

THE CAPILANO REVIEW



They're building an underpass for four lanes of highway
under the Newlove poem.

—ERIN MOURÉ, "*Famous*"

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THE CAPILANO REVIEW

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Jiří Klobouk / THE HOMECOMING

It was midday when I reached the house. The front door was ajar, but no one was moving around inside. A spider was letting himself down from the ceiling. When he saw me in the doorway, he stopped motionless. The empty whitewashed room seemed somehow distorted. In one corner on the floor lay a ball of wool. A pinkish thread, like a slender tongue, stretched to the cat's mouth. The poor creature had choked on it. There was no one to welcome me home.

I took a short rest and woke with my legs astride and my head hanging back loosely between my shoulders. The spider let himself down a little further. He appeared bigger now, his back was adorned with a black cross. But I couldn't delay too long. There was work to be done. I lost count of how many times I went into the kitchen that day. The only running water was in the stream, and that gave off a foul smell. When I was a child, it had teemed with trout that slithered fearlessly through my chubby fingers. I found a piece of rag and ran to moisten it. Every time I returned, the spider set himself rocking ominously.

They were piled on top of one another, all filthy and covered with blood. Not one of them had survived. Father, the biggest and strongest of them, had some unuttered word frozen on his lips. I tore open his shirt and put my ear to his chest, but his heart had stopped for good. Mother was the cleanest. There was some blood on her forehead and around her nose, and there were little balls of spider's bristles behind her fingernails. They had tried to defend themselves, but none of them had succeeded in killing the intruder.

Around the kitchen table were the usual number of chairs. The seventh, on which I had always sat, lay on its back by the tiled stove. The crockery had slipped off the shelf and smashed on the floor.

When they were all washed and clean, I lit a candle for the dead. Then I fished a small bottle out of my pocket and, unwrapping the paper round it, I placed it on the alcove windowsill. It was filled to the stopper with strong poison. The warm wax trickled into the palm of my hand, like a tear held back for too long.

The worst part of it still remained to be done. I had to find some boards and nails and dig a common grave for them in the orchard. By now the spider was close to the floor. When he saw me, he pawed in the air a couple of times with his hairy legs. It looked as though he was being strangled by his own thread, and was begging for help.

I needed the longest boards for Father. He was over six feet tall and, standing in the kitchen, he could support the ceiling in the palms of his hands. I'd always been convinced he was strong enough to lift it off. Both my brother and sister were smaller, like Mother. Last of all, I got the boards ready for my wife. I washed her and she lay on my knees, small and diminutive, even more translucent than when we had first met.

Our house stood on a slight slope in a large orchard. Spring, it seemed, was still far, far away. The branches of the trees bore no blossom, although it was long overdue. I laid the boards out under the old apple-tree and stared up at the sky. Even more than a bottomless pit, it was enticing me to leap into eternity.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. I couldn't afford to take another rest. For several days and nights my mouth had been parched with thirst and I hadn't eaten a thing. Everywhere the water was foul, the food was decomposing. My strength was rapidly failing, but I was still strong enough to dig a grave and bury my family. I chose the prettiest spot in the orchard, where the washing used to flap between the trees. The spade slipped easily into the soft, springy soil.

When I returned to the livingroom, it was already half-dark and the spider was no longer hanging from the ceiling. In the murky corner he had the cat in his embrace and now the dead animal seemed smaller than the spider. No doubt the cat's body had shrunk as the spider sucked its blood.

First I carried my son out into the orchard. He was as light as a feather and I hugged him as close as I could. His arms, which had so often clasped me round my neck, dangled helplessly above the ground. Gently I laid him in the empty box that smelt so sweetly of pine-wood. It didn't even cross my mind that I could no longer cause him any pain. I left Mother till last. She had always been smiling and even now there was a trace of a smile on her lips. I stumbled out with her and straightened her arms alongside her body, but when I knelt beside her no tears came to my eyes.

I didn't have much strength left to get back to the house. Crawling on all fours, I reached the porch and, with one final effort, stood up. The door was ajar as it had been at midday, and seemed to welcome me. It was too dark inside now to see the cat, but the wild eyes of the intruder glittered in the murk. I decided to act with all the determination I could muster.

"Get out," I said. "Go back where you came from."

The spider didn't move. I went into the kitchen and slammed the door behind me. In the livingroom I had retained a certain amount of dignity, but out in the kitchen I felt I had to go through with it as quickly as possible. I gulped down the contents of the bottle and made myself comfortable in the chair. My arms were trembling from my shoulders to my finger-tips. The candle had already burned down. In the orchard the moon was dancing on tip-toe with the breeze.

The feeling that I wasn't alone in the kitchen awoke me. I raised my head from the table-top, which still smelled strongly of Mother's cooking. The intruder was moving around me silently, hardly breathing. When the spider stopped circling, he blocked my view out of the window. The moon and the breeze had come to the end of their dance. First he fingered me gently, with his hairs lying parallel to one another, as if we were friends. But as soon as he realized that my body was leaning towards him and that I didn't intend to resist, he sank his talons into me mercilessly. Slowly he dragged me across the table-top until I slipped into his embrace. It was all I could do to prevent myself from crying out with the pain. He never suspected the trap I had set for him. He smacked his lips and whinnied, making it quite clear that to him the mixture of blood and poison was a delicacy that he had never tasted before.

When day broke, I was still alive. The fragrance of the orchard was overpowering. At long last the trees had blossomed, more magnificently than ever before. I was lying under the table and when I raised my head, I could see my shoes not far away. Somehow I felt small, as if only a quarter of me was left, in spite of the fact that I had grown as tall as Dad. The dead murderer was beyond my reach. Swarms of flies were buzzing happily as they squeezed their way through the ball of spiky bristles. All sense of fear had left them.

Note: Translated from the Czech by Stuart R. Amor.

Edith Van Beek / FISHERMAN

He lives with the sea,
gives himself
to its order of things,
fish believe his bait,
his net, air beats
their brains like drums
—the throat of his boat
rises, falls.

Talk is tedious
you know that
by the way his eyes work,
the way his body
moves to get away—
there are spaces
between his teeth
where words clog
in the tide
of his tongue.

He waits
when you enter his light;
sky covers everything.

Ann Jaeger / TWO POEMS

DOG METAL

There were different aspects to the operation (like an isosceles triangle)
a winch or whippet dog
body fast as spring-
waxed/sprocketed/tightened up something beautiful
a projection on a wheel that's what
engages a chain
that's exactly what I mean.

Concrete beds right away
it's this flat plate turning on itself
pouring off hot on summer
female gorgeous dogs giving breech birth to
slate, the heat, poison, banality
in the breast bark
rivets
this building repetition imperative
how soft the brick to the hand the foundation
contracted to sell:
machine animals, barking, rusting, worried
and their memory knots intact.

TRACKS

These houses hounded by the rail
at the end of a noisy city line, blond hair speckled black, rubble and tricks
drunks, falling china out of doorways
the length of a train
eyes mouth nose of caged animals
 a sequence
hands hidden in the sleeve
 procession.

Children wave at trains, wave at trains.
In a long unbroken concrete wall, a cobalt boxcar door
a man-made sliding slamming lake
at the fence at the fence
the dog dog watches the go by
trees in smalltalk rows
back to our motion
a little dog runs out to bark at in circles
the snowfence rolled like hayricks in the field.

Incomplete roads,
a caravan, black oiled ties,
pattern of sticks between our nests.

Leslie Poole / INTERVIEW

A former student associate editor of The Capilano Review, Aaron Steele interviewed artist Leslie Poole in his Mount Pleasant house in Vancouver in March, 1984. A condensation of that conversation re-edited by Poole contains reference especially to the general idea and the mood that inform his recent work in the Neo-Baroque series. Initials identify the speakers. The interview predates the first showing of the landscapes, still lifes, figures (male, female and child), the dogs, the self-portraits that constitute Poole's current cycle. During the late summer and fall of 1984, the works alluded to in Issue #34 were shown at the Madison Gallery in Toronto, the Hett Gallery in Edmonton, and the Heffel Gallery in Vancouver. A drawing retrospective was staged at the Charles H. Scott Gallery at Vancouver's Emily Carr College of Art and Design.

