one of these wonderful hybrids – you know she just had a major retrospective at the Hirschhorn Museum yet she's also considered an illustrator. Now that's something that's oil and water in the art world. But she continues to produce based on her devotion to her ideas, whether it's about AIDS or it's about animal rights or other things. There are so many artists and illustrators who have to make their livings and kind of just flow with the stream and she flows against the stream and she's done so as an artist all her life so I have a great deal of admiration for that as well. I hope ultimately that she will achieve recognition in her lifetime that does not compromise her values and that after she's gone I hope she's remembered as one of those key artists of our time.

AG: Yes, I agree. Do you have anything to add about Maira Kalman and Roz Chast?

SH: Well, Roz I don't spend much time looking at. Her work is not as appealing to me as Maira's. Maira's work is appealing to me on many levels. Part of it is aesthetic. I love the way she paints and draws. I love the way she thinks. She's a very good friend. And lately she's been coming into her own in a kind of Thurberesque way with her column in *The New York Times*. Each one hits a terrific mark so I see her in that Thurber tradition

as writer-artist. Thurber, incidentally, was not faux primitive, he just couldn't draw. He used marks as a way of expressing himself. I think Blechman's squiggly line was so radical when it began and it still holds up, it still has a modern flavor to it. Part of what artists were doing was rejecting some of the more detailed ways of working. I mean that's always been the case. When it's more detailed you become more minimalist, if something is minimalist you become more detailed, and I think Blechman wanted to work with the most minimalist means because he's a very fastidious kind of guy.

AG: And Ringgold? She's illustrated children's books. *Tar Beach* and...

SH: Right. *Tar Beach* was nice.

AG: Yeah. Was Kalman influenced by her husband Tibor's aesthetics?

SH: They influenced each other. Tibor was definitely an iconoclast and a lot of ideas that people had, I think, came from Maira. Tibor was a showman and Maira was more quiet about what she did. She kind of grew into her own skin once Tibor passed away, sadly.

AG: He talked about the beauty of the vernacular.

SH: Vernacular became a style. That became a kind of faux-naïf kind of style.

AG: I was wondering if that somehow influenced her.

SH: No, that didn't influence her. She was always interested in the things he was interested in, which was indeed the vernacular – why discard something that people do just because it's untutored? But I think her drawing and painting have improved over the years.

AG: Yes, so did Thurber's, even.

SH: Yeah, I guess. I mean I didn't look at Thurber as art. I looked at it as words that were pictures. To me it was just calligraphy, what he did.

Fellow-up questions to Steven Heller and responses via e-mail, November 12, 2009

AG: What I most want to clarify, and feel you misunderstood, is that by "naïve, faux-naïf illustrator style" I don't mean the superficial adoption of a style, or as you called it, a conceit. These illustrators, as you pointed out, have all come by their styles honestly. It's not an affectation by any means.

SH: I always viewed them as anti-academic. But the way I have always described Sue is as an Expressionist. Maira as an Expressive Minimalist. Blechman as a Sophisticated Primitive.

Fellow-up questions to Steven Heller and responses via e-mail, November 15, 2009

AG: What is the distinction between the terms "primitive" and "naïve"? In my readings they seem to be used interchangeably.

SH: I would define primitive as coming more from non-western countries and naïve as more untutored western. But I agree; these terms can be interposed. Moreover, once applied to art – and especially commercial art – they are imposed labels. Unless someone is tutored, they would not call themselves primitive or naïve. Art historians, gallery owners, and collectors affix those terms to make the art categorizable.

Jane Kallir's (Galerie St. Etienne) responses to questionnaire via e-mail, November 25, 2009

JK (Jane Kallir): I am not sure that Sue Coe can really be grouped with illustrators like Thurber and the others mentioned in your note. First of all, she (and her work) are far more deeply rooted in a fine arts tradition, both in terms of influences and presentation. Second, there is scarcely anything whimsical about Coe's work. (Whimsy and the naïve tend to go together in this context.)

Coe stems from the tradition of artists such as Grosz and Dix and other members of the early 20th-century avant-garde who appropriated naïve stylistic elements in order to increase the power of their formal vocabulary. Other influences include Kollwitz, Goya, and Daumier [1808-1879]. However, Coe can be considered an iconoclast inasmuch as she does not conform to current contemporary trends.

Sue Coe's working-class background and her identification with the oppressed have definitely influenced her art. She initially became an illustrator (a) because she needed to earn money, and (b) because she wanted to reach an audience outside the conventional art world. But her desire to set her own agenda, in terms of content, often came in conflict with the demands of the various publications for which she worked. That is why she soon branched off into making independent work, which she has both exhibited and published in book form.

Amy Geller's follow-up questions to Jane Kallir, November 28, 2009

AG (Amy Geller): Since I emailed you I interviewed Steve Heller and his comments were very similar to yours.

I agree, Coe is unlike the other illustrators in that her subject matter is distinctly not humorous. Yet humorists can address issues like injustice, prejudice, etc. Think of the satirists and social critics Mark Twain or Hogarth. So, I do feel there is an affinity between the illustrators I've chosen for my thesis in this respect. With the exception of Lorraine Fox, they are auteurs as well as illustrators.

I have a fine arts background and all these illustrators appeal to me because they

appear to be rooted to varying degrees in the modernist primitivist tradition and create works that address their own needs, preoccupations and philosophical outlooks.

Jane Kallir's response to follow-up questions, December 2, 2009

JK: I think that you need to look further into the stratification of the art scene into varying levels of prestige, with fine art being at the top, illustration being near the bottom, and naïve art being somewhere in between. The avant-garde began poaching from self-taught artists in the early 20th-century, though the latter were never granted full parity in terms of prestige or income. By the 1960s or '70s, naïve art had lost whatever status it once had and become mere fodder for illustrators. Then, the entire cycle began to repeat itself, now under the rubric of "outsider" art (presently still a strong influence on mainstream contemporary artists).

I do not think Sue ever made value judgments about genres of creativity. She gravitated away from illustration and toward fine art because the latter suited her expressive needs better, and not because she desired greater recognition or income. And as previously noted, I do not think Sue was particularly influenced by naïve art, at least not directly. The migration of naïve stylistic tropes from a fine arts to an illustration context has more bearing on the other artists covered by your thesis.

AG: I think there was a genuine appreciation of the formal aspects of so-called primitive art, yet, I agree, although I wouldn't call it poaching, several authors I cited brought up the romanticization of so-called primitive cultures, childhood and the insane that harks back to the romantic movement in the 18th and 19th centuries. I also read that children's art is art only children can do, so, although we were all once children, even in that regard when art-trained adults mine that area they are attempting to do consciously what was done unconsciously. But when you look at some of the academic painting done in the second half of the 19th-century, I'm glad artists looked elsewhere for inspiration. Although modernists were largely ignorant of the indigenous cultures they drew on and early folk art collectors often removed their finds from their context, they also elevated the stature of primitive sculptures, folk objects, etc. from curios to art.

American illustration was influenced by many European imports – Art Nouveau, Art Deco, Art Moderne, the Bauhaus, Surrealism, etc., but not so much Expressionism (Coe, Kalman, Ringgold), the untutored, naïve look (Chast, Fox, Blechman), and genuinely naïve (Thurber) until these illustrators came along. In turn, these illustrators have been tremendously influential. Some of my professors grumble that to be a successful illustrator today you have to draw with your left hand!

Chapter 8

Roz Chast

Roz Chast (b. 1954) was born in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Her mother was an assistant principal at a Brooklyn elementary school and her father a high school teacher. She is an only child. “My parents were both forty-two when they had me in 1954. They were a link to another time and place, and that affected me greatly...I might as well have been raised during the Depression. My parents grew up poor in households that spoke mostly Yiddish. They were from the Old World.”¹ She attended Kirkland College and The Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), where she received a BFA in painting in 1977. Her first cartoons appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1978 when she was only 23. She has since contributed over 1,000 cartoons and several covers to the magazine. Her cartoons have also appeared in other magazines, including *Scientific American*, *O Magazine*, *Redbook*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Mother Jones*, and *Town & Country*. She has published over 12 anthologies of her work, including *Parallel Universes* (1984), *Mondo Boxo* (1987), *Childproof* (1997), and her most recent, *Theories of Everything: Selected, Collected, and Health-Inspected Cartoons 1978-2006* (2006). She has illustrated books by other authors, including *Alphabet from A to Y, with Bonus Letter Z* (2007) by Steve Martin, and two children’s books by humor writer Patricia Marx. She has lectured widely and has exhibited her cartoons in galleries. Chast has had three solo exhibitions at the Julie Saul Gallery which has represented her since 2004. She has received honorary doctorates from Pratt Institute (1998) and Dartmouth (2009) and received an award at the Museum of Cartoon and Comic Art (MoCCA) Festival in 2004. She and her husband, humor writer Bill Franzen (dates unknown), moved from New York City to Ridgefield, Connecticut in 1989. They have two children, Ian and Nina.

Chast started drawing cartoons when she was five. Her first was a strip about two birds called “Jacky and Blacky.” Her parents subscribed to *The New Yorker* but she had no interest in the adult cartoons until she discovered Charles Addams (1912-1988) and other *New Yorker* cartoonists while accompanying her parents summers to educational programs at Cornell University. “...they used to park me in the browsing library in the student



Fig. 176 Charles Addams, title unknown, December 21, 1946, medium unknown, *The New Yorker* magazine.

1. Mike Sacks, “Roz Chast,” McSweeney’s, <http://www.mcsweeneys.net/links/sacks/chast2.html> (accessed March 20, 2010).

center which had a huge collection of cartoon books...I loved his [Addams'] macabre yet cheery way of looking at the world."² When asked in an interview with Mike Sacks for McSweeney's what an 8-9 year old found in Addams to like, she replied, "For one thing, I 'got' them... It was sick humor – very black. They were funny to me. Plus, there were kids in them!...when I was a kid I was obsessed with all sorts of weird, creepy, dark things. I was fascinated with medical oddities and bizarre diseases."³ Her mother's sister was a nurse and the *Merck Manual* was around for her to pore over. As a child she attended art classes at the Art Students League in Manhattan.

After college Chast had little success doing magazine illustrations so she started taking her cartoon portfolio around. *Christopher Street* magazine was the first to publish them. They paid \$10 a cartoon. Chuck Orleb, editor of *Christopher Street*, told Don Shewey, a reporter for *Soho News*, "There's a quality in her work that's like what was going on in the art world a couple of years ago as new wave rock got going. It was also reflected in *Vogue*, where suddenly the layouts were a mess, with 20 different typefaces and whatnot. It was an attempt to go back to more chaotic forms of expression. There's something chaotic about her cartoons."⁴ Soon after *The Village Voice* began publishing her cartoons. Chast recalls that by the late 1970s there were fewer and fewer outlets for cartoons – the heyday of cartooning was over. "It was pretty much down to *The New Yorker* and *National Lampoon*. There was *Playboy*, but that wasn't on my list," said Chast.⁵

She thought submitting her cartoons to *The New Yorker* was a long shot – "I don't have any cartoons about cocktail parties in Connecticut" – but in April 1978 she dropped off her portfolio anyway and to her amazement cartoon editor Lee Lorenz took one. She was paid \$250 for it.⁶ It was "Little Things," "a modest pen-and-ink line drawing that looked as if it had been doodled by a third grader, but it announced an original and offbeat adult sensibility."⁷ (See Figure 177.) By the end of 1978, Chast was asked to join those under contract at *The New Yorker* – a group of around 40 cartoonists who produce the bulk of cartoons that appear in the magazine. Chast was the first woman to be invited.

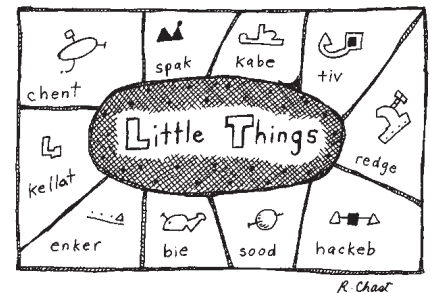


Fig. 177 Roz Chast, "Little Things," July 31, 1978, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.

