

ARTKNOWS – Winter 2020/21

Art of the primary eye.



Rachel does not give up her ability to draw in her search for going beyond the lessons she learned in art school. She bends drawing protocol to fit her intuitive sense of visual rightness. In this sense she is considered an Outsider artist; having been trained in art school, but re-inventing what she learned.

Rachel also is not interested in fame as an artist – she has rejected much of the art world.

Rachel Bliss



James Lloyd - British 1905-1974

Greetings!

I hope this newsletter finds you well and keeping safe! The last newsletter (summer 2020) focused on art in the time of pandemics. Obviously, we cannot yet leave the pandemic behind, but we can change the channel for a respite. This newsletter will focus on art that has many names; primitive art, outsider art, naïve art, folk art, and

vernacular art. Are they the same? While I won't be able to give examples of all of the various genres listed, I hope to give distinction between them.

This fall I received a letter from Timothy Jones (thanks Timothy!). He writes, *“I have never drawn anything, never taken any classes, nothing. But I have a desire to learn.....So my question is; will you be offering any basic, fundamental lessons for inmates, who like me find stick figures challenging and who cannot figure out how to make the head proportionate to the rest of the body?”*

There is something to be said for those basic drawing instruction classes that teach how to create well-proportioned figures. I went to art school for 4 years and have taken all those classes. I have a husband (you know - the other Gary) who has taught at Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art for 30 years; teaching figurative sculpture. So why focus on artists who have no formal instruction? What can be learned from them?

Consider **James Lloyd's** painting, “The boy and a horse.” (Lloyd is British, 1905-1974.) The horse's head is totally out of proportion. But it is this lack of proportion that makes the painting so strong. It gives energy and creates compositional momentum of pulling the viewer into the drawing.



Lloyd was the son of a policeman who had taken up farming. He had worked on his father's farm until the age of 19, when he too joined the police force. He had a variety of jobs before the war: gas-works stoker; bus conductor; builder's laborer; lamp-lighter; until he was accepted for the famous and exclusive British Army regiment of the [Coldstream Guards](#). He served with distinction in his regiment overseas during the war. On demobilisation he married Nancy, she was a teenager and he in his forties, he returned to the land and took a job as a wagoner in Shropshire. He, his wife and four children bought a small holding at Triangle, near Halifax, in the [Pennines](#). Although he had done some paintings as a young man, it was not until he was forty, that he began to paint in earnest.

He and his family moved to [Skirpenbeck, East Riding of Yorkshire](#) in 1950. He took on the job as a [cowman](#). There were now so many paintings, laboriously constructed dot by dot ([pointillism](#)). His wife Nancy decided it was time that Lloyd's work was seen by more people. Without telling her husband she wrote to [Sir Herbert Read](#) and he paid Lloyd a visit to see his paintings, and bought a couple of them. Herbert Read sent some to various galleries in London.

(BTW – Herbert Read (British 1893-1968) was an academic art historian who developed strong interest in art education. He became interested in children's art after he was asked to collect art that would tour allied countries during the Second World War. Because it was risky to ship art by professional artists, it was suggested to send children's drawings and paintings. Read, in making this collection, was unexpectedly moved by the expressive power and emotional content of some of the children's work. He has written much about the genuine and truth dimensions of children's work. For instance, it made total sense to Read that a child would paint a purple elephant. The elephant's amazing size and characteristics cannot be fully experienced by the drabness of the color grey. Therefore, coloring the elephant purple by a child more closely connects with the magical experience of an elephant. Unfortunately, children's sense of the world is hampered down and undermined by adults in the need to “correct” the painting. I saw an example of this in a 5-year old child's sketchbook. I loved the child's drawings - people, trees, plants, houses drawn in various renditions, moving across the page without a care for correct proportion or likeness. The child's marks on the page were like the beating of everyday life -

magical and energetic. Then I came to a particular page. On this page the figures were perhaps more accurate in proportion, but lacked the energy of the previous pages. I asked the child about this drawing and she responded, “Oh that’s my older sister, she knows how to draw better than me.” Was the need for “dutiful correctness” undermining the energy of seeing the world without these constraints?

I also found this individual vision to be true in teaching art in the mental health unit of a men’s maximum-security unit. In general population, I taught the men basic drawing skills, but in the mental health unit, I didn’t teach them the basics. I **followed** them. They interpreted the world in unique ways and I didn’t want to impose correction upon that world. Artists often think too much; the idea of intention is totally based upon thinking. Likewise, the attitude of “I want to express myself” also has too much thinking. It is based upon hopes, desire and a need to please. In other words, if we set out an intended plan for art it is likely to be too influenced by the propaganda of correctness and others. Instead, these mental health drawings existed where the rubber meets the road – without thought or pandering to an audience - like the child’s drawings. How do we regain authority over our own vision?

Exercise: With a drawing pen or pencil and paper at hand, close your eyes, and free your mind. Now open your eyes and draw whatever is the first thing that is in your field of vision. Do not edit it to find something “proper” to draw. Don’t interpret what you see - just jot down whatever. Follow your eyes instead of your brain. Your eyes reveal what you experience as important. Your thinking mind tends to repeats what you have been taught to be important. Now repeat the exercise (maybe turning your chair in the opposite direction). This time when you open your eyes to draw the first thing you see – DON’T look at your paper. Keep your eyes on what you are seeing and draw without looking at your paper.

Many people think that to draw well, they need the drawing to be as “accurate” as a photograph. But is a photograph really how we see the world? Afterall, the camera only has one lens, while the majority of people have two lenses (except my son’s friend who shot out his eye with a homemade potato gun). In addition to having two lenses, our eyes are always moving – even when we think they are not. So how could we possibly see the same as a camera’s single lens? Therefore, why do we insist that “good” drawing looks like a photograph? A photograph is a tough taskmaster making us bend to its potentially insincere power. What happens when we see the world through our own eyes? We begin to see the world as we feel it.

My husband is an artist who is considered to be academically correct. He uses measurement tools, scrutinizing the model from an analytic eye. I appreciate much of his analytic suggestions for my work, but I can take only so much of his input and then slam close my studio door. I know that my final decisions are not made on analysis but intuition.

When I speak about the primary eye, I am not speaking of working from your imagination. Without close observation of the world, your imagination is useless. It is like writing a novel with only three words in your vocabulary. The artist trains to visually listen to the world in order to feed their imagination. If the people you draw are always from your imagination – guess what? Those people will be redundant and boring after a while. Your drawings will all look the same. I remember teaching in a prison in New York and brought home some prisoner drawings. When Gary saw the work, he said – “that person been drawing that same drawing for the past 100 years – in various renditions.” And I realized he was correct. The artist needs to feed his/her inventory of imagery through careful observation of the world. I believe this is the one big factor that defines outsider art – the artist is automatically fine-tuned to the world and does not see the world through the filters of others (the photographs, lectures, you know – how the world wants to you to see it – not exactly how you see it.)

Vocabulary time!

There are many different categories that overlap one another in describing this art.

What is folk art? Folk art belongs to the general category of folk culture in general. Folk culture is defined as “of or originating among the common people.” It comes from a common reservoir of images and skill that reflects a particular culture. Some definitions of folk art suggest that it is created by individual living in isolation. One characteristic of folk art is that it is often “functional” which means that it has a use outside of being an “object of art.” Folk art is not only judge on its artistic merit but its function, making folk art different than how “fine art” is seen. The craft is often past down through generations and the work often has prescribed ways for how it is made and what materials are used to make it.

Outsider art: Outsider art is an accepted term by which to designate art creativity that lies outside the perimeter of the official art world. Often these artists do not want to be part of the mainstream society. Likewise, (and unlike folk art) the outsider art invents their own techniques and motifs and chooses their material by what is naturally around them. (In this way, the outsider artist differs from the folk artists who depend upon tradition for their art.)



Anonymous artist to the left.
Brian Dowdall below with his mural in Baltimore



Primitive art: Interestingly enough, primitive art actually evolved out of the trained academic art. It was a reaction to this overly perfected art of the trained artists. (take note Timothy Jones – it was a dislike for all that perfect proportion – there is hope for all those badly drawn people!) Primitive art was not a retreat to an innocent time, but an escape from the reality of the modern world. For the artists, it was a search to develop a new way of seeing – or as I suggest – the primary eye that does not have to bend to the rules of perspective, the rules of proportion, the rules of harmony and so on. Primitive art is the anarchy of art!

Primitive art rests on an understanding between “feeling naturally” and “feels what is natural.” What this means is that “feeling natural” takes the “what is” out of the equation. The “what is” makes feeling natural too self-conscious. (Again, it is that “intention” dimension that separates the rubber from the road.) Think about how amateurs act in front of a video camera. They act differently in front of the camera because they are overly self-conscious about their actions. It is the same thing for some artists, but in this case the artist is thinking too much about being “natural.” In primitive art, the artist doesn’t think about being natural - **one just feels**. There is nothing separating painting and painter; the painter becomes the painting; the painting becomes the painter; and neither is one outside the other. Where the rubber-meets-the-road.