AS ... In the Neo-Baroque series there is more of a wholeness in that you're not limiting your subject matter. ...

LP I wouldn't say I'm not limiting myself in any way—I'm too familiar with myself to think that I'm not suppressing a lot that I haven't caught onto yet. When I say I'm not going to censor and that when something pops into my mind I'll just do it, I think that probably there are ideas that I don't wish to acknowledge slipping into my mind under the ideas that I do use. So I paint a dog, for example, and I wouldn't be surprised if the dog were covering up what I really want to let out.

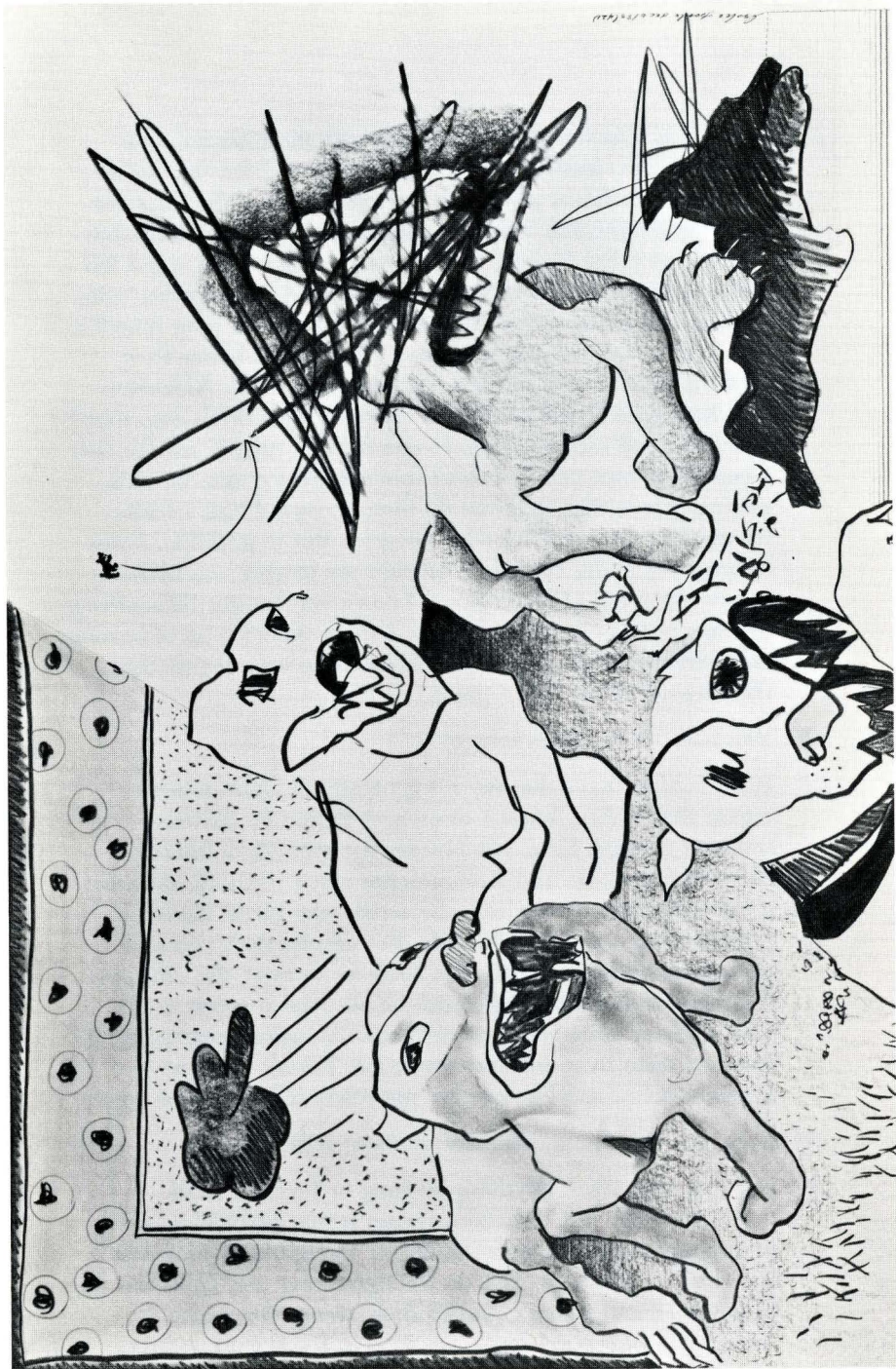
AS And then what do you do?

LP Well, I always try to deal with the issues that come up. I'm very fascinated by, "Why dogs?" The answer I've come up with is that animals are a powerful symbol for our emotional side.

AS What about the duality of the dogs?

LP What duality?

AS A dog sits in your lap and is man's best friend, but he is also able to turn into a snarling beast.



LP Okay, yes. The dualities that I deal with most are emotion versus intellect and also form versus content; I see the dog as being the emotional side, that is, versus intellect. So I'd agree with the duality you mention. Anyway... the other thing that crossed my mind lately is that we had a dog when I was a kid and it was considered to be my dog or maybe my mother's dog. It wasn't that clear. One day when I came home after school it was tied to the clothesline. I guess I figured I'd better let it loose, and it ran out and got run over by a truck. As soon as that happened it seemed that it became by mother's dog, that I had killed my mother's dog. It was the first time in my life that I had dealt with death. I think that's a great reason for kids having pets so that they can do that, because I had a really devastating time dealing with the grief. But in addition, I was feeling very guilty because I felt that my mother was blaming me for the death of her dog, and I don't feel that she did anything to stop me from feeling that way. I think there's a lot of turmoil and difficulty, that guilt in the relationship with my mother showing up in the dogs I paint.

AS You said "form versus content"?

LP Well, I think that's the way it's generally thought of but I meant the duality. What I think is, it should be content revealed through form. Art History is constantly a battle between Classicism and Romanticism and I maintain that the great works of art are always by artists who blend the two together into a good solid whole. But despite that, you still get people saying that they are 100% for form or the contrary, that form is nonsense and content is all. And it seems to me that a compromise between the two is the logical conclusion, but few ever seem to go for that resolution. I don't know why. I guess because most people are not ready to learn to be whole.

AS Have you read Jung, his theories about individuation?

LP No, I've never read anything by Jung or Freud. I think a problem with our education system is that psychology and philosophy are not seen as important enough to be included in a basic curriculum. You go through school and come out of grade 12 and haven't studied those things. Then you

specialize and if that specialization is something that excludes psychology and philosophy, you never learn about them. In my case that happened, and I've never organized myself to start learning the basics of Freud and Jung. I am inclined to start with more recent developments such as Transactional Analysis.

AS Have you been through Transactional Analysis?

LP Yes. I am convinced that . . . T.A. is solid, commonsense, psychological theory and what I'm interested in is not just T.A., but T.A. mixed in with a good dose of Gestalt—not taking anything and going wholly overboard, but trying all the things that come around and finding out from them what living is about.

AS It amazes me that you haven't read Jung because you know all the things he talked about, but of course that was one of his theories.

LP I'm not aware of his theories. . . . When I've talked with people who are psychologically aware, it is generally Freud who comes up rather than Jung. I think one of the reasons that I haven't gone into those things—or that I didn't earlier—is that I came from a very strict Fundamentalist religion and psychology and psychiatry were frowned upon. The idea was that if you had a problem you didn't go to a psychologist, you prayed about it. . . . I was involved in that religion from ages ten to twenty, when I left home. Psychology was a very strong taboo with me. I can remember the names of Freud or Jung coming up and I would have an immediate negative reaction. That's why in my earlier years, I wouldn't explore those things.

AS A lot of your art seems to have been made to exorcise your childhood. Would you agree with that?