2. Roz Chast, "On Cartooning," in *Cartoon America: Comic Art in the Library of Congress*, New York, Harry Katz, ed., N.Y.: Harry N. Abrams, 2006, 270.

3. Sacks, "Roz Chast."

4. Don Shewey, "Household is a Roz Chast Word," *Soho News*, 1980, http://www.donshewey.com/arts_articles/roz_chast.html (accessed March 5, 2010).

5. Sacks, "Roz Chast."

6. Ibid.

7. Ann Landi, "Roz Chast," *Art News*, February 2007, Vol. 106, No. 2.

Chast recalls, “I think a lot of readers were pretty perturbed. Some of the older *New Yorker* cartoonists were really bothered by that cartoon, too. It’s strange that Lee chose that one. I had submitted fifty or sixty, and this was the weirdest in the batch. It was so rough and personal, and it was so weird.”⁸

Robert Mankoff (dates unknown), current *New Yorker* cartoon editor, writes, “Readers were puzzled, then indignant, then outraged. Letters flooded into the magazine...”⁹

Lorenz says,

What amazed me at first...was that her drawings seemed so different from anything else we were getting and, really, that anyone would even consider them cartoons. They weren’t gags, in the sense that most of our material is. They seemed to spring full-blown from an entirely different kind of soil... When I saw her things, they immediately suggested something we hadn’t seen before.¹⁰

Chast says, “Later, Lee told me that somebody had asked him whether he owed my family any money.”¹¹

When Mike Sacks in an interview with Chast observed, “It was certainly a break from the type of *New Yorker* cartoon that came before,” Chast responded:

I knew that my cartoons were quite different, which is why I never really thought they would appear in *The New Yorker*. I never deliberately set out to be different; that’s just how I draw. But if I tried to conform to somebody else’s idea of what’s funny, I’d have no compass at all. I wouldn’t even know where to begin.¹²

Chast credits Robert Crumb (b. 1943) and his *Zap Comix* in the late 1960s with showing her “that comics could be about what you personally thought was funny, that it didn’t have to conform to a particular style.”¹³

In an essay Chast wrote for the book *Cartoon America*, she goes into greater depth about cartooning:

In the magazine cartoon world of the past, the art of making a cartoon was divided between the gag writer and the visual artist. This, for the most part, is no longer true. It’s a one-man band, which has advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantage, some would say, is that the admirable

8. Sacks, “Roz Chast.”

9. Robert Mankoff, *The Complete Cartoons of The New Yorker*, New York, N.Y.: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2006, 514.

10. Shewey, “Household is a Roz Chast Word.”

11. Sacks, “Roz Chast.”

12. *Ibid.*

13. Carly Berwick, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Comic-Book Artists?,” *Art News*, November 2005, http://www.artnews.com/issues/article.asp?art_id=1924 (accessed March 5, 2010).

drafting skills of the earlier days seem to be gone or greatly diminished. On the plus side, what you get is a more personal feel from the work because the artist and the writer are the same. When I look at my favorite cartoonists' stuff, I feel as if I'm getting a glimpse into a particular artist's inner world. I don't care that much about perfect perspective or the ability to render bulging muscles. I'm more interested in story and feeling.¹⁴

A few reviewers compare Chast's cartoons to the drawings of third or fourth graders. Shewey in his article for *Soho News* opens with a description of

the cartoon, "You can dress them up, but you can't take them out": "There's this cartoon that appeared in *The New Yorker* last year. Looks like a kid drew it. Four tiny pictures, skinny little lines." (See Figure 178.) He comments further, "She's the one who does those simple, silly things drawn in the naïve, resolutely two-dimensional style of most fourth-graders, and her cartoons usually have titles instead of captions..."¹⁵

Of the cartoons' content, Shewey writes: "She's a funny, friendly woman, and she does share with her cartoons a camp sensibility – not gay camp, high school camp." He asks her:

Where did you get your sense of humor? "Woolworth's," she says right away. "Kings Plaza." Chast belongs to a generation of smart kids who grew up simultaneously embracing and disparaging the junk-pop culture that surrounded them... they view such modern phenomena as shopping malls with a mixture of mockery, amusement and admiration... Chast's youthful lunacy is, however, a far cry from the *National Lampoon's* sophomore hi-jinx or punk nihilism; she tends to stand back from everyday life to make loving fun. One pervasive influence, I think, is modern-day multimedia advertising. The point of advertising, of course, is to sell you something you don't really need... she loves to overliteralize everyday sayings: a cartoon

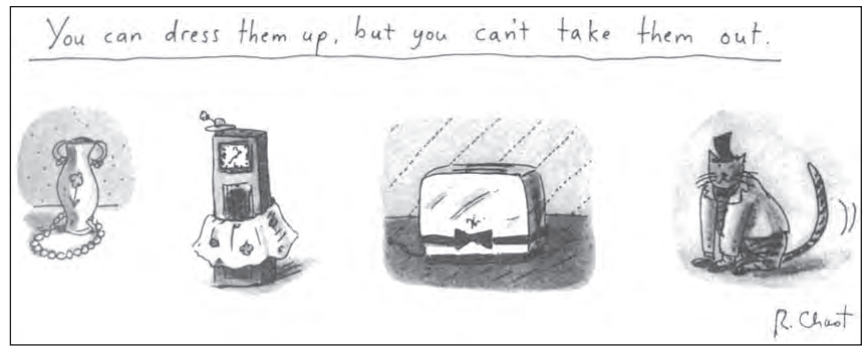


Fig. 178 Roz Chast, "You can dress them up, but you can't take them out," date unknown, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine, May 26, 1980.



Fig. 179 Roz Chast, "Here They Are," December 17, 1979, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine. An example of "overliteralism."

14. Chast, "On Cartooning," 270.

15. Shewey, "Household is a Roz Chast Word."

called “Frankly Speaking” rates three likely characters as “More fun than a barrel of monkeys,” “Somewhat less fun than a barrel of monkeys” and “About the same amount of fun as a barrel of monkeys.” Chast cites R. Crumb as an influence... Some of Crumb’s stoned humor creeps into Chast’s work...¹⁶

Another take on Chast’s cartoons by blogger John Stone:

[Chast] observes American urban and suburban life much as a space alien taking inventory on the sundry and strange things she encounters in her travels. She is a taxonomist of the trivial... In training her spotlight so fixedly on tiny things and average people, she is doing something radical: she is making visible the invisible customs we take for granted, overlook, or simply ignore...¹⁷

Chast’s drawing style has evolved from spare and loose to more detailed and complex. In the 1980s she added watercolor washes. Content has likewise expanded from primarily conceptual, impersonal and ironic to include personal and autobiographical material.

(See Figure 182).



Fig. 181 Roz Chast, “Bob,” February 1, 1982, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.

It’s not easy to summarize the range of Chast’s oeuvre. Michiko Kakutani attempts to do that in her review of *Theories of Everything* for *The New York Times*. She

provides examples of sarcastic, whimsical, topical, political, social anthropological, autobiographical, plays on clichés and familiar sayings, literary takeoffs, critiques of our self-obsessed culture, anxieties about being a good enough mother. Kakutani also notes

16. Ibid.

17. John Stone, “Cartoons of quiet truths mixed with the sublimely ridiculous: Roz Chast’s *Theories of Everything*,” *Epinions*, posted November 18, 2006, http://www.epinions.com/review/Book_Theories_of_Everything_Selected_Collected_Health_inspected_Copyright_protected_Cartoons_1978_2006_Roz_Chast/content_280221617796 (accessed March 5, 2010).



Fig. 180 Roz Chast, “Chicken,” November 16, 1981, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine. Absurdist riff on fast food chain menus.



Fig. 182 Roz Chast, “Mixed Marriage, Downhill Racer,” April 5, 2010, ink and watercolor, *The New Yorker* magazine.

her distinctiveness, “Ms. Chast’s voice in her best cartoons is delightfully her own, as idiosyncratic and instantly recognizable as the voice of any poet or novelist.”¹⁸

“Most cartoonists manipulate one aspect of the world,” says Mankoff. “They see something and tweak it for the humor and get a good line out of it. Roz invites us into her whole world, which is, like her mind, a full-blown creation.”¹⁹

John Stone again:

Her humor often brings the lofty down to plebeian terms, and elevates the mundane, so that “Afternoon of a Faun” depicts three scenes of an altogether ordinary afternoon (“Went shopping,” “Dropped stuff at the cleaners,” and “Visited with Eleanor N.”), while “The Cereal’s Universe” views the cosmos from the point of view of a box of cereal, with concentric rings emanating from it (touching upon first a spoon and bowl; moving outward to sugar, milk, sliced fruit, Steven, Steven’s dad and mom, the cereal shelf; and at the outer limits, Nebraska and the factory where presumably it was born.)²⁰

Walter Kirn in a review of *The Complete Cartoons of The New Yorker* writes,

Roz Chast’s 1981 three-panel piece titled “The Three Certainties” begins with a faux naïf skull and crossbones, “Death.” A check made out to the I.R.S. and surrounded by disembodied angels’ wings signifies “Taxes.” The final panel shows a clown in a curly wig and a ruffed collar—“Bobo.” Get it? Of course you don’t. Such humor can’t be gotten, in the old sense, only inexplicably chuckled at. Chast and her quirky contemporary counterparts practice a sort of comic expressionism that depends for its effects on the reader’s ability to recognize, identify with and mysteriously anticipate the

18. Michiko Kakutani, “Anxiety, Illustrated,” *The New York Times*, December 5, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/05/books/05kaku.html> (accessed March 13, 2010).

19. Bob Morris, “A Day Out with Roz Chast; Wild World of Couches,” *The New York Times*, October 2, 1997, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/10/02/garden/a-day-out-with-roz-chast-wild-world-of-couches.html?pagewanted=all&pagewanted=print> (accessed March 14, 2010).

20. John Stone, “Cartoons of quiet truths mixed with the sublimely ridiculous.”

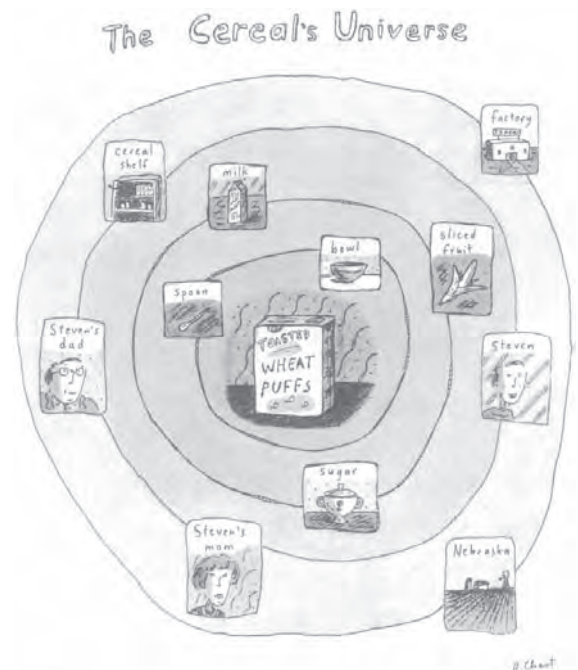


Fig. 183 Roz Chast, “The Cereal’s Universe,” December 21, 1981, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.



Fig. 184 Roz Chast, “The Three Certainties,” February 9, 1981, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine.

habitual, signature movements of individual artists' minds. The most one can say of a good Chast cartoon is that it's deeply Chastlike. And that's sufficient.²¹

Mankoff writes in 2006, "William Shawn, a great admirer of her work, once wondered aloud if she could keep it up. Twenty-five years later the question is moot."²²

Roz Chast's responses to questionnaire via mail, December 2009

AG (Amy Geller): Would you characterize your art as stylistically expressionist or naïve?

RC (Roz Chast): Don't know – too vague.

AG: If not, how would you characterize it?

RC: Personal, idiosyncratic, detail-oriented.

AG: Which artists/illustrators inspired and/or influenced you?