Likewise, outsider is not dependent upon history. And since there is no history, there cannot be any “how-to” manuals telling the artist how to paint a picture. (Many beginning artists want that “how-to” approach. Consider Bob Ross - his how-to formula for painting happy trees is the antithesis of primitive art.

Naïve art: This is usually defined as “visual art that is created by a person who lacks the formal education and training that a professional artist undergoes. However, when this aesthetic is emulated by a trained artist, the result is called primitive art.”

Vernacular art: Vernacular in itself means “of the people.” Consider the difference between the language of Latin that was spoken by priests and everyday language of the people. One would say that the people spoke in the “vernacular” (which is different from “slang”). In art, the vernacular seems to be similar to “naïve art” whereas the artist is not trained and does not consider themselves as artist.

L’art brut: This literally means “raw art,” and initially referred to the art of **Jean Dubuffet** (French, 1901-1985) who in 1940s promoted art that was crude, inexperienced, and sometimes obscene. Dubuffet became interested in this after he studied the writings of Swiss psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn, “The Art of the Mentally Insane.”



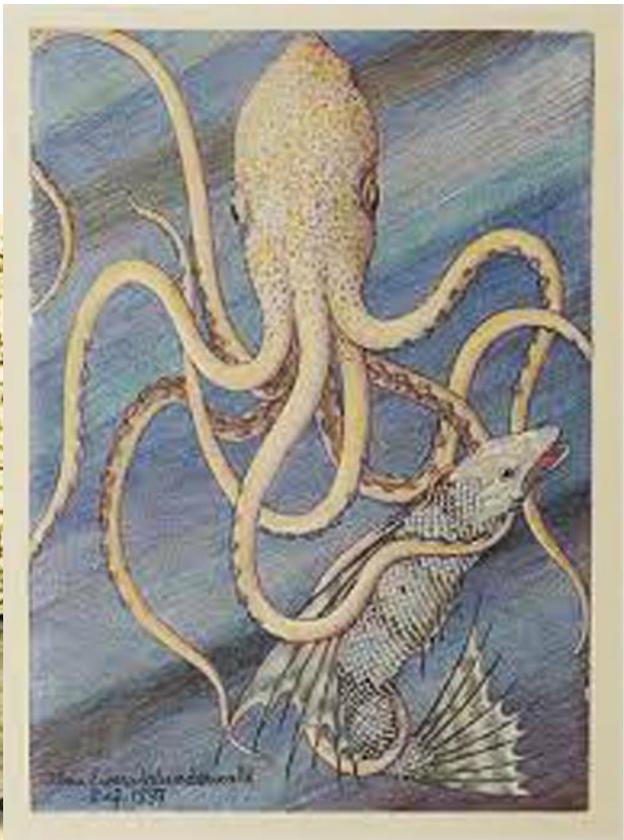
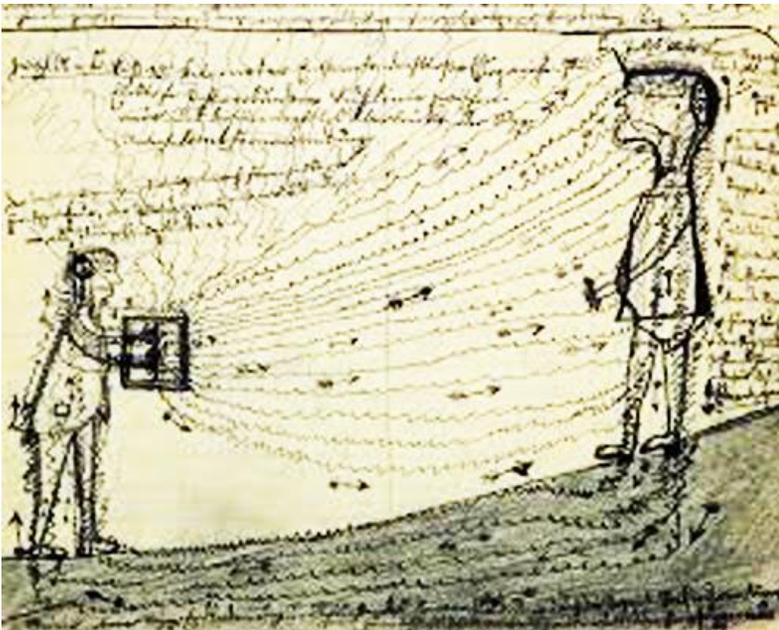
Notice in these six images from Hans Prinzhorn’s collection of artistry of the mentally ill, the artists are NOT AFRAID of the edges of the paper or painting. What is at the edges of the drawing is as important as what is in the center. Most beginning artists are afraid of the edge of the paper, keeping everything in the center! The edges don’t bite!

Exercise: create a drawing where the imagery at the edge is as important as the center. (Even when artists do draw to the edge, the main focus remains in the center – this can be very boring!)



Dr. Prinzhorn collected about 5000 drawings and paintings of the mentally ill patients and wrote a book, “The artistry of the mentally ill”. It was this book that influenced Dubuffet.

Below drawing is entitled: “Influencing machine”.



Dubuffet was interested in this art because he felt that the simple life of everyday human beings contained more art and poetry than did academic art or great paintings. Dubuffet writes “It is the man in the street whom I feel closest to, with whom I want to make friends.” Dubuffet wanted to make art free from intellectual concerns and as a result created work that is primitive and childlike. (Sound familiar to the above?)



Dubuffet – A painting of multiple portraits and an image of the NYC exhibition of his large sculptures that have the same kind of imagery as his paintings. (Fall 2020 exhibition in NYC at Pace Gallery)
 Notice the person walking through the exhibition with a COVID mask.



Henry Rousseau (French, 1844-1910)

One has to talk about Henri Rousseau when speaking of primitive art. Rousseau is probably the most famous primitive artist. In this role, he also has had a strong influence on modern art. Rousseau did not earn his primary living as an artist. He was a toll and tax collector. He began painting seriously in his early forties and retired at 49 from being a tax collector to devote full-time to painting. Apparently, when Picasso was a young man, Picasso saw a painting of Rousseau being sold **as not a painting**, but as a canvas to be painted over by whoever bought the painting! Picasso recognized the genius of Rousseau and went to meet Rousseau. It is said that Picasso held a banquet for Rousseau in his studio. Rousseau did exhibit his work regularly. Rousseau was different than many other primitive artists who often lived and worked in isolation. Rousseau had a strong social network, was not socially naïve as other artists, and was inspired by other artists. Instead, art historians look at his paintings to understand his primitive style which emerges from the sincerity of his vision.



Sleeping Gypsy



“Boy on the rocks” by Henri Rousseau
What I particularly like about Rousseau’s paintings are their bold forms and color. It does not matter that this boy looks like a strange old man. What I like is the strong black of the shirt against the background; the pattern of the leggings against the black. There is something “in-your-face” about the composition. No wishy-washiness. Who care that this boy-looking-more-like-strange-adult could **never** be sitting on those spiked rocks? This is not reality. It is not imagination. It is a vision; not ignoring the world but bending that world to a feeling.

My following survey of primitive artists is not chronological. We are time traveling back and forth. It is also not categorized by particular country. I am relating these artists as I discover them while reviewing several sources of information.

John Patrick Byrne: British, 1940 - Byrne is a contemporary artist still working in his 70’s. He uses the name of “Patrick” for some of his paintings, as he is also a film director. **Byrne was born in Paisley and studied at Glasgow School of Art from 1958 to 1963. He has worked as an artist, playwright and theatre designer. Byrne uses a variety of styles and techniques, always avoiding any association with particular styles or movements in art. In 1967, following a lack of success with London galleries, Byrne produced a series of paintings under the guise of 'Patrick', which he claimed was the name of his seventy-two year-old father. These paintings were met with interest, much to the artist's amusement. Below paintings by Patrick (conjoining non-twins? And Tilda Swinton!)**



Clowns by Patrick (John Patrick Bryne)

You might see a theme here of strong bold form and strong contrast; between dark and light; and patterns.

Exercise: Create a composition where there is strong contrast of tone (black and white) and an intelligent use of pattern. Think of pattern as a color. In this composition, there are the colors of black, white, gray, and pattern.



Self-portrait by Patrick

Scotland, he has been described as the first postmodern poet from Paisley.

André Bauchant (April 24, 1873 – August 12, 1958) was a French '[naïve](#)' painter. He is known mostly as a painter of flowers and of landscape compositions with figures which were often informed by [mythology](#) and [classical history](#).

He was born in [Château-Renault, Indre-et-Loire](#). The son of a gardener, he originally entered his father's trade, and progressed to operating a nursery. In 1914, he was called to serve in World War I. During the military service his drawing skills were noticed and he was trained as a mapmaker. After demobilization in 1919 he found his nurseries destroyed. He and his wife relocated to [Auzouer-en-Touraine](#), where he found work on local farms. Inspired by the rural environment, at the age of 45, he dedicated himself to a career as a painter.