LP Yes, exorcise or . . . I guess that's as good a word as any. It's just that *exorcism* makes me think of some evil in there that you want to get rid of. I think of it more as certain things having happened (that I don't necessarily see as evil) which I don't understand but that make me react in certain ways that I would like to change. . . . I did at one time think that it was evil, that my parents had done incredibly unkind things to me. Now I realize that I have a choice, that every child doesn't

act or react the way I did. I might've reacted in a less traumatized way to the death of my dog but I didn't, and I need to accept responsibility for that.

AS Sometimes you're called a Neo-Expressionist. Does it bother you to be labelled?

LP No, I don't care if I'm labelled or not. Unfortunately the people who tend to label do it almost to limit understanding instead of to expand it. I don't care if I'm called a Neo-Expressionist or a Classicist—if I were labelling my current work I would call it Neo-Baroque. Why not? Many artists say that they don't want to be labelled or that they don't want to be labelled Neo-Expressionist. I'm only concerned about the way that it is used to restrict. As Neo-Expressionism is so content oriented, the label could alienate me from Formalist viewers, which to me is unfortunate because I think I'm a Formalist every bit as much as I'm content-oriented. I believe that you cannot get your content across without understanding the form you're using and translating the content through the form that will best express it. And the kinds of things that I want to say, I feel I can't say through, for example, Renaissance Realism. It just doesn't work. If I do a completely photographic painting of a soul in anguish, somehow to me it is a very different kind of painting than if I do it with an expressionist brushstroke. You can present the two of them as souls in anguish, but as soon as you do it in Realism it's a different kind of suffering. It's a tighter one, held in, using the intellect to try to understand why he is going through his anguish, instead of letting it tear me apart and dealing with it more emotionally and directly. Although I can do it photorealistically if I want, I usually don't, because it's not the kind of statement I want to make. Many critics see looseness as ignorance of form and there seem to be a number of critics who come out of Formalist traditions who think that form is something geometric. It's astounding to have Formalist critics review work and to realize that an understanding of what form really is is lacking in their education.

AS Yes, I was reading the other day about the problems the Formalist critics are having facing up to content in art. It seems that they are still trying to describe everything as if it was done by Donald Judd—that it's 40 inches square and this exact colour and the lights are set up to hit it this exact way—and go on from there to seek some deeper meaning in the work. They simply don't know what to say so they just keep describing the work.

LP Yes, it's astonishing to go through the art magazines and discover that they are not that different from reading newspaper art reporting aimed at the least common denominator of public awareness. You read it and it's not criticism; it's straight reportage: "I went there and I saw these very pretty works presented in this way and I think you should see them too." They don't use the same bubbly, cute terms, but they are doing the same thing, talking about the surface. You wait for the punch line and it never comes. But perhaps even this is better than the obtuse "art jargon" critiques.

AS What kinds of things are you thinking of when you're working? Some people working expressively would get carried away, using their fingers or anything that was there. Obviously you are still in perfect control technically.

LP I guess what I want to do at this point can be done generally with a brush stroke or a line so that I seldom need to get carried away, if that is what it is. What's going on is that my unconscious is telling me what I want to get across and that it can be gotten across by this or that kind of brush mark.

AS What about the kinds of thought processes?

LP Well that's very difficult to talk about. I seem to draw a blank when I wonder what it is that I think about during the act of painting. I referred to it as a battle for a number of years. . . . There was me and there was that canvas. We were in a battle to the death and one or the other of us was going to win; there was a very strong sense of trying hard to overcome what I saw as The Painting. Now I feel that it is not the canvas I am fighting so much as, probably, anxiety—anxiety representing a fear of changing, that fear of revealing things that I don't want to know. Anxiety is present as a kind of censor that keeps saying, "You can't do that; let's be reasonable; no, no, that's

too messy; you can't get away with that." Simultaneously, my hand, almost ignoring this censor, acts on its own, painting the brush strokes I both want and fear, brushstrokes that come alive in the tension between freedom and restraint. I'm trying to consciously think my way through: I'm wondering how to paint a particular tree. I put marks down, but not what I want in my head. I keep wondering, "Should I put a mark down as a line?" and, "How am I going to get the sky to fit around it now without ruining the whole thing?" Meanwhile my hand is doing it.

It's almost like three or four levels of thought are happening simultaneously. I can't really, when I'm all through, go back and talk about what it is I was thinking about. It's almost as though form and content are amalgamating.

AS Does your painting make myth?

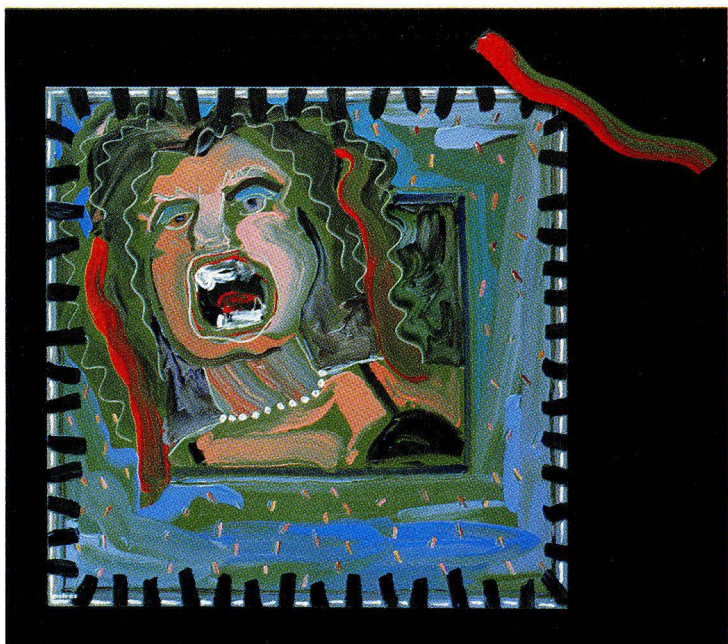
LP My idea of myths is that they are universal epiphanies or revelations about what it means to be human or what mankind is about. They're revelations about how human beings function. They are also about the archetypes occurring through all kinds of art whether it's music, painting or whatever. Though I believe in those basic universal truths, I would never sit down and say, "Okay, now here's this myth about Medusa, so I must do a painting of a woman with hair that looks like snakes..."

I believe in my own myths and the myths that are inside us as a function of our belonging to the human gene pool. They are a part of what it is to be human. Instead of wading through all the Joseph Campbell books, which I meant to do but never seem to have time for, I dig down deep inside myself to find out who I am. If I dig deeply enough, I will come to the universalities that we all have inside of us. In that way I carry on the tradition of artists dealing with and creating mythology.

AS But do you see yourself as a hero? Is what you're doing heroic?

LP No I don't. I'm not the kind of person who wants to be a star, the modern version of hero. I would like for my work to be the star. I don't want to lose my privacy. I don't go out very much. . . . I don't have a very large circle of friends. If I were interested in being a hero I would go out more. Perhaps I'll end up being called reclusive and that will make me even more interesting than if I were accessible. The mystery grown!

. . . I accuse some painters of trying to be stars at any cost. If they have to make good paintings to do so, well they will even do that, but frequently they are so busy trying to be stars they don't get good paintings done.



AS Have you thought of any career besides painting, ever considered maybe philosophy or your own restaurant?

LP No, I don't think so. I'm always interested to look back, say, five years and think, "I never thought I would own my own house and have seven galleries across Canada and in the States. I'm always surprised when I think that twenty years ago, when I lived in Prince Edward Island, I would never have thought that I would be living now in British Columbia and be a reasonably well-known artist.

When you say, "Would you own a restaurant," I say, "Certainly not," but really, surprising things happen. What I hope is to be a painter all my life. I wouldn't be surprised if I decided to write, but I think that it's highly unlikely.