RC: Charles Addams, Sam Gross [b. 1934], Gahan Wilson [b. 1930], Winsor McKay [1867?-1934], R. Crumb, Don Martin [1931-2000], Jules Feiffer [b. 1929], Edward Gorey [1925-2000], Helen Hokinson [1893-1949], Mary Petty [1899-1946], William Steig [1907-2003], Saul Steinberg [1914-1999], Matt Groening [b. 1954], Diane Arbus [1923-1971], Stan Mack [b. 1936], Joseph Cornell [1903-1972], Edward Hopper [1882-1967], M. K. Brown [dates not found] – there are probably lots more!

AG: Do you see yourself as part of a tradition or an iconoclast?

RC: Both. Definitely!

AG: Would you characterize your work as unique when you first arrived on the scene?

RC: Yes.

AG: Please describe your process for coming up with ideas.

RC: Sometimes ideas come from something someone has said, or something I see – sometimes out of the blue...sometimes while I'm working. Pad of paper and pen – carry them always.

AG: How did your family and life experiences influence/affect the kind of work you do?

RC: My stuff is pretty personal so I guess it affects both my viewpoint (what is funny to me) and also the specific ideas themselves.

Follow-up questions and response via e-mail, December 21, 2009

AG: I'm seeing a naïve look to your illustration (along with sophisticated content). You

21. Walter Kirn, "Blame The New Yorker," *The New York Times Sunday Book Review*, December 26, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/26/books/review/26kirn.html> 26 Dec 2004 (accessed March 13, 2010).

22. Mankoff, *The Complete Cartoons of The New Yorker*.

describe your work as “personal, idiosyncratic, detail-oriented” (all true), but what I’m after in my thesis is what distinguishes the “look” of your cartoons from other cartoonists’ work. When I first saw your cartoons years ago, it was like nothing I’d ever seen in *The New Yorker*. They had a certain raw, untutored look which resonated with me. Can you go into a little more detail about what guides you stylistically?

RC: To me, style is like handwriting. It’s drawing in a way that comes naturally, mixed with little tiny bits and pieces of what you copy from other people from the time you’re five years old and you notice that a girl in your class draws shoes better than you, mixed with all the formal stuff one learns about “art.” At the end, everything mixes together, and that’s your style.

AG: When did you start drawing cartoons? I see you graduated from RISD with a BFA in painting. What kind of paintings did you do? Did the art you did there resemble in any way your cartoons?

RC: I started drawing cartoons when I was around five. I liked the storytelling aspect of cartoons, and I liked things that were funny. My paintings didn’t look like my cartoons. They were mediocre art school paintings. The style was pretty realistic. Still lifes. Figures. RISD was the one place I didn’t do cartoons. I didn’t get positive feedback from them, and I was kind of embarrassed by them. It was the mid-seventies and people were doing things like making videos that just showed static and then writing a ten-page essay about I don’t know what.

AG: That’s a long list of influences, many which I share, but I was wondering who influenced your style, in particular.

RC: It’s like handwriting. Bits of a lot of people. In a way, everyone on that list.

AG: Please go into more detail about how you’re both part of a tradition, i.e., what tradition? – and an iconoclast.

RC: I’m part of the tradition of magazine cartoonists, specifically *New Yorker* cartoonists. Doing funny drawings that appear in the pages of a magazine and which are surrounded by an article on an unrelated subject. *New Yorker* cartoonists have always been a group of people with idiosyncratic humor and drawing styles: Addams, Arno [1904-1968], Helen Hokinson, Charles Saxon [1920-1988], George Booth [b. 1926], William Steig, Steinberg, George Price [1901-1995], Jack Ziegler [dates not found], Mary Petty [dates not found], many others... Re iconoclasm: my stuff was very different-looking and different in spirit from what was appearing in the magazine in 1978. Less polished.

AG: I was looking through the book *Complete Cartoons of the New Yorker* and read the entry

about you. Mankoff writes when your work first appeared in *The New Yorker* some readers were outraged. Why were they outraged? Was it the content, the illustration style, what?

RC: It was both the style and the content. I think that some people were genuinely bothered that the drawing looked so unfinished and unpolished. And I didn't draw traditional cartoon genres, like cocktail party banter or board rooms. But sometimes you just need to draw a couch with a tiny doily on it, and the man that's sitting on it is wearing a shirt that has two pockets full of pens, and on the coffee table are four remotes and a bowl of stale sucking candies. And he's worrying about something, like maybe an article he just read about mastoiditis.

AG: I see how your work is personal but they're also highly original riffs on so many of our societal traditions that we just take for granted. Are your parents and siblings humorous? Relatives, friends, teachers? Where did you get such an original, I would say unprecedentedly so, view of the world?

RC: My parents weren't particularly funny, and I don't have siblings. On the whole, my parents and my relatives had a fairly grim and fearful worldview, even though sometimes they told old-fashioned "jokes" which, to me, were rarely funny.

Not that I don't understand that anxiety-filled worldview. But unlike my parents, I noticed that anxieties could occasionally turn a certain corner and become sort of hilarious. Like let's say you're taking a bath. You think about how heavy that bathtub is with all that water in it, and you start to wonder if anyone has ever died because the bathtub crashed through the floor with the person in it. And then you'll laugh, because it could never happen. But then, you'll think some more about it, and get panicky because it could happen. The house is very old. AND WHAT ABOUT TERMITES? And then you'll laugh again, at how silly you're being, as usual, because it could never really happen. But, seriously, you know it could.

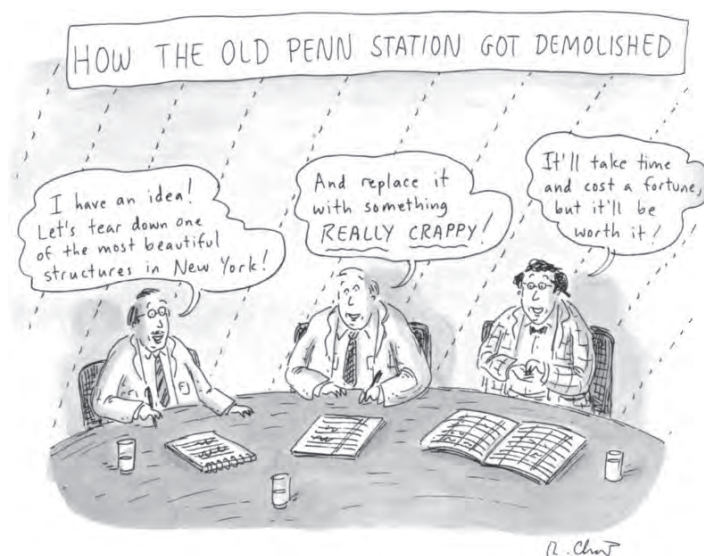


Fig. 185 Roz Chast, "How the Old Penn Station Got Demolished," October 16, 2000, pen and ink, *The New Yorker* magazine. An example of sarcastic!

Chapter 9

State-of-the-Art

Nora Krug (b. 1977)

1. Would you say there is a current trend to use more naïve/faux-naïf illustration?

It's not a new trend. It began in the '60s with sketches, drawing. Starting with Steinberg, immediate gesture was important, not a fine finish. With Blechman also. Current illustrators influenced by outsider art include Mark Todd, Esther Pearl Watson. (See Figures 186 and 187.)

2. If so, when did this trend begin?

It's a fairly recent development – past 5 years or so.

3. Do you feel something is lost or something gained by the use of naïve/faux-naïf illustration?

There's something gained, definitely. There are two opposing perspectives. Some believe craftsmanship is crucial, and ability and technical perfection is important. I believe it is most important to communicate sincerity and reach an audience. Don't care what style. What the drawing says and how it says it is important. Could answer this argument is about the whole history of modern art starting with Cubism, Expressionism. Two parallel styles – both okay. Don't need to be compared, just something different. I'm interested in how an illustrator thinks more than how it's drawn. Do I like any representational illustration? I like David Hughes [b. 1952?], Alan Cober [1935-1998].

Of naïve artists, I like Henrik Drescher (Drescher and artsandwich are the same). As Chair at the Society of Illustrators [annual competition] last year I confronted this conflict. There's a place for both kinds of illustration – it's not a contradiction. I'm surprised when people argue against that style of drawing. Illustrators are influenced by fine arts. If you're opposed, it's almost like saying you're against a style of drawing that has been going on since the beginning of the last century.



Fig. 186 Mark Todd, *Runners World*, date unknown, media unknown.



Fig. 187 Esther Pearl Watson, *Fire Ants*, date unknown, media unknown.

Murray Tinkelman

1. Would you say there is a current trend to use more naïve/faux-naïf illustration?

Absolutely. Look at annuals from previous years. There's a dearth of representational, narrative illustration. There are really talented illustrators working in faux-naïf styles now. Their influences, though, are a major step removed from Fox and others. The great practitioners of mid-century naïve illustration were Fox, Jim Flora [1914-1998], and Jan Balet. They were wonderful illustrators and also sophisticated art trained artists. Doris Lee, too. Fox was influenced by Victorian art, Balet by Eastern European folk art. They were influenced by primary sources. Contemporary illustrators, who are enormously talented – I just met one – Linda Helton [dates unknown] – terrific – not cartoony, not decorative. She's older, close to my age.

The younger crop are influenced by previous illustrators. Balet and Fox were retro themselves in that they were looking at earlier styles. Jim Flora has been rediscovered. Charley Harper [1922-2007], whose work is slicker, more refined, was also rediscovered.

2. If so, when did this trend begin?

There's no trend. Decorative style always existed everywhere. I picked up *Audubon* magazine – it had article on Australian aboriginal art. It's Randall Enos [b. 1936]! I once accused him of being a genius and so far he hasn't done anything to prove me wrong! Enos did illustration for *Playboy* years ago about aborigines. His themes are right out of aboriginal art. Folk art of Sweden reminds me of Persian and Indian miniatures. The urge to decorate has been with us always. There's a theory that Egyptians traveled to the New World and influenced Mayans but there are stylistic similarities throughout the ages and geographically.

3. Do you forecast a move away to more realistic, representational styles in the future?

No. There's always been decorative illustration – not cartooning, not narrative representational art, something in between. Art Deco was influenced by Egyptian art.

4. Do you feel something is lost or something gained by the use of naïve/faux-naïf illustration?

There will always be a number of types of illustration. Only difference is what is more



Fig. 188 Jim Flora, "Mambo for Cats," album cover, date unknown, medium unknown.



Fig. 189 Linda Helton, title unknown, date unknown, medium unknown.

frequently seen. The '50s was a period of great decorative illustration. But the big money guys – Whitcomb, DeMers, Whitmore, Bowler – were pure narrative, realistic illustrators. Two styles existed side by side. Now there are very few narrative guys. Decorative illustrators are in the driver's seat. Look on Drawger – Alex Nabaum [b. 1973], Robert Neubecker [b. 1953?]. Dugald Stermer [dates unknown] is representational. The majority are decorative. Images on the site rotate daily on the opening page. Lou Brooks [b. 1944] from San Francisco is very funny, brilliant. Just did a book – rhymes with limericks. Looks like he's influenced by Flora.



Fig. 190 Robert Neubecker, “New Bank Charges,” date unknown, media unknown, *The New York Times*.

Realistic work is not being shown in New York SOI Annuals and LA SOI Annuals. Also not in CA [Communication Arts] magazine. Not a question of lost or gained. Realistic art is not in print magazines anymore. Used to be showcase for traditional illustration. Print is dying anyway. Film posters use photography. Only opportunities for realistic work are sci fi, fantasy, and action. I don't foresee a comeback for representational art.

Nancy Stahl (dates unknown)

1. Would you say there is a current trend to use more naïve illustration?

Yes, there is.

2. If so, when did this trend begin?

There have been naïve artists all along but I'd say since the year 2001 is when I noticed a big trend toward Outsider Art. The artists you list are all accomplished people whose work shows intelligence and sensitivity. When I mentioned non-dominant hand drawers, I was speaking more to the newer crop of illustrators (it pains me to call them that since they don't usually illuminate the text or anything, but more likely confuse the reader/viewer) who are calculatedly choosing to draw in a way that looks like a 7th grader's best efforts in order to join the trend.

3. Do you forecast a move away to more realistic, representational styles in the future?

I have no idea what will happen next.