Many of his early works depict biblical or mythological themes. His first exhibit was in 1921 at the [Salon d'Automne](#), where he showed a large *Ulysses and the Sirens* and eight other paintings.

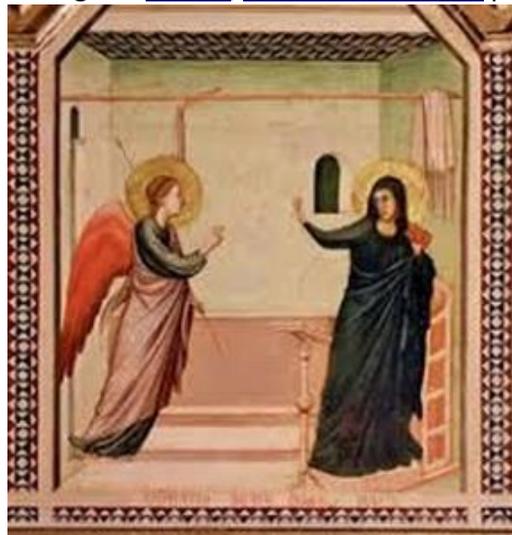
Subsequently, Bauchant's most frequent subjects were floral still-lives and landscapes with figures. In 1937 his paintings were included in the exhibition *Maîtres Populaires de la Réalité*, which traveled to Paris, Zurich, and London. In 1938–1939, a version of the same exhibition was presented at eight US museums, beginning with the [Museum of Modern Art](#) (.....And we can congratulate Jerome Washington, Jesse Osmun, Mark Loughney, James Sepesi, and Brian Hindson for their participation in the current exhibition at MoMA; Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration in New York.) In 1949, a retrospective exhibition of 215 of his works was mounted by the Galerie Charpentier in Paris.

According to the art historian Nadine Pouillon, *"Bauchant's treatment of figures, frozen in attitudes indicating a certain awkwardness and as if enshrined in foliage, manifest a poetic and mysterious quality sometimes reminiscent of medieval paintings. This association was further emphasized by his use of unglazed colours in*

manner of quattrocento frescoes and by a colour sense similar to that of Giotto.”



(Reminder - Giotto was an [Italian painter](#) and [architect](#) from [Florence](#) during the [Late Middle Ages](#). He worked during the [Gothic/Proto-Renaissance](#) period.



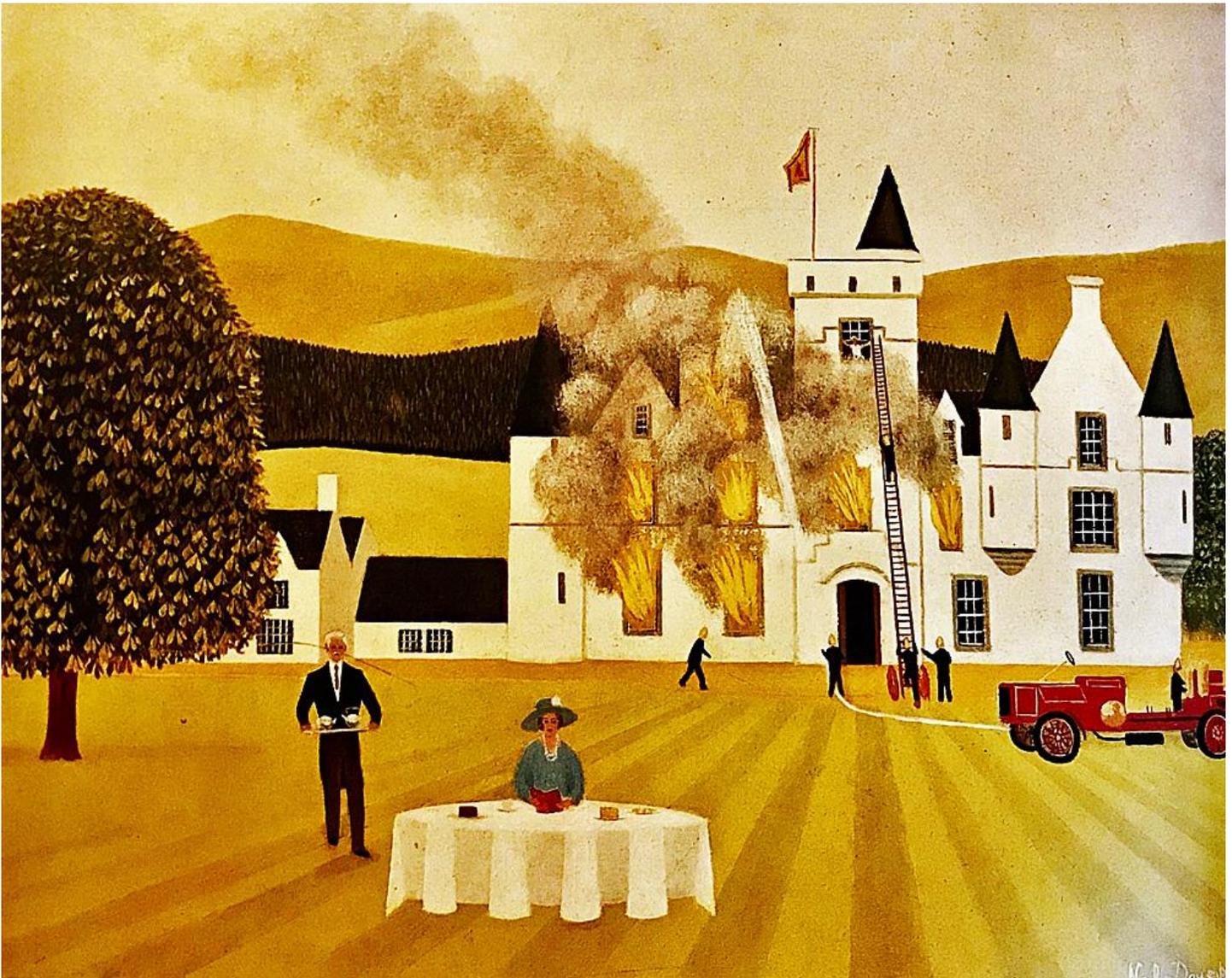
Annunciation by Giotto (it is very hard to find a larger version on the internet.....)

Giotto's contemporary, the banker and chronicler [Giovanni Villani](#), wrote that Giotto was "the most sovereign master of painting in his time, who drew all his figures and their postures according to nature" and of his publicly recognized "talent and excellence".

Giotto was described by the Renaissance biographer Vasari as making a decisive break with the prevalent [Byzantine](#) style and as initiating "the great art of painting as we know it today," (here Vasari was referring to the "today" of the 1500 's of Vasari) introducing the technique of drawing accurately from life, which had been neglected for more than two hundred years." Note that this description written by the biographer Vasari in 1500's talks about the importance Giotto made in "drawing from life."

Neal Davenport – There is not much information on the primitive painter Neal Davenport except that he is British and lived from 1913 until 1983 and was a photographer before turning to painting. His painting "Five O'clock Tea" is painted with attention to detail. Consider the tea serving on the butler's tray and the fireman

at the window. It also suggests a political statement about the rich being indifferent to the state of things; ignorant of the house burning to the ground – as if nothing is going to interfere with the afternoon ritual of tea.



Notice how flat the castle is painted. There is no depth in the building and yet Davenport creates much spatial depth in the painting because of the row of lines in the grass coming towards the viewer. Remember this technique as a good way to create depth in your drawings and paintings. Drawing lines from the bottom of the picture back into the picture (as Davenport does from the bottom of the picture to almost the castle) and – voila!! - you get depth in the picture!

Exercise: Draw a picture of a still life (your coffee cup, your cap, whatever) and then draw lines from the bottom of the picture to the middle of the picture as Davenport does above and see how you have magically created greater space in the picture.

Fergus Hall: Fergus is a Scottish artist who is still living. Technically he is not a “naïve artist” in that he was taught at the Royal School of Art in Scotland. His claim to fame is painting the covers for the rock band King Crimson and for creating the illustrations for the Tarot Cards (Circa 1970’s). So if you have any Tarot cards around, Fergie illustrated them!