As a child I wanted to be a concert pianist. My parents wouldn't get a piano, so I never took lessons. . . . I wanted that with such a passion I still think I'd have been fantastic. When I couldn't do that, I thought I'd settle for being a writer. But then a relative suggested that if I wanted to go to university to study painting, which I had been doing as a hobby, that he would pay my way. I ended up, by default, taking the third choice. So I'm a painter, but I suspect I will always think about the other choices.

After graduating from Yale, I saw myself as a relatively competent painter. It was distressing that I couldn't draw but I thought it wasn't important; no need to let that defeat me. By drawing very carefully and then tracing onto the canvas, I could still make powerful paintings despite that struggle with drawing. In 1971 I taught at the University of Alberta for a year and felt that was a disaster. I was incompetent and uncomfortable. I thought that, though I couldn't teach or draw, my ability to paint was never in question.

When I came to Vancouver in 1974, financial survival depended again on teaching. Drawing courses became available at Langara. I found I was teaching as I had been taught, and I didn't believe in it. I bought every book on drawing I could find and discovered exciting exercises that I could develop—things that could stimulate—and wrote up my own course. I started learning to teach. That was much more rewarding, and I started getting positive responses from students. I realized with some considerable surprise that I could really enjoy

teaching. After I'd been teaching for two years, I began to do drawings. I was astonished to discover that just the process of looking critically at students' work had radically improved my ability to draw. . . . My vision had improved; my ability to correlate had improved. All I basically had to do was train those drawing muscles and get on with it.

I guess the first time that I realized that I could draw very well was when Paul Wong (Bau-Xi Gallery owner) told me that one of my drawings was worth ten of my paintings. I don't agree with that, but it was certainly a way to realize that my drawings are as relevant as my painting. . . . I'm quite confident now and think of myself as being as strong a draughtsman as a painter, and a good teacher.

AS The drawings you showed me upstairs were certainly as strong as the paintings.

LP Yes, I agree. I watch my hand do it so easily now and I have great sympathy with my students. I can remember those years at university trying to draw a figure. You draw one side of the leg and then there is a real quandary about how to draw the other to get both sides to fall opposite one another. That took years of practice and now I don't have to think about it. It simply works; my hand just does what I want it to do.

I firmly believe that when you draw you have to be aware of what is going on at both sides of the line of, for example, an arm, because you are not just representing a figure, you are creating a drawing. You must be aware of negative and positive space at the same time. I was amazed to discover when I started doing montages that that was happening—that I was aware of creating a good design on one side of the line and a good design on the other without thinking of it; just doing it. I found it very exciting.



© Louis J. de la Sota (1951)

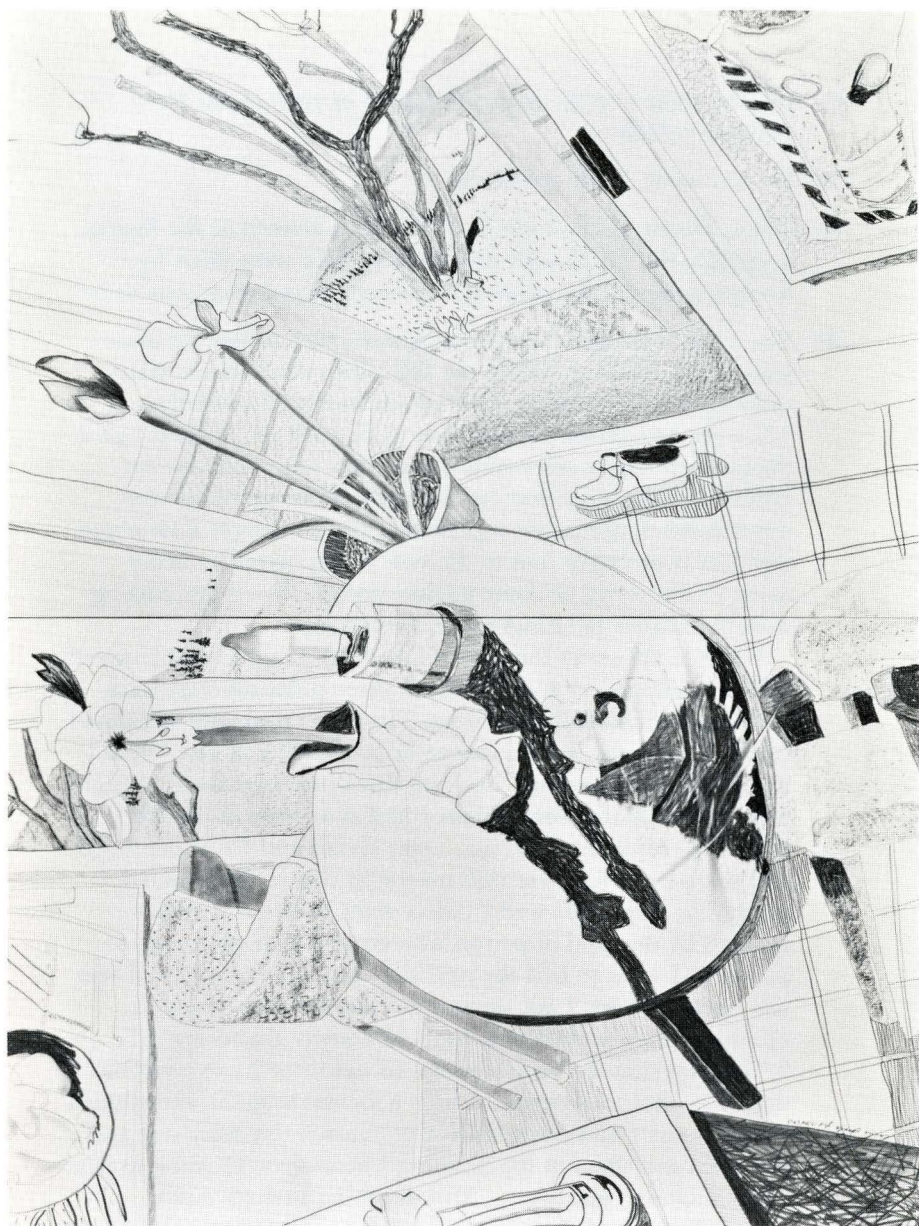
AS Do you want to talk about the figures in your recent Neo-Baroque series?

LP Do you want to ask questions?

AS Okay, I want to know the way you have arrived at the figures, especially the works with two figures. Were these done by leaning against the canvas and tracing around your own body?

LP Yes, I did that also in the montages in more or less the same way... but this is probably the first series where more than one figure has started to show up somewhat consistently.... My work has almost always been to do with the isolated figure. People have made comments about that, and there are Art Historical references that can be made with regard to what the isolated figure might represent. I never thought a lot about this, but it probably had to do with seeing myself as being alone in the world or alone against myself. Now I am making these two-figure paintings more consistently.

I started the series then when Gary was away. I was by myself and just plunged in and did about three paintings that were extremely emotionally upsetting. The way I deal with emotional upset in my work is by trying to lie to myself and say, "This is a really bad painting." So I did three paintings that I thought were probably the worst things I had ever done in my life. With *Dog/Mask* my reaction... was severe and I was depressed and scared; my fear was that maybe in two or three days I would like *Dog/Mask* and I didn't want to like it. I didn't want to be the kind of person who created that grotesque a painting. I went to bed the next day and stayed there and was just coming apart. I got up and did another one nearly as upsetting, then a third one that was equally shattering. My feeling was that if I went ahead and did three more paintings that were that traumatic, I'd be in a mental hospital. I concluded that you can't take large chunks of yourself day after day and put them out there in the painting because you're going to take away whatever you are.... After finishing perhaps eight paintings, I got really upset, scared: a severe anxiety attack. I had a testing of the soul and found out I didn't like it, so I backed off the painting rather than face the anxiety, fear and emotional upset. Without being aware of it, I tried to tighten up in the painting, tried doing things that were safer.