4. Do you feel something is lost or something gained by the use of naïve illustration?

I enjoyed the freshness of naïve art until this recent wave enveloped every other style. I think what is lost is a respect for fine craftsmanship, clear presentation of a concept and appreciation of beautiful design. In how many other professions would the work of a

person who is imitating an individual with mental difficulties be chosen over an educated voice? Would you pick your lawyer because he is goofy? Or your surgeon because he stitches up like a crazy quilt? Or a pilot who acts like a schizophrenic without his meds? No. Of course not.

There are times for loose, childlike drawings, but I don't think they should be everywhere. And I'm sad to see them edge out almost everything else (the other safe big look being comic art/graphic novel style). It's a dumbing-down of our visuals. Anyone can draw that way, so it's very comfortable to the majority of people, and recalls a safer time, like grade school. Maybe that is why it seems to me it started after 9/11.

5. Anything more you can add would be greatly appreciated.

Oh, I've gone on enough. I do want to restate that I like naïve art.

Steven Guarnaccia (dates unknown)

The illustrators you chose are very dissimilar. Ringgold comes out of a folk tradition like Beardon. Then you have talented amateurs like Chast and Blechman. Blechman is coming out of a European tradition of expressive minimalism. Coe comes directly out of German Expressionism. Very different levels of sophistication. Chast, Thurber, and Blechman are coming out of the cartoon tradition of *The New Yorker*. Cartooning lineage is very different from painting. Thurber is unique, uncategorizable.

1. Would you say there is a current trend to use more naïve/faux-naïf illustration?

It's not a trend; it's more of a tendency for artists to return to hand drawn, unslick illustrating. It's a direct response to the ascendancy of the computer. There's been a tremendous return to traditional media and even illustration that's done digitally – similar to sound recording, which is seamless, and adding hiss, pop, crackle – adding mistakes, accidents to work that doesn't need to have it. There's an interest in obsolete, out of date technology and printing techniques. Recent illustration mimics old techniques – incorrect registration – makes art that feels naïve, raw. What is decorative? Do you know Mike Perry [b. 1969]? Okay, how about the Einsels? Okay, so they're decorative. There's the charm of folk art. Then there's raw, unschooled. A sophisticated person looking at the unsophisticated, bringing it into the sophisticated world, making it sophisticated. Mid-century home magazines showed African



Fig. 191 Mike Perry, poster, 2009, medium unknown, Microsofts Zune.

art that was pared down and looked like Brancusi's. There can be a focus on style to the exclusion of content – see only surface. Gorey was a sophisticated naïve artist with an idiosyncratic drawing style. Thurber's sense of words is a perfect analog to his strange drawing. Thurber's not a style – it's more of a language. I don't get it and don't want to. His work is singular, mysterious. He opened up the possibilities of what cartoons could be. Before that, *New Yorker* cartoons owed a lot to the decorative styles at the time. Do you know Frueh [1880-1968]? Chast felt very foreign when she first appeared in *The New Yorker*.



Fig. 192 Alfred Frueh, "Yvette Guilbert," 1922, color linocut, *Stage Folk*.

2. If so, when did this trend begin?

It's a current tendency, not a trend. People are tired of computers and the hard-edged stuff that came out. Annuals are skewed. Not necessarily about what's going on out in the world. Nicholas Blechman [dates unknown] was art director for *The New York Times* Op-Ed around 10 years ago so he would be a good person to contact about the transition to more naïve illustration. I was art director at the *Times* Op-Ed for three years after that. I commissioned what I liked. It's ultimately about individuals and what they like.

3. Do you forecast a move away to more realistic, representational styles in the future?

There's always a swing between these things. Art directors are looking for more representational illustration. Artists make what they make. In editorial illustration editors are literal-minded and want work that is conceptually clear and traditional. I can't talk about illustration in general – too fragmented. Nicolas Blechman would commission artists to do their own Op-Ed art.

4. Do you feel something is lost or something gained by the use of naïve/faux-naïf illustration?

I have catholic tastes. I like naïve, I like realistic. I like gesture, accident. Just came back from a kids' book fair in Bologna. What style to use depends on use of work – all styles have a purpose. I think naïve, sophisticated naïve work is great. You need to ask, how well does its use express the purpose? There's always a need for authentic, sincere work. There's a misconception that naïve is more authentic. Name a representational illustrator I like? John Howard [b. 1939].

Derin Tanyol (Riley Illustration representative)

1. Would you say there is a current trend to use more naïve/faux-naïf illustration?

I wouldn't say there's been an upswing in naïve/folksy illustration recently. If anything,

there is a trend away from illustration altogether, as newspapers and magazines are suffering financially. Photography and Photoshop montages have all but taken over book covers. As you know there's always been a division, in the worlds of illustration and fine art, between naïve and academic, or "low" and "high," or between untutored, personal, and stylized versus fine-edged, detailed, and realistic. These categories are, however, pretty arbitrary and often overlap. I think the "naïve" in art, especially as a style exercised by those technically capable of more "refined" imagery, will remain alive so long as practitioners of its opposite do. In some ways the history of modernism has been about the triumph of the former, predicated upon a period of dominance by the latter. Witness Manet [1832-1883] painting "badly" in a sea of far more successful academicians, many of whose names we've forgotten.

3. Do you forecast a move away to more realistic, representational styles in the future?

Only if realistic and representational are the greatest that Photoshop has to offer. I wouldn't be surprised, however, if certain "old-fashioned" trends in illustration see a revival. We have a few artists who work very specifically in "retro" styles that suggest a kind of nostalgia for illustration of the '50s (Zohar Lazar [dates unknown]) or Italian Renaissance painting (Mara Cerri, [dates unknown], Steven Rydberg [b. 1952?]). I think realism and its opposite are constantly doing a push-me pull-me thing in the eyes of art critics, buyers, consumers in general. The advent of photography, needless to say, had an enormous effect on how "realism" has been defined. And, if anything, digital photography – and its use in the context of illustration – has unsettled the supposedly infallible partnership between reality and the camera.

4. Do you feel something is lost or something gained by the use of naïve/faux-naïf illustration?

Not at all. Those whom I would characterize as such are: Nora Krug, Sara Fanelli [1969], Mara Cerri, Philippe Petit-Roulet [b. 1953], Mark von Ulrich [dates unknown] (in a high-tech kind of way), and, on occasion, Jeff Fisher [dates unknown].

5. Anything more you can add would be greatly appreciated.

You've probably already done so, but your questions make me think you should consider trends in the history of painting and sculpture as well...



Fig. 193 Sara Fanelli, interior illustration, 2003, medium unknown, *Pinnocchio*.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

The illustrators I chose – Thurber, Fox, Blechman, Ringgold, Kalman, Coe, and Chast, introduced naïve or expressive styles in their respective fields, whether editorial, advertising, cartooning, animation, or book art. When Thurber and Chast’s cartoons first appeared in *The New Yorker*, diverse as those cartoons were, theirs stood out. For Thurber, E. B. White was key. White appreciated the humor in Thurber’s drawings and submitted them for publication. Chast, an iconoclast, failing to conform to editorial expectations for magazine illustration, took her own material – her cartoons – around. Fox’s work, though not unique – precursors included Balet and Lee – was distinctive, and the decorative styles of all three were unlike the dominant boy-girl editorial illustration style of the time. It was the art director at Keiswetter ad agency, Fox’s first job after graduating Pratt, who encouraged her to freelance and take her illustration portfolio around. Blechman happened to appear on the scene when concept advertising was first introduced. His light-on-technique but idea-driven minimalist style of illustration was picked up by ad agencies. Blechman had an early success with his first book and that led to employment at Hubley’s animation studio, Storyboard. Both Ringgold and Kalman began children’s book illustration at the suggestion of others. In Ringgold’s case, a poster of her story quilt *Tar Beach* was seen by Andrea Cascardi, a children’s book editor at Random House. Kalman’s husband, the iconoclast designer Tibor Kalman, proposed her first book, *Stay Up Late*. Coe’s editorial illustrations were published while she was still in college and she easily made the transition to the *Times* Op-Ed when she came to the United States.

As explored in the Historical Overview, certain cultural developments certainly led to appreciation of these illustrators, even though their work was to varying degrees at odds with the prevailing ones at the time.

The 1913 Armory Show exposed Americans to modernist art from Europe and America and created a market for modernist art and folk art in America. When Thurber’s drawings first appeared in print in 1928, his work was critiqued as fine art, at least by Europeans, and admired for its expressive quality, shared by modernists Matisse and Picasso. His drawings of men and women here in America, though, were described as a “sub-species” and by Dorothy Parker as having the “semblance of unbaked cookies.” His drawings were exhibited at The Valentine Gallery, which also represented Matisse, in 1934, at Smith College along with Grosz in 1933, and at MoMA in 1936. E. B. White

recognized that Thurber's lack of technique increased the expressive quality of his drawing and dissuaded Thurber from refining it. That's one of the qualities modernists were seeking when they broke from academic tradition and exalted the "primitive" – unselfconscious line, subjective color, intuitive sense of design – skirting the rational and favoring the irrational, the unconscious. For a brief moment "lowly" cartoons were seen on a par with the latest modernist developments, at least in Europe.

As already noted, predecessors to Fox included decorative, folk-art inspired illustrators Balet and Lee. Balet came from Europe and studied applied arts, where he most certainly was exposed to current trends in fine art and illustration. Lee studied fine art here and abroad and brought her appreciation of folk-inspired art to her illustration commissions. Major exhibits of folk art were mounted at MoMA in 1932, the Newark Museum in 1930, the Museum of American Folk Art in 1970, and the Whitney Museum in 1974; and self-taught art at MoMA in 1937, 1938, 1939, 1943, the Newark Museum in 1930, 1931, and 1995, and at the Corcoran in 1982. Grandma Moses, "discovered" in 1938, had a solo show at Galerie St. Etienne in 1940. Her paintings, commercially reproduced on greeting cards, drapery, and china, reached a wide audience.

When Fox first started out post-World War II, the "literal" advertising and editorial illustration styles of Rockwell, Al Parker, and Cooper Studio artists Whitmore, Whitcomb, and DeMers were dominant. At the same time, as Tinkelman cites, "...illustration was entering a period of serious decline. Television was replacing print as both entertainment and advertisers' primary medium. The use of photography for magazine covers, fashion layout, and for major advertising campaigns further eroded the market for illustrators."¹ These developments led to the popular mid-century decorative styles which are quoted liberally in the current illustration field.

Blechman appeared on the scene in the early 1950s when concept-driven advertising was first emerging. His minimalist, humorous illustration style was well-suited to this new development in advertising.

The intuitive conceptual "big idea" method became a uniquely American visual communications expression, and was closely associated with the New York School of advertising of the 1950s and 1960s. Exemplified by Doyle Dane Bernbach's classic Volkswagen Beetle series, this advertising created intelligent and clever interplays between verbal and visual concepts.²

1. Murray Tinkelman, "Lorraine Fox: Illustrator, Painter, Teacher, Alchemist," 38.

2. Katherine McCoy, "American Graphic Design Expression: The Evolution of American Typography," *Design Quarterly* 149, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1990; reprinted from 1998 High Ground Design, <http://www.highgrounddesign.com/mccoy/km2.htm> (accessed March 3, 2010).

Coe schooled at the Royal College of Art (RCA) and, as Heller writes (see page 106), was influenced by avant-garde teachers and former students. She also participated in student protests and those experiences contributed to her activist mindset. According to Heller, Coe was one of several British illustrators to come out of RCA who introduced their expressionist style in the United States and Canada.

In the late 1960s the Chicago Imagists, graduates of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago which included Jim Nutt and Nancy Spero (1926-2009), produced surreal, grotesque art, very different in style from the cooler New York art scene. (See Figure 193.) The group's interests were wide ranging and included "... an attraction to comic books...kitsch decoration, popular advertisements, and storybook content," and, "The influence of Folk and Outsider art provided the Imagists with the confidence to chart their own anti-establishment course."³

Also in the late 1960s the underground comics movement originating in San Francisco and spearheaded by Robert Crumb, made its appearance. Jay Kennedy, comics editor for King Features Syndicate, writes, "The core of the undergrounds is personal expression."⁴

Editor of *Christopher Street* magazine Chuck Orleb, as already cited (see page 119), comments that Chast's cartoons, which appeared in the late '70s, shared a sensibility with the emergent new wave rock and rising experimentation in graphic design characterized by "chaotic" layouts and wild typefaces – signaling a break with the, up until then, dominant Swiss design aesthetic.