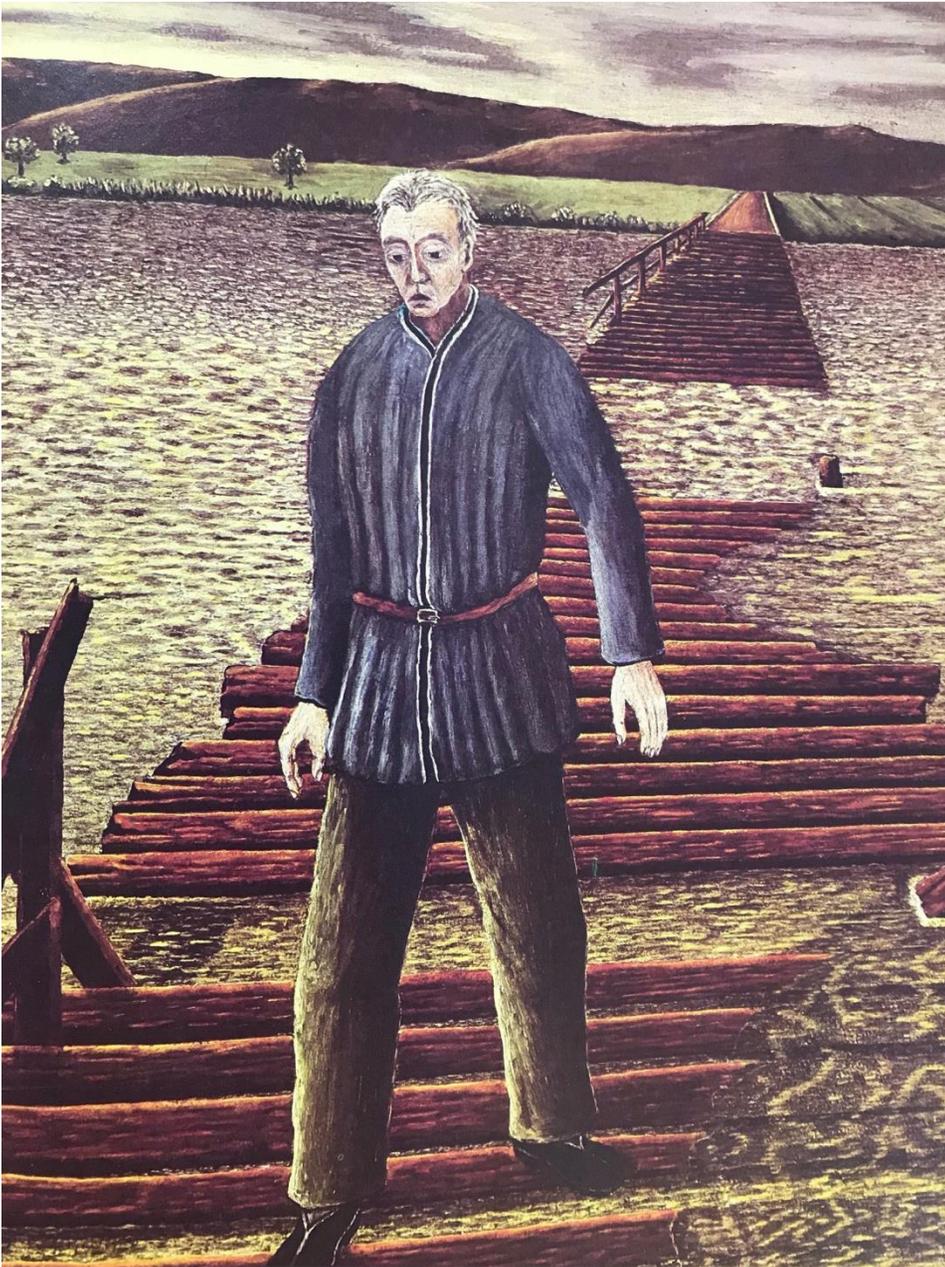
Fergus Hall



Fergus Hall –

The Garden

Friedrich Gerlach: I could find no information about this artist, although some of his works are on the internet. The little information I could find on him was that he was German and worked in the German mines. There is a kind of existential somberness to his paintings.



The Bridge – Friedrich Gerlach, Another technique for creating depth in a drawing is making a figure very large in the foreground (the man here is seen in the foreground. He is drawn from the bottom of the drawing page to the top and everything behind him is smaller.

Exercise. Draw something large - like your coffee cup or toothbrush, positioning that object on the page like this man on the bridge. Then draw everything behind it much smaller. That “large something” right at the front of your picture frame will dwarf something smaller behind it and will create the illusion of space in your drawing. Another technique for creating the illusion of space in your drawing is where you place the horizon line. In this drawing, where the mountains meet the sky.) The higher you place the horizon line on the paper, the closer the horizon will look in the drawing. A far away horizon would be drawn lower on the paper. Experiment with the horizon line by redrawing the man in this drawing by Gerlach. Now draw the horizon line (the line created where the mountains meet the sky) lower on the page. Make the mountains lower on the horizon. See how the space is altered. Bring the horizon down to about where the man’s waist is and see how far the horizon looks.

I like the high horizon line in the Gerlach drawing because it makes the drawing fuller in terms of what is on the earth. If the horizon line is lower, although it will appear further away in space, you then would have to deal with the larger sky. which may not be as interesting as this bridge that extends behind the man. But maybe you could draw balloons, flying objects, flying monkeys and elephants – and so on.

Harriet Powers. African-American folk artist Harriet Powers was born into slavery in rural Georgia on October 29, 1837. She made quilts and used them to record local historical legends, Bible stories and astronomical events. She is probably more aligned with folk art in that she used the culture of legends and the traditional method of applique technique (a technique of cutting out material shapes and sewing them onto the quilt.) She died in 1910.

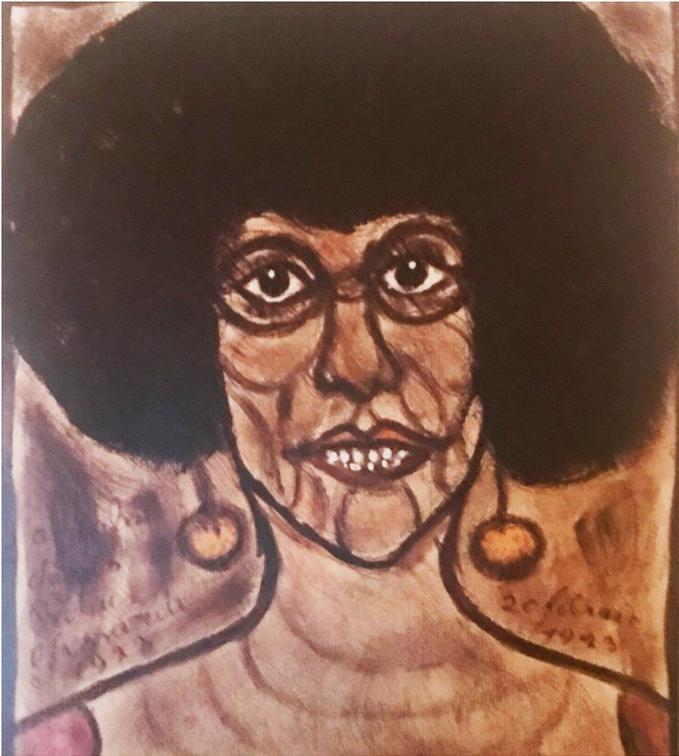


Two quilts by Harriet Powers

Pietro Ghizzardi Pietro was born in 1906 to a family of farmers in Northern Italy. His parents were day laborers who were constantly on the move looking for agricultural day work. Pietro first began drawing and painting on the walls of old barns. Then he started painting on cardboards, often painting with soot taken from furnaces and berries from nature to make dyes. He accidentally met with a vagabond individual who made his living by drawing numbers and monograms on bedclothes. This person had a strong influence on Pietro and when his family finally settled down in one area of Italy, Pietro decided to dedicate his life to painting. He often painted several portraits of family members, saints, wild animals, but his favorite was painting portraits of women. He often presented these women as fertility goddesses. Before he died in 1986, Pietro had about 15 years of relative fame as an artist.



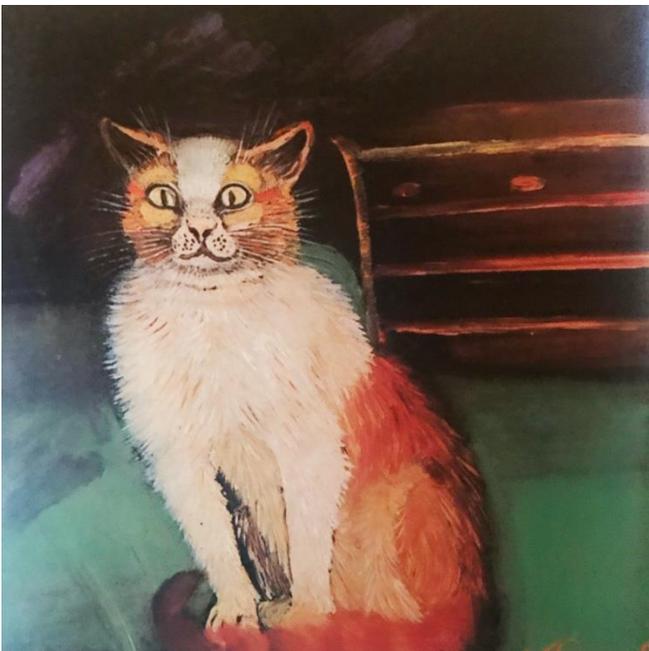
Photograph of Pietro Ghizzardi; “Oy, do I ever have a headache?”must be from the paint fumes.