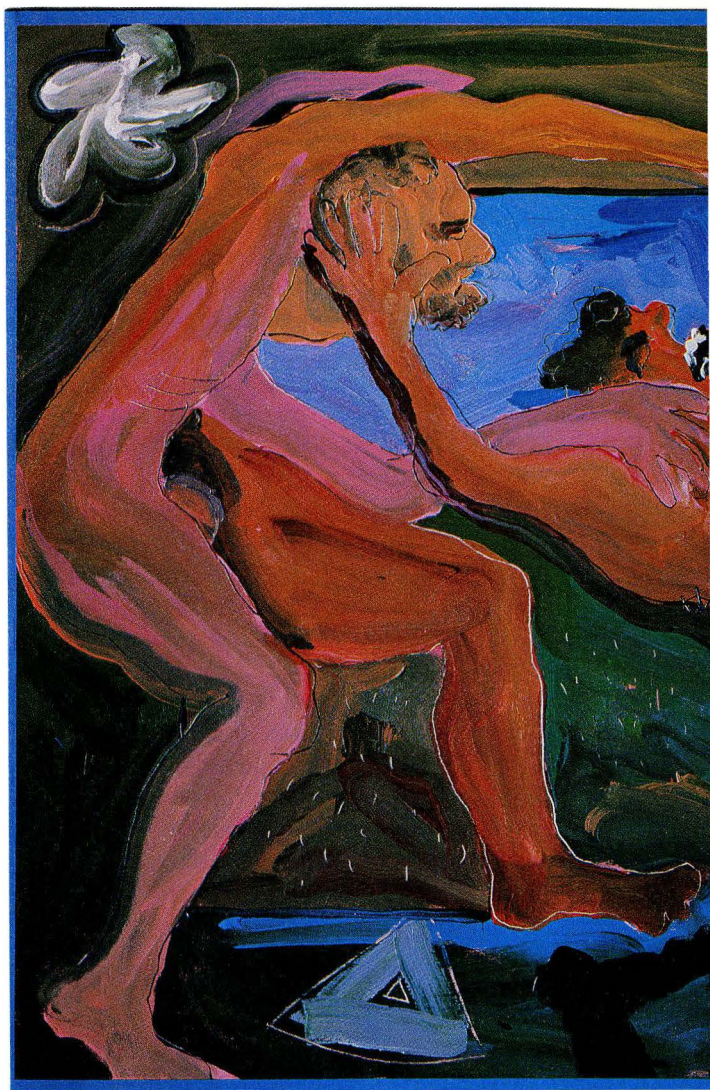


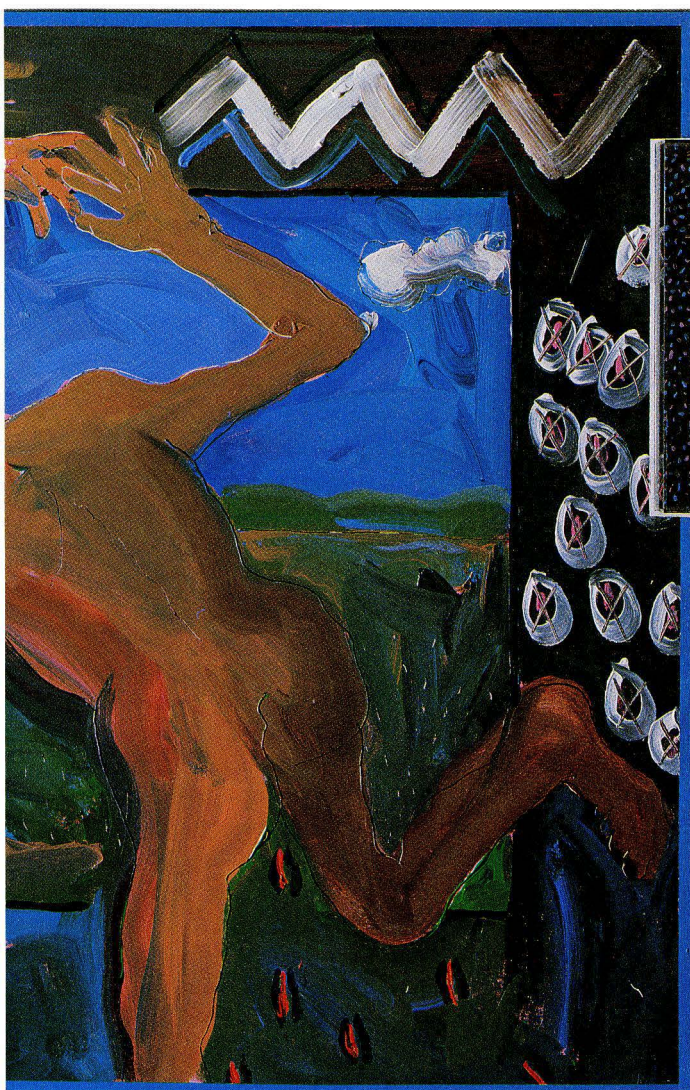
Well, of course, as soon as I played it safe, I got more anxious because I wasn't satisfied. . . . I went through a two month period of . . . loss of faith and hope because I'd always thought that I could paint as hard as I wanted for as long as I wanted and I would be all right. I began to think maybe I really can't do this, maybe . . . I have to ease up and do lower quality paintings and that was a shock to me, as I'd never considered that. So these foundations that I'd built, where I believed in myself come-hell-or-high-water, . . . crumbled under me. . . . I did some paintings . . . that were ill-resolved . . . because they were safe and they weren't the gutsy kind of work I wanted. Now I look at them as documentation of having gone through that period.

I had a drawing that I really liked and wanted to do a painting . . . (a looser version of the same work). The painting, however, was tense, careful, overtight. It was not the feeling I wished to express. I made the next set of stretchers and did the third version. There was a great sense of relief when I realized that I had loosened up again. Now having resolved that, I've been painting furiously the last week, doing paintings that I'm very happy with and with which I feel I have resolved my crisis. . . . I'm quite excited that it occurred, because although it was exhausting, it pushed me further than I would have come. I've also decided that I was right, at the critical point, to recognize the limit of my endurance. When pressure on oneself begins to feel like self punishment, it is time to review one's motives.

AS Do you think these are literal, narrative works? Are there stories behind these paintings?

LP Not really. What it boils down to is that I don't have the story beforehand. . . . I deal with it afterwards. In a way, that is . . . the difference between Modernism and Post-Modernism, because Modernism, I think, is more deciding what you want to do and then doing it, whereas Post-Modernism is more concerned with expression first, evaluation later. In the latter there is a great element of trusting a well informed unconscious.





AS Great way to put it! Would you like to talk about the kind of constructions you are doing in the Neo-Baroque series?

LP One of my concerns about Expressionist art is with the possibility of form out of control. I've loosened up dramatically in the last ten years. Let's say I paint for forty more years: I can't get forty years looser. What's going to happen next? And what happens after the expressionist brushstroke? One of the things I want to do is to somehow slow down. If I can't slow down the actual speed of working on the canvas—which I've tried and haven't been happy with—I can slow down the whole process of actually doing the painting, by painting extra parts and adding them on. To make it a little clearer, Expressionism is emotional. It's fast and gutsy and scary. I believe firmly in a balance of form and content and in a balance of emotion and intellect. With the looser paintings—the *Irises*, for example—the emotion is in the central images and the intellect comes in at the borders. . . . Now in these recent, freer works, it's inaccurate to say that I've thrown intellect out the window and gone completely emotional. You've got to start taking time into account—all the years spent learning about colour, form, line, etc.—when I did my intellect-feeding homework as it were. This intellectual, formal information is now in the unconscious and informs the emotional statement although the result may appear to be completely emotional. I worry however as I think in many ways the painting doesn't look to me like a 50/50 balance of intellect and emotion. So what I came up with was to add the intellectual borders outside the canvas edge because I didn't want to keep the borders in the paintings. . . . I began making masonite cut-outs to attach to the works. They are conceived, designed, cut out, attached after the work on the canvas is finished.

This adding on becomes an additional intellectual process to balance the very emotional things that are going on in the paintings.