In the *European Illustration* annual from 1982 there are a number of illustrators in addition to Coe who adopted a naïve/expressive style: Ian Pollack (b. 1950), Anne Howeson (dates unknown), Ralph Steadman (b. 1936), Nigel Shuster (dates unknown), Karin Batten (dates unknown), Liz Pyle (dates unknown), Wendy Hoile (b. 1948), Lionel Koechlin (b. 1948), Carolyn Gowdy (b. 1956). Editor Edward Booth-Clibborn writes of "the new wave,"



Fig. 194 Jim Nutt, *Running Wild*, 1970, acrylic on metal



Fig. 195 Robert Crumb, cover, 1968, first issue *Zap Comics*.

3. Elizabeth DeRose, KAM intern, "Chicago Imagism," Kresge Art Museum at Michigan State University, <http://artmuseum.msu.edu/exhibitions/past/chicago/> (accessed March 3, 2010).

4. Mark James Estren, *A History of Underground Comics*, Berkeley, CA: Ronin Publishing, 1993, http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=hQb_q6DWle4C&oi=fnd&pg=PA7&dq=undground+comics&ots=f1jMKU9zRZ&sig=xPfzyGRiH9b6DkHtaX8qYrNxVs#v=onepage&q=&f=false (accessed March 3, 2010).

...in the early years of the Seventies, illustration (like much else in life) was decorative. The work we received for selection was pretty. It was, at the same time vacuous; many delicate images concealing an emptiness. Now European illustration contains some of the most potent imagery I have ever seen anywhere.⁵

Chast, Coe, and Kalman were all coming into their own in that period and benefited from this cultural climate marked by broad acceptance of rawer, emotionally expressive art forms – punk music, underground comics, outsider art. Tom Patterson, already cited page 36, writes how Howard Finster’s discovery by the larger art world in the early 1980s “happened to coincide with....graffiti art, ‘fun’ and ‘Wild Style’ painting, punk rock (with its return to raw, primitive basics), ‘the new Figuration,’ Neo-Expressionism, etc.”

Ringgold began making her story quilts in the 1970s. Perhaps Ringgold saw the issue of *New York* magazine in 1972 which featured naïve artist Ralph Fassanella on the cover.

Other examples of “raw” art and possible influences on illustrators from the fine art world include Ray Pettibon (b. 1957), Amy Sillman (b. 1954), Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010), Philip Guston (1913-1980), Jean Michel Basquiat, and Keith Haring.

###

When I first conceived of the thesis title, the terms naïve and faux-naïf seemed self-evident. That turned out not to be the case. For me, the term “naïve” describes what I detect when I look at illustrations that are figurative, non-academic, informed by folk art, children’s art, indigenous art, outsider art (Art Brut) or modernist art, or in the case of Lorraine Fox, Victorian art – or any combination of these. It might look untutored, even if it’s not. Expressive qualities are achieved by employing distortion, flattening of perspective, lack of chiaroscuro, subjective use of color. It might also be marked by crudeness and an offhand awkwardness, deliberate or not. There might even be smudges, and other accidental elements. It is imaginative or memory-based rather than observant-based.

As became apparent in the interviews, there was strong resistance by my subjects to characterization of their work as naïve. Kalman was the exception. Chast, when



Fig. 196 Philip Guston, *Smoking Eating*, 1972, oil on canvas.



Fig. 197 Louise Bourgeois, *Femme Maison*, 1947, ink on paper.

5. Edward Booth-Clibborn, ed. *European Illustration 1981-1982*, Basel, Switzerland: Polygon Editions S.A.R.L., 1981.

pressed, said her work was unpolished. Blechman initially said his work qualified as naïve because it was both untutored and non-academic, but quickly asserted he didn't like being labeled. Ringgold rejected the terms "naïve," "faux-naïf" and "expressive" altogether, but later shared how, in addition to her mentor Jacob Lawrence, children's art and African art were both influences. Coe did not respond to my questionnaire but both Steve Heller and Jane Kallir strongly iterate Coe is an expressionist, not a naïve artist, and should not be grouped with the others. Coe, as Ringgold put it, has "...got the full range of picture making."



Fig. 198 Sue Coe, *Baby Elephant at Sea*, 2007, oil on canvas. This painting is an example of Coe's naïve style.

Coe works in many styles, yet enough, I believe, are rendered in a naïve/expressive way to justify her inclusion in my thesis (see Figure 197). Her sources are Western art, yes; nevertheless, German Expressionist Grosz, one of her prime influences, copied graffiti from public urinals and children's art. Thurber recognizes that his drawings were technically inept to the point of disparaging them. Tinkelman and D'Andrea both affirm the decorative, sophisticated naïve quality of Fox's work.



Fig. 199 Maira Kalman, title unknown, December 21, 2009, gouache, "The Pursuit of Happiness," *New York Times Select*.

In the process of writing my thesis, I began to question whether any of the subject illustrators qualify as genuinely naïve. It is true, both Thurber and Kalman have no formal art training, yet as biographer Holmes notes, in Thurber's college days the illustrations he created for the *Sun-Dial*, although not commercial, show a greater technical skill and awareness of illustration styles (he cites Art Nouveau) than we see in his later drawings. Kalman's work has grown in sophistication. Compare the album cover she did in 1983 for David Byrne (Figure 143, page 96) and the interiors she's done most recently for "The Pursuit of Happiness" blog, 2009 (see Figure 198). As McAlpin writes, "she captures architectural interiors with the panache of a set designer."⁶ Chast is art trained – she studied art as a child at The Art Students League and later at RISD – yet she seems to have regressed to an earlier period in her life when she drew cartoons as a child and teenager. Thurber, it appears, has no stylistic influences. Kalman cites Bemelmans and Salomon as influences. Chast's style also appears to have no

6. McAlpin, "A Year in the Life."

influences. Kalman’s characters lack consistency – formerly a prerequisite for children’s book illustration. Ringgold’s too.

Their styles didn’t usurp other styles; those continued on. They didn’t introduce a revolution. That they were published at all is what is significant. Biographer Grauer writes,

That isn’t to say Thurber’s cartoons have had no impact whatsoever on would-be artists. In May 1993, Matt Groening, creator of “The Simpsons,” told *The Washington Post* that as a child he “took great comfort in the work of James Thurber, the only cartoonist that draws worse than I ever did.”⁷

In these cases the illustrators are able to express their ideas visually and refinement of technique is neither necessary nor desirable. Their “natural” drawing style is sufficient and actually preferable. If it became too refined its individual character might be lost. As Chast says, “I never deliberately set out to be different; that’s just how I draw.” In the 20th-century, as we’ve seen, realism was no longer the pinnacle of achievement in art. Qualities found in non-Western art, etc., as explored in the Historical Overview, are deemed equally desirable.

State-of-the-Art

Individual illustrators working today, I discovered, don’t characterize their work as naïve, even if their work, as I perceive it, suggests otherwise. It’s not clear if the term is rejected because it’s seen as pejorative or whether the illustrators genuinely perceive their work as not naïve. Nevertheless, a naïve illustration trend is recognized by those whose work is either not naïve or by illustrators who don’t characterize their own work as naïve but see it operating in the field as a whole.

I did think there would be greater recognition by illustrators working today that naïve does not refer to only untutored – that it has broader meaning and includes a whole range of styles from decorative to crude, raw and expressive. The blurb for a book recently published in 2009 titled *Naïve: Modernism and Folklore in Contemporary*

7. Grauer, *Remember Laughter*, xvii.



Fig. 200 Roz Chast, title unknown, 2006, ink and watercolor, *Theories of Everything*. Note hands. Blechman is similarly challenged drawing hands. Traditional cartoonists’ employ stylized, easily replicable conventions for hands.



Fig. 201 titles unknown, 2009, medium unknown, *Naïve*.

Graphic Design:

Naïve documents the extraordinary renaissance of Classic Modernism, from the 1940s to 1960s, in contemporary graphic design. This compilation introduces a new wave of young designers who are rediscovering the stylistic elements reminiscent of classic graphic design such as silkscreen printing, classical typography, hand lettering, woodcutting and folk art and integrating them into their work. Inspired by 20th-century American legends such as Saul Bass [1920-1996], Charley Harper, and Alexander Girard, the burgeoning designers and their work showcased in this book are inspiring, ranging from illustrations, poster art, editorials, book covers and record sleeves to stationary and textiles.⁸

Perhaps this book will help remove the perceived stigma of having one's work described as naïve.

Summary

In my interviews one premise was confirmed – when the illustrators' work first appeared it was new, fresh, heralding a break from prevailing styles, yet was quickly embraced. These illustrators were at the right place at the right time, forerunners of a zeitgeist that changed notions of what was possible. The other premise, that the subjects' illustration styles are naïve, faux-naïf or expressive, was confirmed in most cases if not by the artists, then by other interviewees.

8. R. Klanten, H. Hellig, eds., *Naïve: Modernism and Folklore in Contemporary Graphic Design*, Berline, Germany: Die Gestalten Verlag, 2009, <http://www.gestalten.com/books/detail?id=ceaea7651fc964c3011febe7430d0019> (accessed March 3, 2010).

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Appendix A

Illustrator responses to questionnaire

Juliette Borda (dates unknown)

1. What/who influenced your illustration style?

That's hard to say because you spend your youth accumulating input before you begin a career as an artist; and then you spend every day as an artist experiencing input of all kinds, not just visual. So for me, my influences change constantly. And whatever I cite as an influence is not something that might then be evident or obvious as an influence in my work. For instance, certain film directors like Alexander Payne (b. 1961) and Steve Buscemi (b. 1957) capture a certain angle on life which touches me deeply – and might resonate in my work. But not directly or anything.

2. Is there a period in history that influenced/inspired you?

I like the 1970s but I don't know if, again, it's a direct influence.

3. Is there a geographical location that influenced/inspired you?

Well, I do have my favorite places on earth, which are Vermont, Sicily, and Amsterdam, but it's not like those places pop up in imagery. I just like being there. I prefer to keep my own "settings" in my work pretty spare – not quaint like all of my favorite places.

4. Did any of the illustrators named above* influence/inspire you? If so, how so?

NO. It would be lazy and lacking in integrity if illustrators were studying other illustrators' work. For illustrators who truly have a vision, it comes from a place way deeper than looking through an annual at work to pilfer from. Sue Coe, R. O. Blechman, etc. didn't get where they are by cheating. I think it's important for students today to understand that you find your best work by digging deep inside yourself, not by looking at other illustrators' work.

5. Would you characterize your illustrations as naïve, faux-naïf or expressive? If not, how would you describe them?

Probably none of those things. I don't have a name for it.

6. How many years have you been an illustrator?

19.

* Note: Throughout this section, this question refers to subject illustrators James Thurber, Lorraine Fox, R. O. Blechman, Faith Ringgold, Maira Kalman, Sue Coe and Roz Chast.



Fig. 202 Juliette Borda, "Good Fat, Bad Fat," date unknown, medium unknown, *Shape* magazine.

R. Gregory Christie (b. 1971?)

1. What/who influenced your illustration style?

The style is influenced by any figurative painter that abstracts the body. It started with an inclination to stretch the body during my figurative drawing days at SVA [School of Visual Arts]. A teacher suggested I look at Egon Schiele [1890-1918] who's work lead me to El Greco [1541-1614], Diego Rivera [1886-1957], and John Singer Sargent [1856-1925], but the strongest influences are from Picasso, Hockney, Ben Shahn, Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, and Basquiat.

2. Is there a period in history that influenced/inspired you?

I feel a strong pull toward images (photos) from the rural south in the 1930s and painters of children's books in the 1960s. However, my taste is eclectic and I love Northern Renaissance painting as I do Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s.