Pietrao Ghizzardi's portrait of Angela Davis.

I'm not sure if Pietro saw Angela as a fertility goddess

Antonio Ligabue. Antonio was born (1899) of Italian parents who lived in Switzerland. He was taken from his father after his mother died. There is some speculation that his father poisoned his mother. Antonio eventually was kicked out of Switzerland (not sure why) and had to go to Italy, but he didn't speak Italian and tried to get back into Switzerland. Antonio started painting in 1920 and with the help of a local artist was taught how to paint. Apparently, he was hospitalized several times for psychiatric difficulties. On one hospitalization Antonio met a sculpture who helped him get out of the mental hospital and offered Antonio a place to live. In 1957, the public got interested in his work and he had his first gallery exhibition in 1961 in Rome. Unfortunately, the next year he was in a motorcycle accident and was paralyzed. He died in 1965.



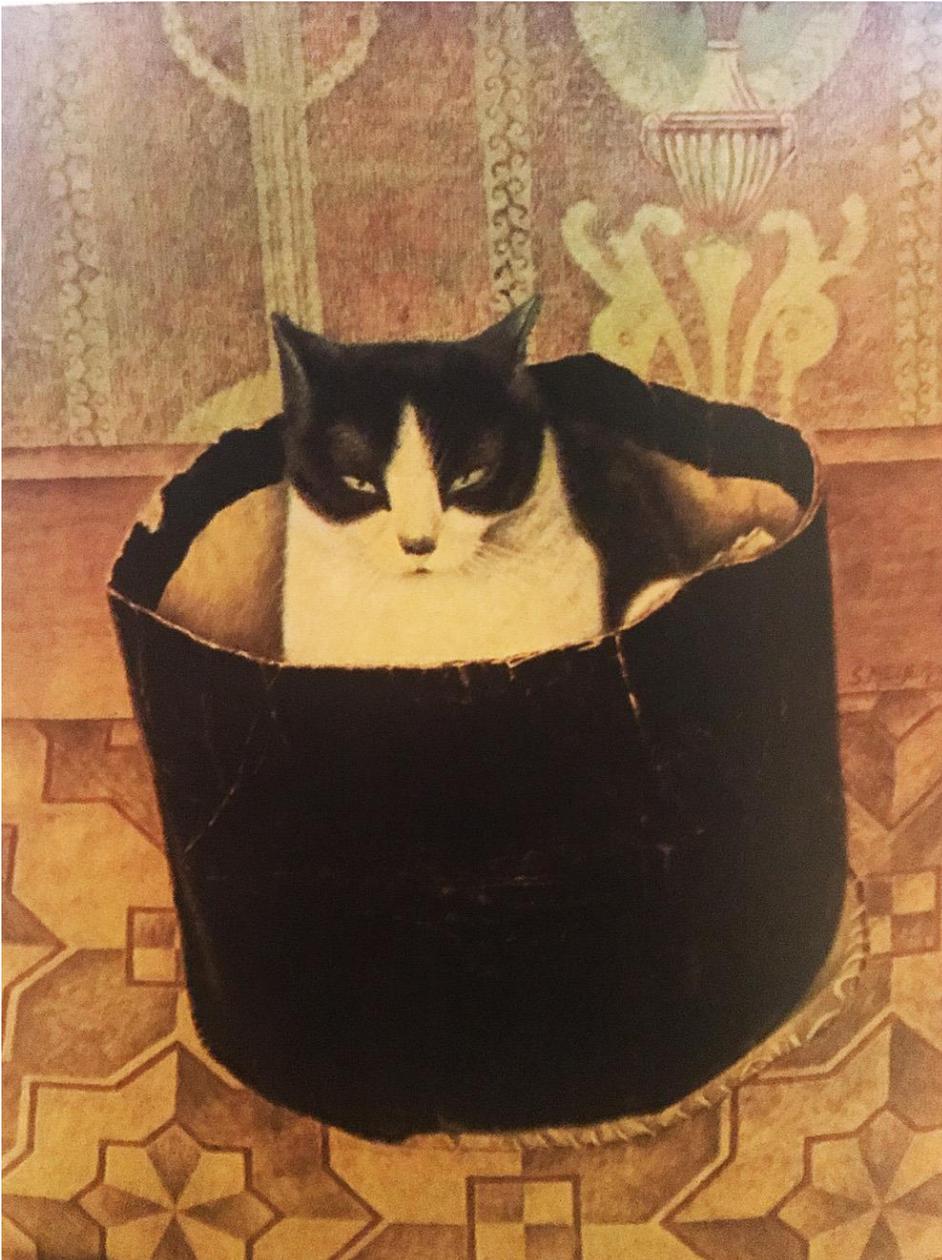
Antonio Ligabue, male cat. Notice how Antonio places the cat directly on the bottom of the picture plane and off-center. This compositional device creates a very aggressive stance of the cat; kind of like "in-your-face" attitude. Placement of things in a composition are very important in how the viewer experiences the images. Try placing the cat differently. The beginning artist always draws the main figure (in this case the cat) in the middle of the picture with equal distance around it – thus creating a very boring picture.

Salomon Meijer (December 6, 1877 - [Blaricum](#), February 1, 1965) was a [Dutch](#) painter, primarily known for his paintings of cats and Amsterdam city views. Works by Meijer are on view at the [Jewish Historical Museum](#) and the [Kattenkabinet](#) cat museum in Amsterdam, among others.

Sal or "Sally" Meijer was born at [Zwanenburgwal](#) 10 as the son of [Jewish diamond-cutters](#). In his youth, he worked in the diamond industry while studying art. He devoted himself full-time to painting in 1914. His first one-man exhibition was in 1926.

His marriage to the non-Jewish Liesje Giehl in 1930 caused so much friction with his parents that he moved out of his parents' home and moved the following year to the village of Blaricum, which had a vibrant artists' community. Following the German occupation of the Netherlands during [World War II](#), Meijer was banned from exhibiting his paintings; however, his [mixed marriage](#) enabled him to survive the war.

In 1957, he was honored at a ceremony by the Blaricum artists' society to mark his 80th birthday. At this occasion, the Dutch state purchased one of his paintings, depicting the [Raamgracht](#) canal in Amsterdam. In 1958, the [Stedelijk Museum](#) in Amsterdam presented an overview of his work. After his death in 1965, a memorial exhibition was held at [Zeist](#) palace. Meijer was buried at the Jewish cemetery in [Muidersberg](#).



In this painting Sal does place the cat and its nest in the middle of the painting. But he does consider the outside edges. Notice how he off-tilts the container making it slightly off balance. This keeps the painting from being boring and stagnant; makes it feel like the cat might topple over. And look at the beautiful contrast between the black of the cat and box with the monochrome of the outside. He made fierce division between the two. I'm emphasizing this bold contrast of tone because many of you tend to stay in the midtone of color. I rarely see some intense blacks in your drawings. I see mostly greys in the midtone. Get a wide range of one in your drawings and see how snappy the drawing can get. Also look at the verticality of the cat and the horizontals of the wall. A good compositional device to make interesting drawings.

Teophil Ociepka was born in 1891 in Poland. He was a self-taught primitivist painter who studied the occult and theosophy. (Theosophy is any number of philosophies maintaining that a knowledge of God may be achieved through spiritual ecstasy, direct intuition, or special individual relations, especially the movement founded in 1875 as the Theosophical Society by Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907). Ociepka's paintings are influenced by the life of miners, Silesian fairy tales and occult literature. (Silesia is a locale in central Europe, mostly Poland.)



Ociepka's monster. Maybe this painting refers to the wood spirit, Rübezahl, who is a mountain spirit, but no one knows his true appearance. He is in charge of the gnomes, those creepy but slightly cute little beings? Apparently, his character is as transient as his appearance. In some stories, Rübezahl is bad, but in some he is good. Above he must be good – just look at those eyes. But wait, is that a tongue coming out of his beak? And is that beak really a COVID mask?

(Exercise; take an old fairy tale or legend and create a drawing about it – giving it personal meaning for you.)

Judith Scott. I realize that this newsletter is short on women! Not sure why that is. Everyone knows Grandma Moses but what other women are there that are primitive artists?

Judith Scott was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1943. Isolated as a result of being institutionalized for most of her life due to Down syndrome and deafness, Scott began creating art at age forty-three, after being introduced to Creative Growth in 1987. Fabric quickly became her passion and medium of choice, and for the next eighteen years of her life, Scott created sculptures using yarn, twine, and strips of fabric, to wrap and knot around an array of mundane objects she discovered around her, such as keys, plastic tubing, bicycle wheels, and a shopping cart.

Scott's vivid and enigmatic sculptures, which evolved in shape and material throughout her career, expressed her imagination in ways she could not through speech. Her abstract works have been compared to nests and cocoons while her processes alluded to both ritual and play. Described as hermetic and complex, the wrapping suggests protection and concealment.