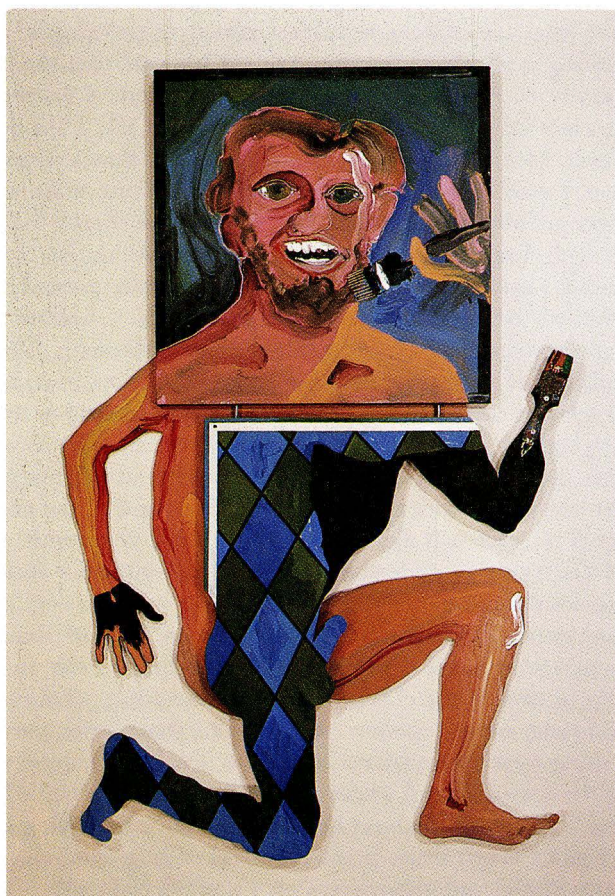
AS Could you summarize the theme that underlies all of these works?

LP Generally, or at the moment?

AS We could start in general and then get specific if you wish.

LP It sounds to me like you're asking me to discuss what I'm thinking about, and that comes down to a discussion of content. I don't know how much agreement or disagreement there is on what the content or subject matter of painting is, on what painting is about. . . . Susanne Langer has said that the purpose of art is to express an emotion, that each work of art represents one emotion whose purpose is to enrich your life. I like the sound of that, except that I find it hard to believe that a whole . . . novel I read over eight days is expressive of one emotion. There are others who suggest that the purpose of art is to represent the soul of our society, the soul of human beings. My own belief is that the basic content of art is the ever-present concern of human beings to deal with life and death. . . . I think that form represents life (Eros): content represents death (Thanatos). That's what the major battle is about. . . . I think everybody has anxiety and that the primary source of anxiety is that everybody is going to die and it doesn't make sense to us. I think the role of art is to deal with that mindboggling problem that everybody who has ever lived on the face of the earth sooner or later will die. To me that is what it is about.

I am trying to understand that, to deal with that issue, consciously and unconsciously. The only way I'm ever going to understand is to find out who I am, where I came from, what life means to me. I dig down inside and I find those universal parts of myself: the child, the parent, the adult, all those people inside who are my essence. As I deal with these issues, particularly in using form to transform them into art, I understand why I act the way I do and where certain fears and joys come from. . . . I can't really paint about death yet without horrifying myself, so I paint tough issues that I can deal with in symbolic form, that will give me information on an emotional level . . . that will teach me what this battle between life and death is about. I think what happens is that as I get older I can confront this [issue] more and more. I think when I'm in my 70s and 80s and know death is approaching, I will dare to confront that anxiety and let the fear of it and the resolving of it create the heart of my art. I hope when the time comes I'll be ready to deal with those things, that there'll be no failure of nerve. What I know of myself suggests I shall not fail.



IMAGES

Running, 1983, graphite drawing, 101.6 x 152.4 cm. *photography*: Robert Keziere

Aria, 1983, acrylic on canvas & masonite, 107.6 x 124.4 cm. *photography*:
Robert Keziere

Woman VI, 1980, mixed media on mat board, 149.9 x 101.6 cm. *photography*:
Robert Keziere

Still Life/Cockatoo, 1984, graphite on paper, 152.4 x 203.2 cm. *photography*:
Robert Keziere

Rites of Spring, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 153 x 237 cm. *photography*: Robert Keziere

Painter 2, 1984, acrylic on canvas & masonite, 158 x 98.4 cm. *photography*: Gary Maier

COVER

It's a Boy, 1983, acrylic on canvas & masonite, 164.0 x 124.8 cm. *photography*:
Gary Maier *colour separations*: Cleland-Kent Western Ltd.

Dale Zieroth / FOUR POEMS

LAST NIGHT'S OWL

Last night's owl turned her head
completely around for me; underneath
I watched how lamplight
threw her great grey hush
up against the sky and made no division
between the bird and the night
heaven—and she did not fly

In a dream she came to my hand

Elsewhere in time she sat white
in a hallway that ran
straight to the dentist's foot pedal
drill, his boiling trays,
his pink hands
The white owl freezes in her bell jar
her friend the mallard flies off the wall
(no slough wind ripples chintz or china here)
As the glass bead eye of the hare
steadies, leather cringes
under pressure of a head

This dim world
her white, and now this grey glides
as a dream, is gone
Sudden as the revelation of the talons
the soft night parts both ways

WHAT IS GIVEN

I remember
father wanting more cattle in the barn
crushed together like brown bags
I am digging with the two-pronged fork, with blisters
the pain in the back begins to scheme

In his black toolshed,
one window looking onto trees,
fire brightens iron
into white, he hammers at the coals,
he picks a box of small things
and mends and I talk into that
mending

perhaps I dream/climb
out through the frozen maple
the icicles at the end of sugar branches
the farmyard drops below

mother on her path to the garden, her hands
in yellow apron, green grass at her feet
and she tells me
over and over this matter of love
her word on everything and I ask
for a gift:

 a bowl of red berries
then a typewriter

The father looks up
his animals everywhere
all the doors flung wide

THIS SIDE

It's hard to listen all the time:
the voice of who you are
coming at you.

Sometimes you hear another voice,
as if from behind a green hedge
where I might be walking

where poems slip out of my head
hit the ground and start blooming.

On this side of the light
I listen as hard as I can.

HOUSE IN THE NIGHT

A house at the edge of the night
is not shackled to its street;
the dreams of the sleepers
shunt it inch by inch

out of the ground and up
where fog shapes bear it away,
over the mountain and the mountainous
cloud. The sleepers stir, take up

new positions, re-arrange their hips;
their cool pillows are depthless
as the eyeless dreams careen and dodge
inside their confining hold.

—And when we awake now
we know we have travelled: look, the friendly
folk watch us descend, waving,
the trees open to gather in

our dangling pipes and wires.
We hover over this vacant lot,
smooth out its rubble
with our landing blast: *home!*

Here the birds come boldly
to our windows as if inside
they still can glimpse the old
brambles and the displaced nests,

the future tangles rising
from the doorbell's alarm; listen:
the nails in our roof realign themselves
in readiness all night long.

Birk Sproxtton / UNTITLED

wandering men
tapping the face of the country
caught now in black & white
hooked
 out of time

1
 behind David's eye
 a shy wish to be soft-footed in muskeg
 and bush or facing the wind
 in a canoe instead of here
 with children & women & family extended
 across the page a cabin
 (syllable in a long articulation)

2
 and Tom framed
 by the doorway smiling
 other men to his left
 and in the foreground a hunch
 of snarling husky snapping
 at the camera baring
 his teeth thinking *meat*

3
 a hockey picture skates & sticks
 manager in long coat with fur collar
 other men to his left the *comitatus*
 smiling hands in his pockets
 and in his head
 (sentence of the future
 a buzz
 of bush planes

Brenda Riches / HELEN'S DAY

Helen wakes to a day she has to get through one way or another and wonders what to do. She could listen to the lilac tree hit the window pane. There's a chair to sit in, to rise from; carpet to walk on. A glass to fill and empty. Cupboard doors to shut. A drawer to open; chair to sit on. Cigarette to light and watch glow in the ashen light of a dark day.