3. Is there a geographical location that influenced/inspired you?

Italian, French, British, and German painters from the past inspire me the most, so I'd have to say Europe for inspiration. But I love the Regionalist painters; in a way it feels like they took those 1930 photos that I love so much and brought a new vision in pigment to them. Also love Caribbean art, especially the greats from Haiti.

4. Did any of the illustrators named above influence/inspire you? If so, how so?

I'm familiar with Faith Ringgold's work the best. I can't say that it directly inspires me so much as the woman herself. That's because she's a brown person, a female brown person, who's taken her own edgy and naïve style and brought people to her world to understand it rather than the other way around. I know Thurber's writing, not so much his visual art, but overall the curse of my days working at the Guggenheim (or benefit) is that I learned a lot more about the artists in museums and galleries than the ones in magazines and the commercial field. So my influences and inspiration are steeped in the fine art world.

5. Would you characterize your illustrations as naïve, faux-naïf or expressive? If not, how would you describe them?

Expressive is the term of the three that I am most comfortable with. The term that makes me cringe is "primitive." I see my work as a bridge between realism and abstraction.

The end result for me is the visual manifestation of the way an organist or jazz musician would use improvisation with a familiar song. I once was given that challenge from one



Fig. 203 R. Gregory Christie, cover, 2004, medium unknown, *The Champ: The Story of Muhammad Ali*.

of Europe's most gifted organists. He had an antique organ built and shipped piece by piece from Prague into the top floor of his Stockholm apartment. He was explaining the intricacies of his thinking as a concert organist and the details of the long tradition of study that brought him to his level of playing. Eventually he asked me to give him a song and he played it as Bach would, as Mozart would, on and on. All variations were "Happy Birthday" as the foundation, but with an organ – a well-trained European going through various styles including Ragtime. It was simply amazing.

I see my work that way. I'm inspired by all types of traditions in painting including Egyptian and Middle Eastern artists. I've been painting with professional materials since I've been ten and at that age I thought that realism was the highest form of painting. I wanted to paint on the level of those religious painters I saw in my childhood Catholic school books. But after Bearden and Picasso I chose to develop another path as a painter. Rigid ideas on glazing, tones, forms, and structure are all my foundation, but the "talent" in my art comes with the choice and ability to break those traditions.

6. How many years have you been an illustrator?

Record covers and magazines in '93 and children's books in '96.

Blair Dawson (dates unknown)

1. What/who influenced your illustration style?

My illustration style evolved over quite a number of years, and it continues to evolve. I started my career doing pictures for educational books, and only started doing editorial material in the mid- to late-'70s. As a kid I loved drawing pictures, and as a teen I worked for several summers in the sign industry, getting lots of practice painting large format signs, etc., and designing them at a later date. I feel like I've been influenced

by everything! Now that I'm also a teacher, I see things in my students' work that turn me on, surprise me, thrill me. And I point out to them that one should never stop learning – and that involves being influenced too, I suppose. So, the truth is, everything from nature, emotions, other art forms, language, and the paradoxical aspects of life itself – these are the broad categories of my influences.

2. Is there a period in history that influenced/inspired you?

First influences historically were copying the characters from Disney. Kids' picture books too, of course. I still have a child's version of the *Arabian Nights*, and that had a big



Fig. 204 Blair Dawson, *Smoking Pistol*, 2009, acrylic on paper.

influence on me, but there were plenty of others. Listening to plays on the radio was a great boon to developing my visual imagination.

As to art history – again, everything. First were the Impressionists, and the early works from the 20th-century – Picasso, Klee, Bonnard [1867-1947], but also Vermeer [1632-1675], and the Renaissance, particularly Fra Angelico [1395-1455], Mantegna [1431-1506], Giorgione [1477?-1510]. I'm not sure if these were influences, but they certainly were artists I admired. There's such a long list – and some come and go, and then come back again for other reasons.

In my course in Sequential Narrative, I introduce students to influential figures from the historical canon of what is now called the graphic novel – George Herriman [1880-1944], Milton Caniff [1907-1988], Al Capp [1909-1979], Walt Kelly [1913-1973], Chester Gould [1900-1985], etc., and also major figures such as Saul Steinberg, and Milton Glaser, and Ralph Steadman, and on, and on... These people were not only wonderful visual artists, but splendid writers, too.

3. Is there a geographical location that influenced/inspired you?

I'm curious about the culture of every continent, with the possible exception of Antarctica. I have an enduring appreciation of all sorts of so-called “primitive” or “naïve” art as well – again, from every country and background. The Internet has made this a wide-open possibility for all of us these days, in a great many versions and applications. It is possible to find out about any aspect of any cultural achievement in any part of the world now, and to recognize the power of that particular achievement.

4. Did any of the illustrators named above influence/inspire you? If so, how so?

I love the works of Thurber, Blechman, Coe, and Chast; the others I'm not so familiar with. As for “influence” – probably not. Sue Coe and I are roughly about the same age, and I remember enjoying the mordant humour of her early work, and there may have been some similarities in those early days.

Henrik Drescher (b. 1955)

1. What/who influenced your illustration style?

Mexican retablos, and ex-votive paintings, art of the insane, George Grosz, John Heartfield, and many more.

2. Is there a period in history that influenced/inspired you?

All.

3. Is there a geographical location that influenced/inspired you?



Fig. 205 Henrik Drescher, interior illustration, 2005, medium unknown, *The Gruesome Guide to World Monsters*.

Mexico, Germany, Asia.

4. Did any of the illustrators named above influence/inspire you? If so, how so?

They're part of the creative current, along with many others. Everyone rubs off on everyone else.

5. Would you describe your work as naïve, faux-naïf, or expressive? If not, how would you describe it?

I'm naïve; the pictures are sophisticated.

David Hughes (b. 1952?)

1. What/who influenced your illustration style?

Diane Arbus, Egon Schiele, Edvard Munch [1863-1944], George Grosz, George Herriman, George Remi [1907-1983], Richard Avedon [1923-2004], Maurice Sendak [b. 1928], Heath Robinson [1872-1944], David Hockney, Francis Bacon [1909-1992], Peter Blake [b. 1932], Toulouse-Lautrec, Holbein [1498-1543], Paul Klee, Push Pin Studios, *The Beano*, *Lord Snooty*, and *The Bash Street Kids* comics. Death, sex, alcohol, cricket, walking, running, Neil Young, Camille O'Sullivan [dates unknown], *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, *Dexter*, my Wirehaired Fox Terrier, the birds in my garden, Brighton, Sussex.

2. Is there a period in history that influenced/inspired you?

Every day influences me but, now you ask, I suppose the 1940s-'50s-'60s-'70s – so that would be latish, middish 20th-century – God, I sound like a sad old dinosaur.

3. Is there a geographical location that influenced/inspired you?

The River Thames, London.

4. Did any of the illustrators named above influence/inspire you? If so, how so?

In your list? I confess that four of those listed I haven't heard of. Sue Coe is the artist who came out of the RCA in the mid-'70s, an era that was profoundly influential, and in London I was in my early 20s. That whole period was in retrospect extremely exciting. So exciting I was a postman and had given up being an illustrator for three years – I was so disgusted with the crap I had found myself producing. Sue Coe wasn't really an influence, Chloë Cheese [b. 1952] was probably more influential.

Aya Kakeda (dates unknown)

1. What/who influenced your illustration style?

Japanese Ukiyoe prints and its masters, circus/sideshow posters, comics, tapestry/



Fig. 206 David Hughes, *Jury*, 2005, medium unknown, *Esquire* magazine.

embroidery from around the world.

2. Is there a period in history that influenced/inspired you?

I'm really into 14th-century tapestries from Europe. I love how it's one image but tells a whole story. Embroidery around the world in different periods (sorry I can't pinpoint what century). Edo period, Miji period in Japan.

3. Is there a geographical location that influenced/inspired you?

Many places inspire me and it depends on where I travel that year or what I'm interested in in the moment. Right now I'm into Hungarian folk art and Spanish costumes.

4. Did any of the illustrators named above influence/inspire you? If so, how so?

I'm naming a few illustrators who inspire me! Seeing their work always gives me a fresh breath of wind. David Sandlin [b. 1956] – he was my teacher at SVA and I really enjoy how he makes his books and silkscreens, and how he makes a narrative work. Sara Varon [dates unknown] – she always inspires me by how simple she uses her colors but really effectively. Yunmee Kyong [dates unknown] – I love her imaginative world.

5. Do you consider yourself a naïve illustrator?

Oh, I've never thought about this... I'm not sure where I belong....but I could see myself called a naïve illustrator.

Farley Katz (b. 1984)

1. Did Roz Chast influence you?

I have always liked and identified with the anxious and neurotic world where Roz's cartoons take place. Everyone is literally shaking with fear, terrified of everything, and that is why so many funny things happen there.

2. Would you say your cartoons are naïve in any way?

My cartoons are influenced by stuff I liked when I was a kid – Dr. Seuss, *Ren and Stimpy*, Steig books – so, yes, the way I draw is a little childish and weird because of that.

3. Do you have an art background or are you self-taught?

My grandma taught me to paint when I was seven years old. I've taken art classes on and off since then but don't have a degree from an art school.



Fig. 207 Aya Kakeda, *Mapinguari*, date unknown, screenprint with charcoal shading.



Fig. 208 Farley Katz, "I can't believe I didn't think of this before," April 5, 2010, medium unknown, *The New Yorker* magazine.

Nora Krug (b. 1977)

1. What/who influenced your illustration style?

It's not so much the style, but the way of thinking visually: Tomi Ungerer [b. 1931], Henrik Drescher, Tadanori Yokoo [b. 1936], Blair Drawson.

2. Is there a period in history that influenced/inspired you?

No particular period. For me it's never about a particular style or medium, but about what an artist wants to say and how he expresses it. I like all kinds of art movements for a variety of reasons.

3. Is there a geographical location that influenced/inspired you?

Japan. I love how Japanese artists throughout history have communicated ideas in simple, but elegant ways, through wood block prints and other illustrations. I also like how they combine text and image as one visual unity.

4. Did any of the illustrators named above influence/inspire you? If so, how so?

Not directly, but I like their work.

5. Do you consider yourself a naïve illustrator?

I don't consider myself a naïve illustrator, but interestingly enough, a lot of people have referred to my work as naïve or primitive! I myself am not that aware of it. But I'm probably more influenced by that kind of work than I think. This is probably the most difficult question, because I'm interested in a variety of different ways of visually expressing myself. For me, the content is always the central part of my work. I choose the medium based on that. I suppose I would call my work graphic, expressionist, and conceptual? Not sure...



Fig. 209 Nora Krug, poster, 2008, mixed media, Meldorf Open Air Festival.

Philippe Petit-Roulet (b. 1953)

1. What/who influenced your illustration style?

I was influenced by so many people that it is hard to make a list.... Though there is certainly Saul Steinberg on top, as he had so many different styles... He was working with ideas, which is what interests me mostly. (When I am drawing I am trying to express an idea as simply and efficiently as I can...)

2. Is there a period in history that influenced/inspired you?

Our modern and civilized world I guess, but I can play sometimes



Fig. 210 Philippe Petit-Roulet, "Turkey, stuffing, and hand sanitizer," November 21, 2009, medium unknown, *The Boston Globe*.

with the past and the future too...

3. Is there a geographical location that influenced/inspired you?

Not particularly... But I guess NYC is, in my imagination, the quintessence of the big modern town....

4. Did any of the illustrators named above influence/inspire you? If so, how so?

I am afraid I don't know Lorraine Fox and Faith Ringgold, but I do appreciate the work of the other illustrators you mention – particularly Thurber and Kalman, though I don't think I am directly influenced by them...

5. Would you characterize your illustrations as naïve, faux-naïf or expressive? If not, how would you describe them?

Expressive.

Steven Rydberg (b. 1952?)

1. What/who influenced your illustration style?

Fine art, and classic illustration from the first part of the 1900s.

2. Is there a period in history that influenced/inspired you?

The Egyptians, the Greeks, then Giotto [1267-1337], then David [1748-1825] and Ingres [1780-1867]. Then the Belle Epoch.

3. Is there a geographical location that influenced/inspired you?

Um...., no.