Scott's work is held by the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the American Folk Art Museum, the Museum of Everything, and the Collection de l'Art Brut in Switzerland. Her works have been displayed in galleries, fairs and museums around the world, most notably the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017. In 2014, the Brooklyn Museum held the first comprehensive survey of Scott's works in an exhibition titled Judith Scott: Bound and Unbound.

Scott lived in Dutch Flat, California, and continued making art at [Creative Growth Art Center](#) until she passed away in 2005.



Judith took twine and wrapped things – like this above right chair with a bicycle wheel on it.

Madge Gill: British 1882-1961) Below is a gallery summary about Madge Gill:

"Mediumistic Art." It's something we'd never heard of, until we uncovered the mysterious world of Mrs. Madge Gill. One of history's most important outsider artists, Madge tended to her garden, her husband, and her children in what appeared to be the quiet life of a London housewife. But one day, she felt a stirring to create, and in the darkest hours of the night, she began to draw – and she wasn't alone. Madge declared her artistic partnership with an otherworldly companion, a spirit called "Myrninerest," as the guiding, ghostly of creative bouts. Together, they made an elaborate tapestry of thousands of works, from embroidered pieces to tapestries, gothic, architectural drawings to a kind of alphabet. History has labeled her art as "obsessive" and "giddy"; "ghostlike," and existing in familiar, kaleidoscopic spaces. What really went on in the mind – and the heart – of Madge? Who was this Myrninerest? To untangle the truth about this fascinating artist, we have to turn back the clock..



The works came in all sizes, from postcard-sized to huge sheets of fabric, some over 30 feet long. She claimed to be guided by a spirit she called "Myrninerest" (my inner rest) and often signed her works in this name. As American scholar Daniel Wojcik noted, "like other Spiritualists, Gill did not attribute her art to her own abilities, but considered herself to be a physical vessel through which the spirit world could be expressed."

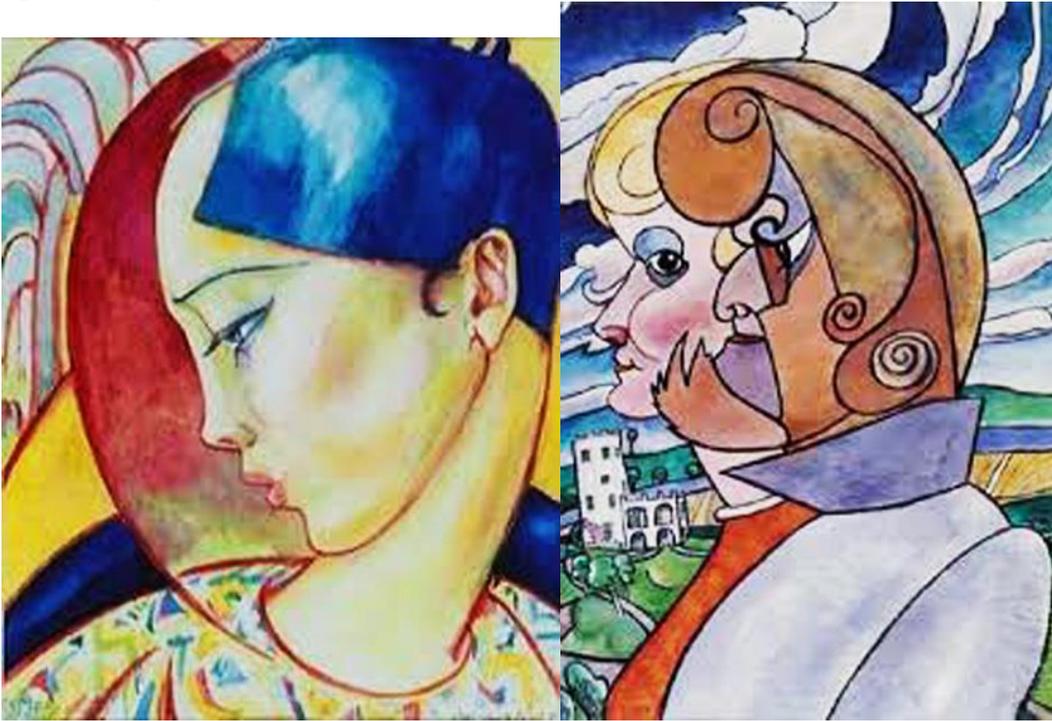
Ida Maly was an Austrian painter born in 1894. She grew up in Graz, attended the state art school there and later continued her studies in Vienna, Munich and Paris.

At first, she managed to make a living as a painter. However, after the birth of her daughter Elga in 1921, her desire for freedom and her emancipation goals came into conflict with her duties as a single mother. She gave her child up for adoption with a heavy heart not being able to combine her role as an independent artist with her role as a mother.

In 1928 she was admitted to the psychiatric hospital "Am Feldhof" in Graz. In 1941 Ida Maly was murdered as part of the National Socialist "euthanasia program" in the Hartheim extermination center. A characteristic of

her work is the break with socially determined role clichés and the abolition of a typically female and male gender identity.

Maly's works with their own visual language of modern painting were forgotten. Maly only became known again through an exhibition in the Neue Galerie Graz in 2005.



Rachel Bliss – American 1962- Rachel studied art with me at Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art and has always followed the beat of her own artistic drum.

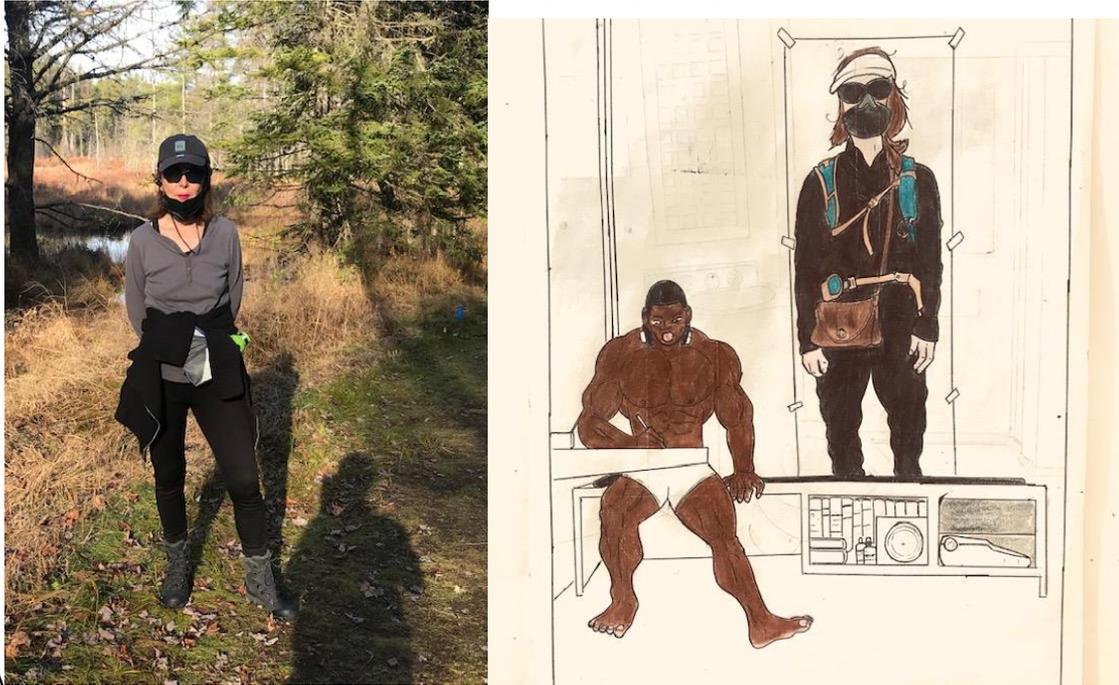


Notice that in the left painting of the dog, Rachel uses the Egyptian style of drawing the profile of the dog's head, while at same time drawing the eye front on and not in the profile view of the eye. This is repeatedly used in Egyptian painting. (You can compare it to Rachel's painting on the right. The eye of the dog is drawn from the same perspective as the eye of the child.)

Well, there are many, many artists that could be included in this newsletter, and maybe I will revisit primitive art in later newsletters.....Africa, South America and so on.

Art news and what's been happening on this end of the line!

I am writing this on Christmas day, so Merry Christmas! It was bitter cold two days ago, but on this Christmas day, it is 50 degrees in the Adirondacks. The Adirondacks is 6.5 million acres with more than 10,000 lakes and 30,000 miles of river and streams. In demonstrating my use of masks in the past, I have posted pictures of hiking in these newsletters Here I am hiking in beginning of November this year.



(and on the right.....Thank you, Herman Moore III, for your comical drawing of me in my Nepal and Covid gear!)

I have to hike every day. I need those endorphins flowing or else I get nasty (or so my husband tells me, and yes, it is probably true). This morning I was in a bit of a funk; maybe because I haven't seen my son for a while and the border to Canada where he lives is closed and will be for a while. But taking a 5-mile hike on one of the trails in the Adirondacks helps. Of course, I understand that I am fortunate in being able to take these 5-mile hikes every day. I hope you will be able to be in contact, visit, phone the ones you love.