On the shelf where the clock ticks stand pictures of her family. She sees the house crumbling around them, their bodies in the rubble. She sees Jesus nailed to His Cross, the Marys weeping at His Feet, a bright light on the threshold of the hell she can't get away from, no matter what, no matter how. She goes to the closet, puts on her coat, picks up her purse and leaves the house.

For a moment on the porch she wonders where to go this time. Should she walk to the bus stop and wait? Should she sit on the riverbank and count dandelions that grow there, sunny heads in the spring grass? Should she walk to the front gate and back? Should she keep her doctor's appointment?

She sits in the waiting room. As she smokes a cigarette, she notices the pictures on the walls: a faint ship in a fiery haze, a room with a bed and sloping floor, a serene-faced girl wearing a blue and yellow turban, a white horse with his head over a stable door. She hears a voice calling her name, but doesn't respond until a hand touches her shoulder and the voice asks her to come this way please. She stubs out her cigarette, but walks out of the doctor's office.

At the end of the avenue where she lives she meets a woman whose name she can't remember. The woman smiles and says it's a nice day isn't it.

She stops by the neighbourhood church and goes inside where she sits in a wooden pew and imagines altar boys in white surplices moving in the distance. She watches them light tall candles with thin tapers. Hears her quiet breathing. Smells incense. How the candlesticks shine. How still the flames seem. How cold the bench feels: notches in its wood; old wax in the notches.

She hears voices in her head, and sharp words in the voices. They that wait upon the Lord . . . miserable sinner died . . . is my shepherd I shall not . . . shall magnify. . . . As the words walk through her, she thinks of another church where a long time ago she received her name.

A man in robes marked her forehead with water as she cried the devil from her soul. She was a baby who lay in a lace-trimmed crib, or against her mother's breast, or in a pram and looked up at the faces that looked down at her. She watched the leaves that drifted into her hands, gifts she hadn't asked for. She was a child who touched her mother's cheeks, her father's nose; banged a metal spoon on a metal plate; saw her face in the bottom of a cup, and laughed. She learned to count her fingers, ducklings, raindrops, days. How to build little buildings with bricks and careful hands, and how to knock them down with a fist.

Outside her parents lie buried. She stands before their tombstone and watches small insects crawling through the cracks in the stone, over tight growths of moss and lichen, over the epitaph: Beloved father of—, Beloved mother of—. They crawl down the stone and into the earth where flesh rots in darkness.

The world inside her is deeper than death, darker than earth. It, too, houses small insects that find their way through cracks. Spiders, earwigs, beetles, centipedes crawl up from her darkness when she doesn't want them to. Her insects do what they want. There's nothing she can do about that.

If she could tell someone.

If she knew what there was to tell.

If she had something sharp, a nail file perhaps, or a nail, she would scratch her name on her parents' stone. She has nothing.

Someone has weeded the earth around her parents' stone. Someone has thrown away the decayed irises and replaced them with lilacs. She stands for a long time looking while the wind blows through her

hair and into her eyes. But fear blows colder through her soul. If she stands there any longer she will never be able to move away from that sad spot.

So she moves away.

She reads the names of the dear departed, the dearly beloved asleep in Jesus, gone to their rest, their heavenly reward. She touches the moss on the headstones and reads the years, the ages of the dead. Some were babies. Some were young. Some were old. When she tires of walking, she sits on a gravestone so old the name has worn away. She takes out a cigarette and carefully lights it against the wind, cupping her hand. She smokes it till the butt burns her fingers.

She follows her short shadow along her avenue, down a high-walled narrow lane to the river bridge. Above the water she stands and opens her purse. She takes out a small brandy flask and sips from it while clouds passing in the current below make her tremble. As she sips from the narrow neck of her flask, she grows warm inside. Where are all the blankets that have warmed her? Where are the hands of the mother who used to tuck her in? Bones now in a grave. She tilts her head back to look at the heavy clouds that get heavier all the time, and wishes she could fall into them, but knows that up and down are two different directions, and she has no choice.

She drinks till the flask is empty and the clouds are still. Rain is a faint blessing on her face. She watches raindrops slide down the sleeve of her dark coat and follow its creases to the cuff, then fall to the ground. Soon the bridge, stretching away from her on either side, is shining.

She wonders why she is standing on a bridge.

Is this where she gets off?

Dives off?

Jumps off?

Falls off the world.

When she hits the water, will the pain stop?

She stays till her coat is soaked, then goes home.

In her livingroom, she sits near the window and holds her head between her damp hands. Each drop of rain becomes a thin needle stabbing the glass between her and the lilac she can't touch. The lilac heads are pale blurs that make her think of faces on a railway platform. The pale faces of the lilac hurt her. She holds her head and tries to rock the pain away, but the lilac continues to sway, waving goodbye with pale handkerchiefs.

The window streams with rain and the lilac is a wavering dream sliding into her. Wet petals brush her brain; smooth leaves cling to its cells. Caged in wet branches, she bangs her head against the window and the tree falls away.

She looks through the rain at grey slate roofs and clouds, and fears the absent sun. She is afraid of the wide grey world that has no edges. So she pours herself red wine and lets it touch her inside so she knows she is safe. There in her high-backed chair. Glass after glass she grows safer and the world grows soft and mauve. If she could stay right where she is, with red wine settling the dread inside her, and prettiness all around, anyone could say to her: How are you? and she would be able to say: I'm fine. And she would be fine, if only she could say to time: Stop right there, this is as far as we're going. But time moves her into a place where branches will break and a family will die, and roofs cave in, and it will all come tumbling if she doesn't do something about it.

The rain stops and the sun comes out and dries up the raindrops.

She goes to lie on her bed, where she lights a cigarette and blows its smoke to the ceiling. Faces stare down at her and tell her she is nothing. She sees the scorn in their eyes, curling in the lips of the damned faces that fill her ceiling. Under her bed is a whisky bottle. When she unscrews the lid, she feels herself turning its narrow spiral, following the only grooves she can because that's what she is: stiff metal on hard glass going around its tight thread till off it comes. The neck of the bottle is naked in the light that spins around the rim, lifting her away. Bottle neck to dry mouth—that narrow tunnel with light at one end and the darkness of no light whatever at the other.

Her bed is a quiet coffin. Its nails are loose. Her heart is pounding the nails in.

Her cigarette has left a long crumbling finger of ash.

She can't bear the heavy sunlight, so she gets out of bed and draws the curtains across the bright window. In her dark bed she listens to the hammering.

"Why are you sitting in the dark, Mom?"

Her daughter is a shape in the doorway. She wants her daughter to go away.

"Can I get you some lunch?" her daughter asks.

"I'm all right," she replies.

Her daughter switches on the light. "I'll do the wash now," she says.

"Turn the light off. It costs money."

Her daughter has already left the room.

Inside her is something dreadful that she cannot reach.

"Get out," she says, but it doesn't.

She can't bear the light, so she switches it off and gets back into bed again. Now is not the time to see things clearly: the wholeness of a glass, of a book, the features on photographs, the edges of a table.

She hears the washer rattling. Clothes get wet, get spun, get dried, are worn and washed and dried to be worn and washed and dried again.

Her son stands in the doorway. He switches on the light.

"Switch that off," she tells him. "It costs money." But he doesn't switch it off. He is a stranger by a bedroom door, his coat unbuttoned, but he hasn't taken it off yet. Or has he just put it on?

"How are you?" he asks, and she wonders how she is, and how she is ever going to know.

"How are you?" she asks him.

"Fine," he says.

"Do you want some lunch?"

"I'll manage," he says.

She hears the fridge door open, hears him take a plate from the cupboard, hears him unscrew a jar. He is fine. He will manage.

"Do you want something to eat?" Is he back in the room? Her eyes are closed because she can't bear the light.

"No thank you."

"A cup of tea?"

"Very well." Just to stop his questions, she will drink the tea he makes for her, will swallow the pill he gives her, will lie back and wait for the world to stop hurting, for her children to go.