4. Did any of the illustrators named above influence/inspire you? If so, how so?

I know each of their work well enough to say that that is a varied list. Ms. Ringgold doesn't register in my mind's eye. Mr. Thurber's drawings would be the first of the group that I remember. Whimsical, but bulky drawing style. I lived in the East Village when Ms. Coe happened on the fine art scene in the mid '80s. Her b+w drawings were considered bold. I find Ms. Kalman's style freeing. But the rest I know as humorists. Cartoonists, right?

5. Would you characterize your illustrations as naïve, faux-naïf or expressive? If not, how would you describe them?

I'd never heard the term "faux-naïf." Interesting, but rather forced, I should think of the work that is labeled so. I am a big fan of true naïve art, though. The pure design and odd, but perfect juxtapositions have always inspired my goals for simplicity and honesty in my own work. I like finished illustration more than cartoons, unless the cartoons are brilliant!



Fig. 211 Steven Rydberg, title unknown, 2004, medium unknown, United Airlines ad.

If pressed, I would say all three have come into play in my body of works, at some time or another, especially my early work. The last 20 years, however, I've strived for a "poetic realism" in my work.

6. How many years have you been an illustrator?

I was hired by a well-known professional theater company to create poster art (still my favorite form) when I was 19 years old – making it 39 years ago this year... Gee, and I still feel 19!

Mark Ulriksen (b. 1957)

1. What/who influenced your illustration style?

Movies, photography, folk art, Buster Keaton [1895-1966], graphic design posters, binoculars and artists/illustrators such as Beckmann [1884-1950], Shahn, Miroslav Sasek [1916-1980], Flemish masters, Picasso, etc. All have been big influences.

2. Is there a period in history that influenced/inspired you?

I really like Flemish art of the 1400s; American and European posters of the 1940s-'50s; graphic design of Northern California, circa 1980s.

3. Is there a geographical location that influenced/inspired you?

Living in San Francisco I am, of course, influenced by the golden light we get. It's a bit like Tuscany. I'm also a big fan of Manhattan and its architecture.

4. Did any of the illustrators named above influence/inspire you? If so, how so?

Only Maira Kalman from your list. I like how loose she is, her sense of fun and play and her facility with gouache.

5. Would you characterize your illustrations as naïve, faux-naïf or expressive? If not, how would you describe them?

I really don't think about how to label my work but I do have aspects that are naïve as well as expressive. I like folk art and children's art and unprofessional work. And I think it's important to try to express a sense of who you are as a human, how you respond to the world around you and to make your work as personal as possible. I think one of my kids summed up my work best when she said it's kind of real and kind of cartoony at the same time.



Fig. 212 Mark Ulriksen, "Julia Child," date unknown, medium unknown, *The New Yorker* magazine.

Sarah Wilkins (dates unknown)

1. What/who influenced your illustration style?

I have always been influenced by anything that conveys a purity and grace – nature has and is always a source of influence and inspiration for me...conceptually and aesthetically. As a student studying in New Zealand I was influenced by the European style of illustration that was around at the time (late 1980s) mainly because of my fascination with all things European, and, coming from the Antipodes and feeling a sense of isolation, at being so far away from the centre of things.

2. Is there a period in history that influenced/inspired you?

I am drawn to the late 1950s and 1960s – the cleanness and simplicity.

3. Is there a geographical location that influenced/inspired you?

Paris and New Zealand.

4. Did any of the illustrators named above influence/inspire you? If so, how so?

Maira Kalman has always been one of my favourite illustrators. She has been a great inspiration with her exuberant use of color and her painterly style, but especially her sense of fun! Her books are always a hit with my kids, too.



Fig. 213 Sarah Wilkins, “Houseplants – a breath of fresh air,” date unknown, medium unknown, *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Appendix B

***Raw Vision* magazine definitions**

The controversy surrounding the exact definition of Outsider Art and allied fields has been going on ever since awareness of the phenomenon began. Whatever views we have about the value of controversy itself, it is important to sustain creative discussion by way of an agreed vocabulary.

Neuve Invention

Dubuffet realised that there existed many creators whose work was of comparable power and inventiveness to Art Brut, but their greater contact with normal society and the awareness they had of their art works precluded their inclusion within the strict Art Brut category. These creators were often humble workers who created in their spare time, or eccentric and untrained artists trying to make a living from their work – some of whom had dealings with commercial galleries. As an acknowledgement to them he formed his “Annex Collection”; in 1982 this became the “Neuve Invention” section of the Collection de l’Art Brut. (*examples: Gaston Chaissac, Mario Chichorro, Rosemarie Koczy, Gerard Lattier, Albert Loudon, Frederich Schroder-Sonnenstern*)

Art Brut

Jean Dubuffet’s original 1945 term for the works that he collected and revered; later adopted by the Collection de l’Art Brut at Lausanne. Art Brut means “Raw Art.” Raw because it is “uncooked” or “unadulterated” by culture. Raw because it is creation in its most direct and uninhibited form. Not only were the works unique and original but their creators were seen to exist outside established culture and society. The purest of Art Brut creators would not consider themselves artists, nor would they even feel that they were producing art at all.

Art Brut is visual creation at its purest – a spontaneous psychic flow from brain to paper. No works of Art Brut are allowed to be exhibited away from the Collection at Lausanne. Equally, the name “Art Brut” is not permitted to be used except as a description of the works in the Collection. Similarly, the Collection de l’Art Brut insists that it alone can officially designate any newly discovered works as Art Brut. (*examples: Aloise, Carlo, Henry Darger, Madge Gill, Johann Hauser, Raphael Lonne, Laure Pigeon, Martin Ramírez, Adolf Wölfli*)

Outsider Art

The term “Outsider Art” was originally intended to act as an exact English equivalent to Dubuffet’s term, although Outsider Art has developed to encompass not only Art Brut but also works that the Lausanne Collection would not strictly designate as such (eg. some of the works in the Neuve Invention category). Outsider Art has not had the benefit of the unique protection surrounding Art Brut and the definition has undoubtedly become obscured by chronic misuse since its introduction in 1972.

Sadly we find today that many use the term in the loosest way, to refer to almost any untrained artist. It is simply not enough to be untrained, clumsy, or naïve. Outsider Art is virtually synonymous with Art Brut in both spirit and meaning, to that rarity of art produced by those who do not know its name. (*examples: Wölfli, Hauser, Chomo, Traylor, Schroder-Sonnenstern, Cheval, Rodia*)

Folk Art/Contemporary Folk Art

A simple and direct term that has become much used – and over-used – especially in North America. Originally pertaining to the indigenous crafts and decorative skills of peasant communities in Europe, the term was later applied to the simply made practical objects of colonial days – a combination of charm and practical craftsmanship. In contemporary terms, Folk Art can cover anything from chainsaw animals to hub-cap buildings. The crossover with Outsider Art is undeniable, but most Folk Art has its own traditions and is often very different from the psychic flow of Art Brut. (*examples: Thornton Dial, Sam Doyle, William Hawkins, Clyde Jones, Joseph Sleep, Mose Tolliver*)

Marginal Art, Art Singulier

The works of artists, usually, but not exclusively, self-taught, that are close to Art Brut and Outsider artists, both in appearance and directness of expression. These are the artists “on the margins,” that grey area of definition that lies between Outsider Art and normal mainstream art, very similar to Dubuffet’s Neuve Invention category. Art Singulier encompasses French marginal artists. (*examples: Chomo, Danielle Jacqui, Marcel Landreau, Gerard Lattier, Raymond Reynaud*)

Visionary Art, Intuitive Art

Both of these are deliberate umbrella terms; used together they can include almost everything of value in the field, including much tribal art and the urban folk art of the

third world, as well as most of the works described above. They are safe and honest general terms that avoid the specifics of Outsider Art or Folk Art. (*examples: Kox, Coleman*)

Naïve Art

Often confused with Outsider and Visionary art, this term refers to untrained artists who depict largely realistic scenes, often in minute detail, with people, animals, and other aspects of the observed world, sometimes combined with fantasy images. They often aspire to normal artistic status and are usually very different from the visionaries to be found in the pages of Raw Vision, and may often be seen as quite sophisticated amateurs verging on professionalism. (*examples: James Crane, Grandma Moses, Ivan Generalic, Joseph Pickett, Douanier Rousseau, Germain Tessier*)

Visionary Environments

The environments, buildings, and sculpture parks built by intuitive artists almost defy definition. They have become known by various terms – Visionary Environments and Contemporary Folk Art Environments being perhaps the most appropriate in current use. Although Outsider Art has been used to describe the environments, some feel the label to be insulting to these particular creators, many of whom are integrated members of their local communities. Another popular term, especially in the United States, is Grassroots Art, which can also cover the more humble expressions and constructions of ordinary folk in both town and country.

(<http://www.rawvision.com/outsiderart/whatisoa.html>)

Appendix C

More Lorraine Fox

SEPTEMBER, 1956 WOMAN'S DAY

HOW TO BE A GIRL
BY SUSAN BENNETT HOLMES

All about
the Horseless Carriage

A story by MARY GIBBONS

BLUE
VALENTINE

Strange that Angelo, who knew all about romantic, should make such a mistake with his first girl!

She eyes him with tears.
They've missed each other, Angelo, and Parker wants to talk with you.

WOMAN'S DAY

AUGUST, 1956

How Beautiful Can You Get?

Good Housekeeping

DEEN-LOU'S 8 PAGES BY HELEN WRIGHT

Love, Life and Lipstick

Scene: Any high school
Time: First day of school year
Cast: Three seniors, new teacher
Stage directions: All characters are speaking to themselves

First student (remissably pretty girl, slightly above-average height): I know if I had I've grown six inches this summer, I'm the tallest girl in the class—in the school—probably in the city. Boys love tall girls—they like the little ones, the cute ones—and I don't blame them!

Second student (tall attractive fellow, with two almost nonexistent spots on his chin): Damn! It just figure to happen! The first day of school, and I break out like a paper or something!

Third student (a delightfully and fairly misjudged girl): Why did I decide to wear this red sweater? No one else is wearing a thing like it. And, oh, how I despise being such a slut—no—I'd give any thing to be taller!

New teacher: I should never have had that punishment last week—my hair's an absolute mess. Heaven knows what these kids will think of me—they all look so sure of themselves.

Critic's comments: These people aren't normally insecure or self-conscious, just normally so. What they don't realize is that every body feels the same way at times—painfully aware of the slightest imperfection, real or imaginary, which no one else ever bothers to notice! *

SEPTEMBER 1957

That Certain Kind of Miracle

It happened in the town library, right under the skeptical eye of Miss Hartie.

The End never. Better saying before.

A story by HELEN KAMPEN

Note: Tinkelman was the model for the foreground figures in "Love, Life and Lipstick" and "That Certain Kind of Miracle," above right.

WHEN YOU SHOP FOR YOUR NEW WASHER...

It pays to be a
HARD BOILED
EGG!

SPIN: When the spin says "It's Over!" ask how "How fast will it?" The washer can wash the spin. Easy Spin! It's good to have a spin that is too fast for you!

WASH: When to say "It's over a good thing to do," remember how. Easy Wash! It's easy to see the water. Washes are lighter to look up and dry faster, without looking for the water in the water!

WASHES: Wash all over the spin. Easy Wash! It's easy to see the water. Washes are lighter to look up and dry faster, without looking for the water in the water!

WASHES: Wash all over the spin. Easy Wash! It's easy to see the water. Washes are lighter to look up and dry faster, without looking for the water in the water!

WASHES: Wash all over the spin. Easy Wash! It's easy to see the water. Washes are lighter to look up and dry faster, without looking for the water in the water!

WASHES: Wash all over the spin. Easy Wash! It's easy to see the water. Washes are lighter to look up and dry faster, without looking for the water in the water!

WASHES: Wash all over the spin. Easy Wash! It's easy to see the water. Washes are lighter to look up and dry faster, without looking for the water in the water!