Below is my Christmas gift to my son, Jack and his partner, Gabriela. It is an oil and gold leaf painting of their dog, Supay.

Supay (pronounced Sou-pie) is an Incan hairless hound. In the [Quechua](#), [Aymara](#), and [Inca](#) mythologies, **Supay** was both the [god](#) of [death](#) and ruler of the [Ukhu Pacha](#), the Incan [underworld](#), as well as a race of [demons](#). Supay is associated with [miners'](#) rituals. Jack and Gabby bought Supay when they were in Peru last year. Gabriela, herself, looks like an Incan goddess; her father being from Venezuela and part Indian. (But maybe I'm just partial – we love Gabby!)



Because Supay is hairless,
Gabby and Jack have to
dress her in “outfits.”
They live in Canada!!
She has a stunning wardrobe

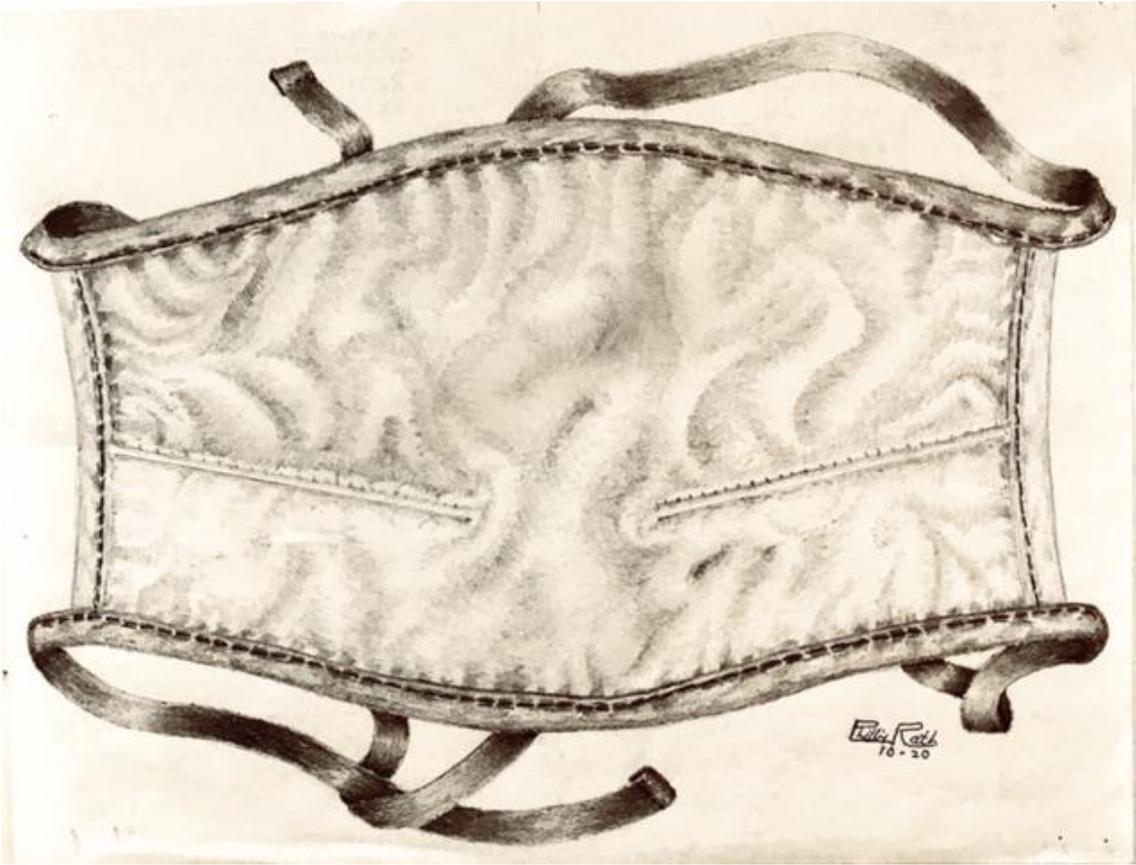
“Saint Supay”
Oil and gold leaf on panels.
I was influenced by the art
of Giotto – his elongated
faces and dark figures
against the gold background.
(Remember Giotto from
earlier pages.....)

BTW. – Gabby loves your art!

We at Prisoner Express haven't been able to get into the library since April and haven't been able to have the Monday night letter writing workshops. Whether we can start again in the spring depends upon the status of Covid and whether Cornell will allow the Durland Alternatives Library to be open. Students are motivated to come into the library at normal times because it is a warm place to hang out and they enjoy seeing the actual art and reading your letters. They are less motivated to respond virtually – probably zoomed-out enough with their courses!

Exhibition at the Big Red Barn. Again, it is difficult to ascertain whether there will be an in-person exhibition of your work at the BRB in April 2021. If not, we will organize a virtual exhibition. It may be a good idea even if there is an in-person exhibition to also have the exhibition virtual. This would enable your friends and families to also see the exhibition. Sometimes good things happen from less fortunate things....

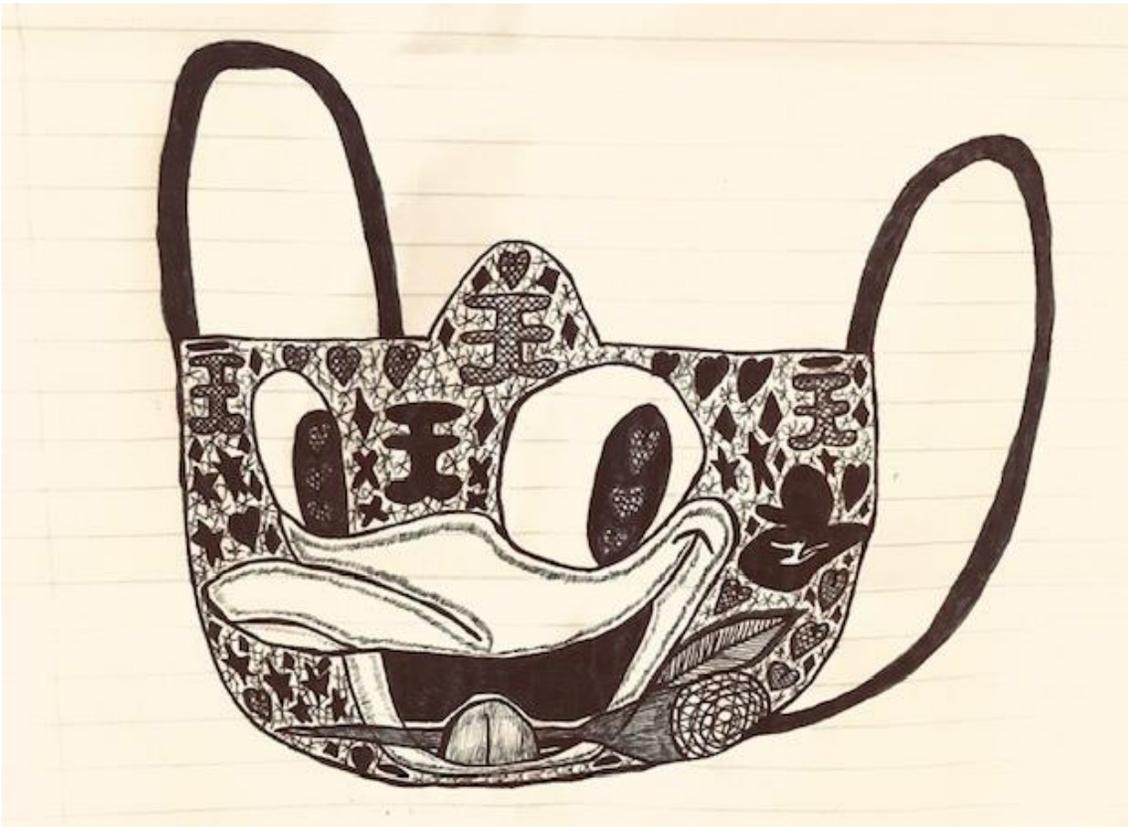
And because COVID is always in the shadow, here are some mask drawings submitted by you:



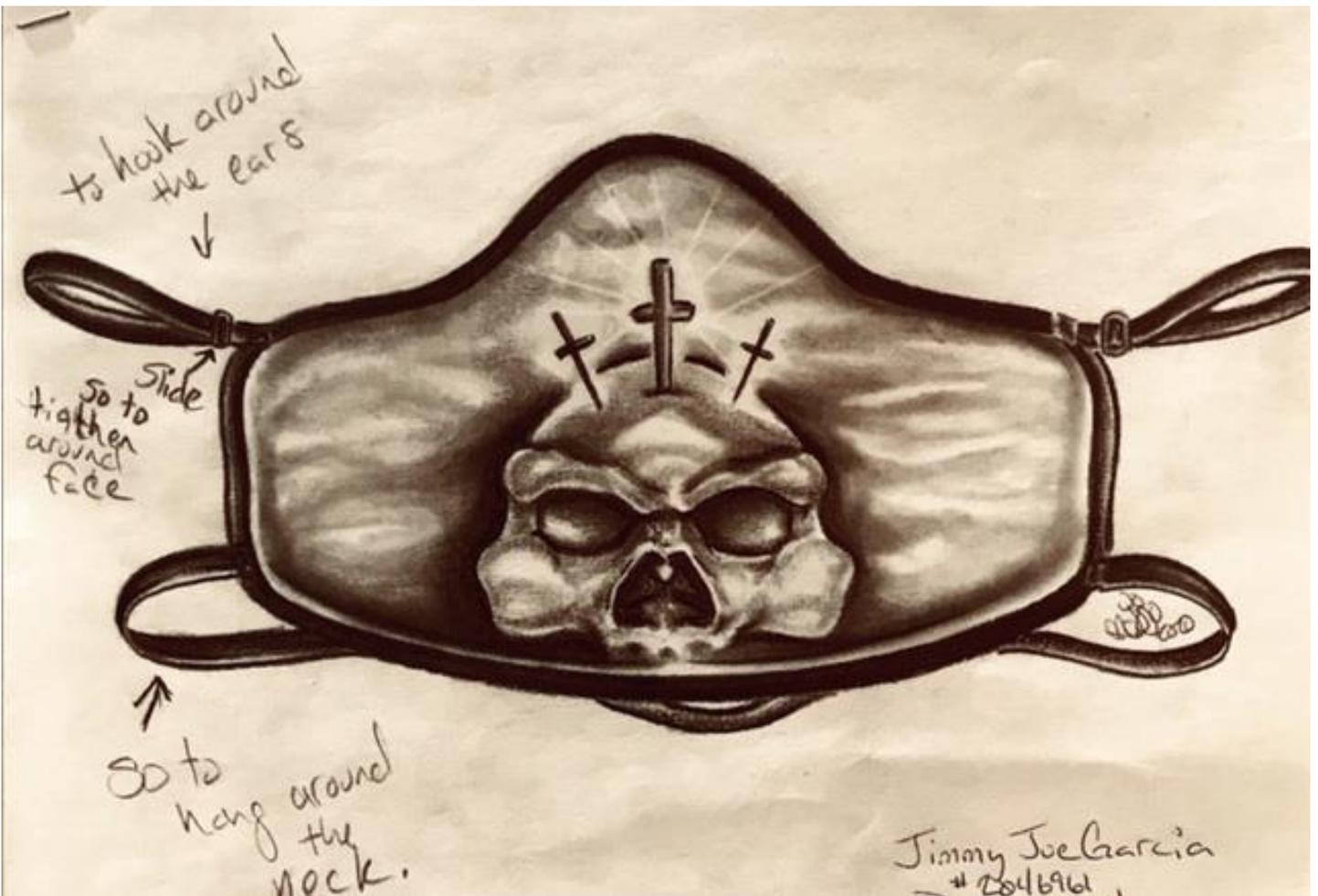
Phillip Rath



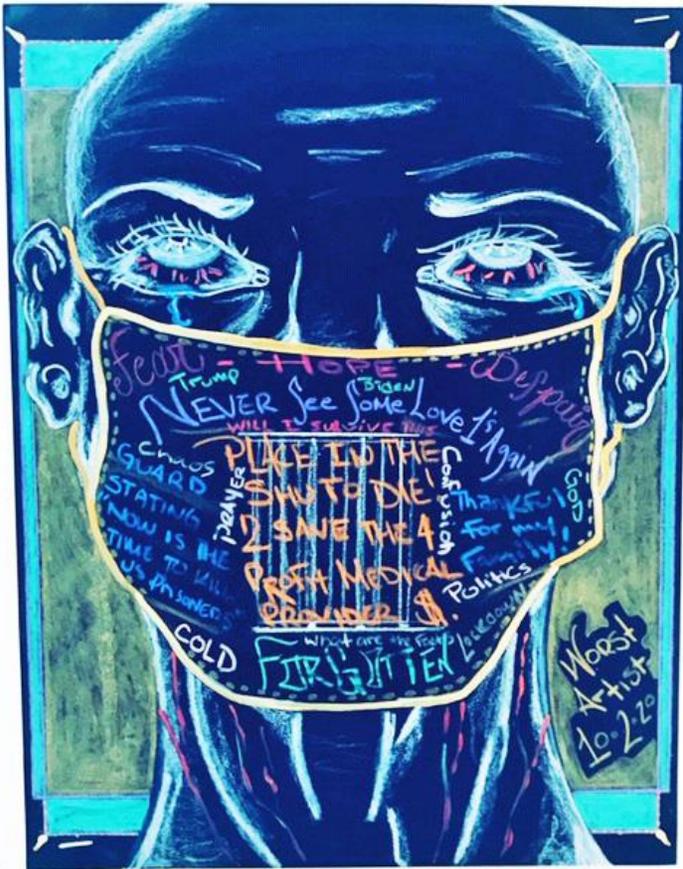
Japon Gordon



Japon Gordon



Jimmy Joe Garcia



Kenneth Zamarron



Clifton Jackson (ok maybe not a mask, but good

advice!)

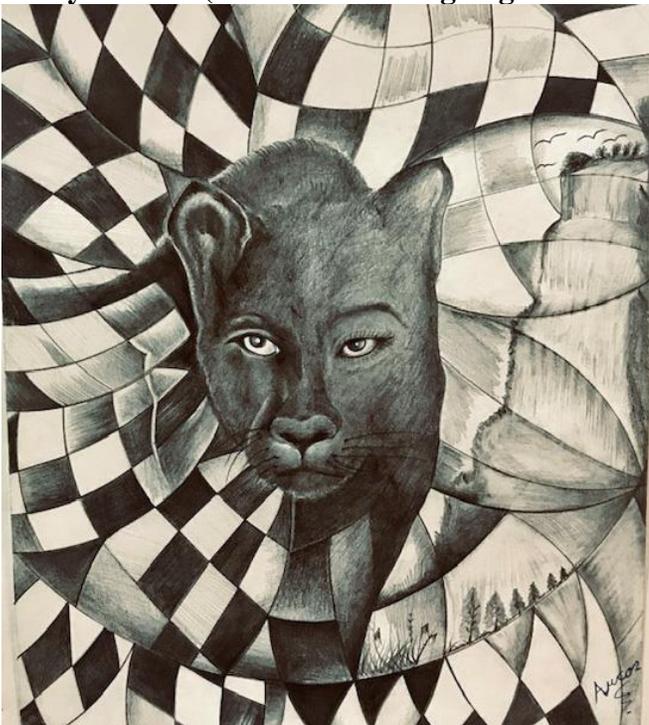
Thank you for all of your letters. And thanks for sending art. Please continue to do so as we are developing a virtual gallery. (The internet is a good way for people to get to know your work. This is how MoMA selected the work for their exhibition. And I'm sorry that not all of you were selected. I had no input....Nope, MoMA does things all by themselves.....)

PLEASE Please, put your name and address on the back of all artwork. Often letters are separated from art and then, I'm left with a beautiful work of art and no name to respond to that work. AND while you might have a fancy nickname - like Ruby Roseylips, if Ruby Roselips is not how the prison knows you, there is no way for me to give your credit for that art. AND write clearly.....or else you will get a new name based upon what I can make out.....oops! **HAPPY NEW YEAR! Best, Treacy**

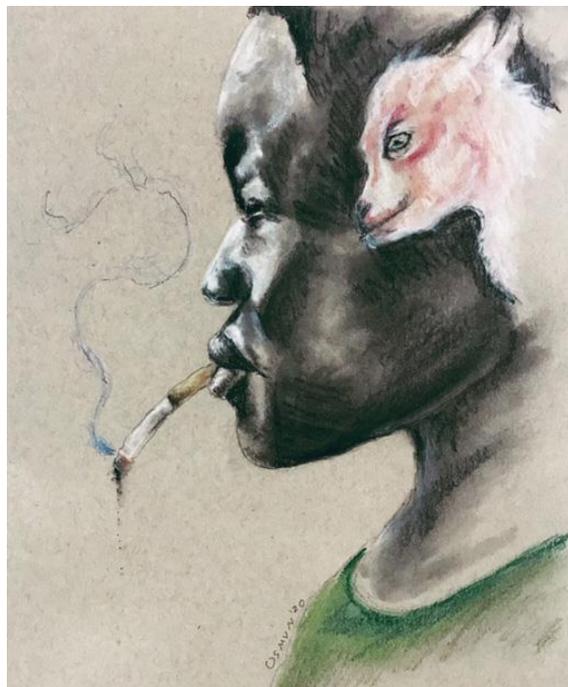
Some more recent art:



Leroy Sodorff (Talk about lines going back creating depth!). Right – Patricia Olsen



Miquel Arcos



Jesse Osmun