You'll end up buying an **EASY SPINNING**

Better Homes and Gardens
BABY BOOK

A handbook for parents by
The Better Homes & Gardens
Child Care and Training Department





Chairs in Pairs

are better than one! Take



Chairs (spray-paint) set on a "modern style" of modernist
style. One Giraffe chair, \$1 each. Woodstock rug, \$12.99

one inexpensive chair, multiply by two—

place on a



Canvas sling chairs by Frank & Son, \$2.99 each. Black
and white rug by David rug, \$19.99 a square yard

bright splash

of small rug

and get twice

the decorative effect! In your room or any

spot in the house, a chair-



Upturned dining chairs (shaded seats). By Simmons
\$12.99 each. The Cobble Cat rug by Woodstock, \$12

duo doubles the fun! For a Modern decor,

use tub or canvas sling chairs; for Early

American,

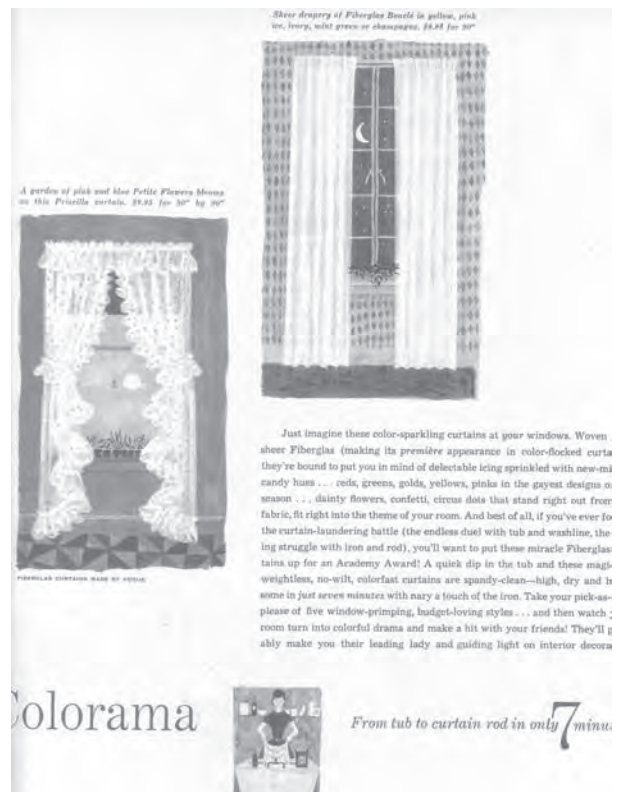
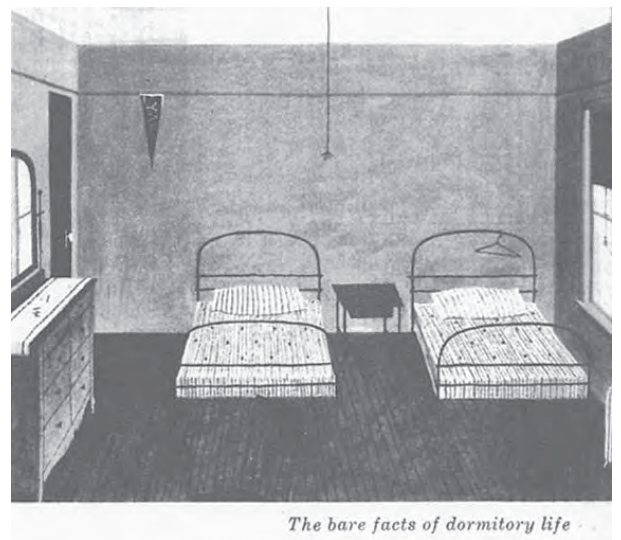


Old bedroom chairs by Fred City, \$12 each. Mosaic's
"ragged" rug in pink Shimmer tone, \$6.99 a square yard

rockers, and for

Victorian,


little gilt chairs





Any Problems?

The innocent telephone, the virtue of not smoking . . . even these can be troublemakers



Telephonitis
We have a bad problem in our house. It's about the telephone. My parents say that I tie up the

have your own, don't talk and talk and talk.

No Smoking!

Fade up to a new hat shape? It's the F&L creel—a modern version of the classic wreath. Here, there are details.

Above, left: A red Italian straw crown-of-thorns, inspired by the coming coronation of the great Queen of England. Packs of straw over the hair. Also in white or navy, about \$7.

Center: A floral halo of imported roses, velvet blossoms and sprays of white-pinked roses. Not covers the crown of your head. Green leaves with white blossoms are a mixture of red with pink or white, about \$11.

Right: A wreath halo of white roses, inspired from the newly-minted Queen Elizabeth visit. A net headpiece covering. Pink with green under, overtones or light and dark green, about \$7. All hats by Fratline Millinery. All pieces by Hannee

More information on page 176



Room Service

Curtain-and-bedspread duets to give a room a spanking new look

BY MIMI SHERATON

1. *Three basket colors . . . super-crisp, lime, turquoise . . . are gently laid in a willy-willy, quilted plaid bedspread. Accented with soft, warm-toned curtains for the most engaging effect in the world. By Ulrika Lindh. Bedspread \$220. Curtains \$150 a pair.*

2. *Slapdashly elegant black and white plaid combined with a towel for a studied cover. Add the strong shape of matching haberdash, soft curtains, and your bedroom is a balanced sitting room! Dumasgrange. Cover \$250. Curtains \$250 a pair. Bedside cover \$250.*

3. *There's a quiet and quiet look about this one . . . the diamond pattern of the bedspread's floral print is set off by the spiraled lines of the dust ruffle, soft curtains, and the look of freshness. By Dreyfus. Bedspread \$250. Duffel \$250. Curtains \$250 a pair.*

4. *For the modern girl with an orderly soul, a beige bedspread, simple and straight. Exquisite, though, in the tapered covers, the earthy tones of linen, beige, and white. Excellent curtains carry out the feeling. Bedspread \$250. Curtains \$250 a pair.*

5. *Right on a note for you, Early American . . . a warm print bedspread brought instantly down to earth by a deep brown dust ruffle. Big curtains to match. By Kinnear. Curtains \$250. Dust ruffle \$250. Curtains \$250 a pair.*

The entire fabric that makes the bedspreads. All prices are for a single-size spread.

For more information, see page 222.



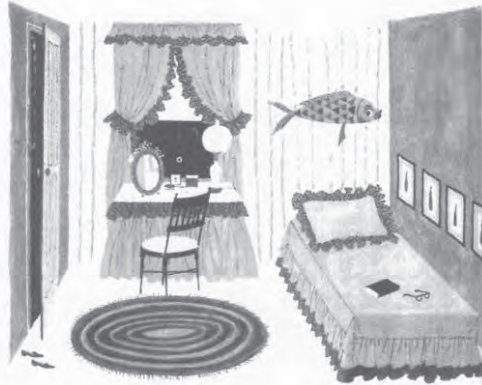
BY (OLD) MISS AGNE H. SCARDALA, NEW YORK

I Take My Lunch to School

When I finally made up my mind to go on a diet in earnest and really lose some of my excess pounds, one of my biggest problems was what to eat for lunch. I didn't have time to come home from school for lunch. Eating at the cafeteria didn't work because most of the food served was too high in calories. The only solution was to carry my lunch from home. But I hated the thought of taking along a lunch that simply stank. "She's on a diet again!" I'd been on diets before and carried along a salad of some kind in a special container. But the minute my friends saw me eating out of this special dish they knew I was dieting—and I felt very self-conscious. I think I had a complex about being different from the rest

Sheets in Disguise

Bed sheets come out of the linen closet to do a real decorating job in your bedroom



Everyone knows about the girl who couldn't see the well-known forest because of the well-known trees. But all of us suffer from the same handicap now and then. For example . . . your room. Just about now you probably would like some cool, crisp curtains, a new bedspread and dressing-table skirt. Then take a fresh look at bed sheets . . . huge expanses of ice-cream-colored cotton just waiting to be stitched into a wrap



How To Pack a Suitcase

The way you look on a trip away from home reflects the way you packed your suitcase. Here are tested tips from experts on how to pack the most with the least wrinkles: folding, tucking or wrapping rules for everything and a special suitcase filing system.

Whether you're packing for one night or one week, make a list. Pin on paper.

Use on half to keep the wetness inside. Big patterned. If it's a permanently.

Packing tips for the artistic, suggested this unique filing system. Here is the

How to Enjoy a Prom



That important prom calls for careful planning

Enjoyment is an art, just like playing the piano. It is not something that just happens to you, like the weather. Certainly you have an amazing natural talent for it—but it's equally certain that you will improve with diligent practice. You can get along from day to day, if you care to, without paying much attention to the art of enjoyment; but when something important comes along, something as out-of-the-ordinary and as long-looked-forward-to as a really big spring prom, it is merely common sense to buckle down and do your finger exercises well in advance. So—on the principle that if a party is worth doing at all, it's worth doing well—here is a selection of major and minor scales to help you polish up your technique. Run through them a couple of times, trying to develop that allegro vivace feeling.

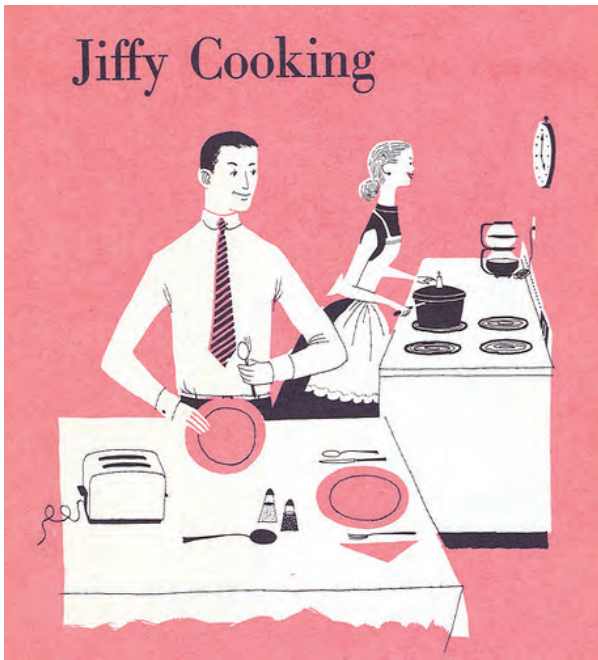
C Major: That's for Clothes, and it is extremely major. Being human, you want a new dress for the occasion—and it's better than even money that you will get one, by fair means or foul—fair. You will instinctively think, plan, analyze, daydream, study, evaluate and reconsider the whole clothes question from every angle. You will also gossip around and see what your friends are planning to wear. But in your fascination with detail, don't neglect the level of high policy: ask yourself

whether you want to look exactly like everybody else, a little different from everybody else, or astonishingly different from everybody else. If you find yourself leaning toward the first answer, then you should climb out of your rut and assert your individuality. If you're tempted by the last, stop to consider whether you're really as sensationally gorgeous that you can afford to attract that much attention. If you are, then you can; otherwise, take it easy. Boys are conservative creatures: by and large—and while they will be pleased if you are memorable, they are apt to be rather uneasy if you are conspicuous.

When you come to such specific questions as color, length, décolletage, straps or no straps, and so forth, the specific answers will depend very largely on who you are, how you look, where you live, and what the other girls do . . . or don't. In general, you should bear in mind that your aim is to look pretty, natural, extremely well-bred, and just the least bit aristocratic. In other words, if you must err, do it on the conservative side.

If a new dress is completely and hopelessly out, don't be discouraged—at any rate, not to the point of paralysis. A few of your very dear friends may notice it, and tell you so, but most people won't, and ninety-nine out of a hundred boys will automatically assume that it's a (continued on page 162)

Jiffy Cooking



Special Helps



chapter 1

It's your home
what kind do you want?



chapter 2

You know more
facts about color
than you think



chapter 3

How to build a color scheme



chapter 4

Create convenience with furniture arrangement



*The basic "rule"
furniture arrangement*

chapter 5

Backgrounds set the mood



chapter 6

Glamorize your floors



chapter 7

Wake up your home with lighting



chapter 8

Make the most of your windows



chapter 9

Personalize your home with accessories



chapter 10

Space-makers stretch your living area



Do you need a guest room? Are you frantic for

Plan for a livable kitchen



Color has moved into the kitchen, making it a

Decorating ideas for other rooms



Take advantage of dollarsavers



Redecorating makes your dreams come true