The things that hurt have broken edges. A cup and saucer patterned with roses cause her pain. A silver teaspoon with her initials on it causes her pain. The veins on her son's hands, the silence

in his eyes. She drinks the tea. Takes the pill. Tells him to switch off the light, it costs money. Then she lies back.

In the darkness she touches the fingers of one hand with the fingers of the other. They feel like bones. Where's the skin? Here's the ring her husband put on her finger when she was someone else in a long white dress walking out of a church through a tunnel of raised lances whose pennants fluttered like leaves. Her ring is loose. She is afraid she will one day lose it. She touches her knuckles: rough and scaly, dry as kindling. She touches the wrists she wants to slit but won't because the pill works.

And now she is walking serenely along a white stone path at night, bushes on either side, growing out of dark soil. White petals gleam in the moonlight. A breeze cools her face. The moon is kind and has a sad smile. She is the moon's child. She is guided over the white stones. Her white dress swirls round her. She will live forever after sleep has led her to the end of the white stone path.

When she wakes, she reaches out and takes a cigarette and strikes a match that flares against the darkness long enough for her to suck her cigarette alive. She leans back against the pillow and pulls the cool smoke into her lungs, and knows she is alone.

She has tried. She has tried to brush her hair with an arm made of lead. Tried to take her sickness by the shoulders and shake it. She has made decisions: every day to wake at seven, take a bath, cook breakfast, do the shopping, read a book, sit in the garden and enjoy the flowers, make lunch, drink milk, nap for no longer than an hour, change her clothes, brush her hair, write letters, mail them, make supper, talk to her husband of the day's events.

She has tried to fight the knowledge that she is alone in spite of the people who touch her. She can't wash her hair, make her face up into the young it isn't, choose what clothes to wear any old thing will do now that the grass is withering, the flower fading and the word of the lord is a mouth forming a silent O.

She gets up and goes into the livingroom. She writes her name in the dust of the desk top. Her name—the only clean thing in the room. She sits in the high-backed chair, closes her eyes, and feels life pulsing in her head.

She looks at the ticking clock. It's half past two.

The room loses its furniture. Once upon a time there was a table where she sat; its hardness hurt her elbows and it offered no softness for her head. Once upon a time there was a couch where she lay; its softness made her sink when she wanted to soar. Once upon a time there was a cabinet with glass doors framed in laquered wood; it contained liquor bottles. She holds the void like a child in her arms and feels the space from which all things have been taken.

She goes to the closet, puts on her coat, picks up her purse and leaves the house, stepping lightly over gravel, over pavement, step after step along a long road that takes her away from home. Her coat slaps gently at her knees and her feet grow warm. She holds her purse tucked firmly under her arm.

She enters a small shop and buys a can of gasoline. She smiles at the shopkeeper who smiles back. "Thank you," she says as she leaves. "You're welcome," he says. "Have a pleasant day."

She walks easily to the park, through the park, through a small gate in a wooden fence and into a meadow, to a lean-to shed near a cricket pavilion. Outside the shed she takes off her watch, her coat and her ring. She sets them on the ground, takes a book of matches from her purse, then puts the purse on the ground. She goes into the shed.

She unscrews the lid of the can.

Slowly she empties the gasoline over herself.

She stands drenched.

She opens the book of matches.

She pulls a match out of the book.

Strikes it.

She steps out flaring, raising her right arm like a dancer, like a witness. She makes no sound.

Erin Mouré / FOUR POEMS

FAMOUS

Where the road no longer sweeps left & right
in great concrete arcs

at the famous resort
under the yellow light of, the Cascade Mountain,

etc.

All the Japanese poets were wrong about mountains.
We are only getting *older*, after all,
sitting

where two streets intersect at right angles under Mt. Rundle
Listening
to the singer from Vancouver we remember

from twelve years ago.
The Japanese poets never spoke this plainly,
they just lied.

Once you start, it's easy to keep going.
The lies, that is.

They're building an underpass for four lanes of highway
under the Newlove poem.

The cold wind he spoke of, was the government.

*On that black highway,
where are you going?*

FOUR PROPOSITIONS FOR CLIMATE

It's the wood & paint of the chairs
speak loudest,
when we are not wearing them.
Where the grass stops at the edge of desert.
Trying as if for the first time, on the lawn, the
fault-lines of the heart
where two continents fit & push overboard
touching

the sky with our mouths & no damn chatter ever.
Bless us this day thy fairly grain
forgive us our name & address thy chair
among us
clutter & rain, what if.

Green the plant colour, made of light.
Green the artesian water after the week of storm.
White chairs on the new-cut lawn.
Your blue sweater bunched up in the garden
& you in it, squatting over lettuce.
In our glasses, small drunk
insects, pickled & glad.
Our way of verbs, excessive
Badlands left in us from the old seas, where the ice
broke down, & receded

Wood & paint of the chairs speak loudest,
undercut by the dig dig
of your hand between peas & broccoli
That fault-line, where two continents
stop
because their villages are fragile, not
built to earthquake standards
The fault-line of the heart, where two continents
Fit.
This road, or any road. Into the desert. & after that.
Where we are sitting. What if

SNOW DOOR

Trying to remember, as if
The music, as if, as if

The music fell into my boots & I couldn't
wear them, couldn't feel.

The scent of orange behind the room's door... that note...
Physical space, physical
space

Space between the window & its frame where the wind enters,
chilling the chairs. Dead flies between the panes, winter flies that
come to life when they warm up, but go stupid from the freezing,
& can't remember flight exactly, not exact enough, they topple on
their backs & spin & buzz. Having forgotten everything except that
they used to fly, why can't they do it now. Too stupid to know why
they can't do it now.

Us, too,
who don't know we've been frozen, or if we have, &
if we know, don't ask questions.

I know I know.

My colleagues' mouths are opening above their male ties, spilling
molecules of air across the room, & I am this sad when I see it spilling,

no one else watches & I can't tell them, they are *serious*, & their jobs
are filling up with their bodies, their jobs are the shape of their
bodies, I see their lives

fluttering, behind.

The woman I once knew
who reached her right hand into the glow & gripped the spoon,
flaming,
the physical reproduction of anguish
denial of physics
defiance revenge

Snow door snow door snow door snow

Affectively, as if
The blizzard was over, we cut holes in the snowbanks,
our razor hearts burnished, our shovels raised up like sheet metal
As sentences, to make us feel

GOODBYE TO BEEF

The irrational deafness of our heads, that's
all.

Where our elegant coiffure comes from,
our own fingers, hey: squirrel-
hunting in the Rocky Mountains under the smell of spruce
forest I said I never would forget
& haven't.

Damn it.

Where our research will get us,
home free, sliding fast
past the hard throw from second baseman.
Looking for just one more homer.

We are listening to too much music, & our tastes
are lousy.

The squirrel my brother shot down with the .22 so the dog could play.
The dog just sniffed the dead fur
& looked up the tree again, eye
cocked for the squirrel.
It is always in our damn heads.

Or my head.

Or anyone's.

When we got together, what we talked of,
the moose my uncle shot & cut up into frozen pieces,
& sent it down, in 1964, on the Greyhound.

What I forgot to say, was:

When we saw that box of moose hefted out of the bus bay in
the din of yelling navvies,
we knew it was goodbye to beef
till springtime.

& I haven't talked to my aunt since.

I go deaf thinking of it. Or anything.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JIRÍ KLOBOUK's work has appeared in both European and North American literary journals as well as being aired on the CBC. This is his first appearance in *The Capilano Review*.

EDITH VAN BEEK has been published in a number of magazines. *My Side of Fruit* (Three Trees Press) was published in 1982.

ANN JAEGER is a relatively unknown visual artist who has travelled to four out of five continents through no fault of her own. She is working on a novel.

LESLIE POOLE is a Vancouver artist with a growing national and international reputation. Works from the Neo-Baroque series have been shown recently at the Charles H. Scott Gallery and the Heffel Gallery (Vancouver).

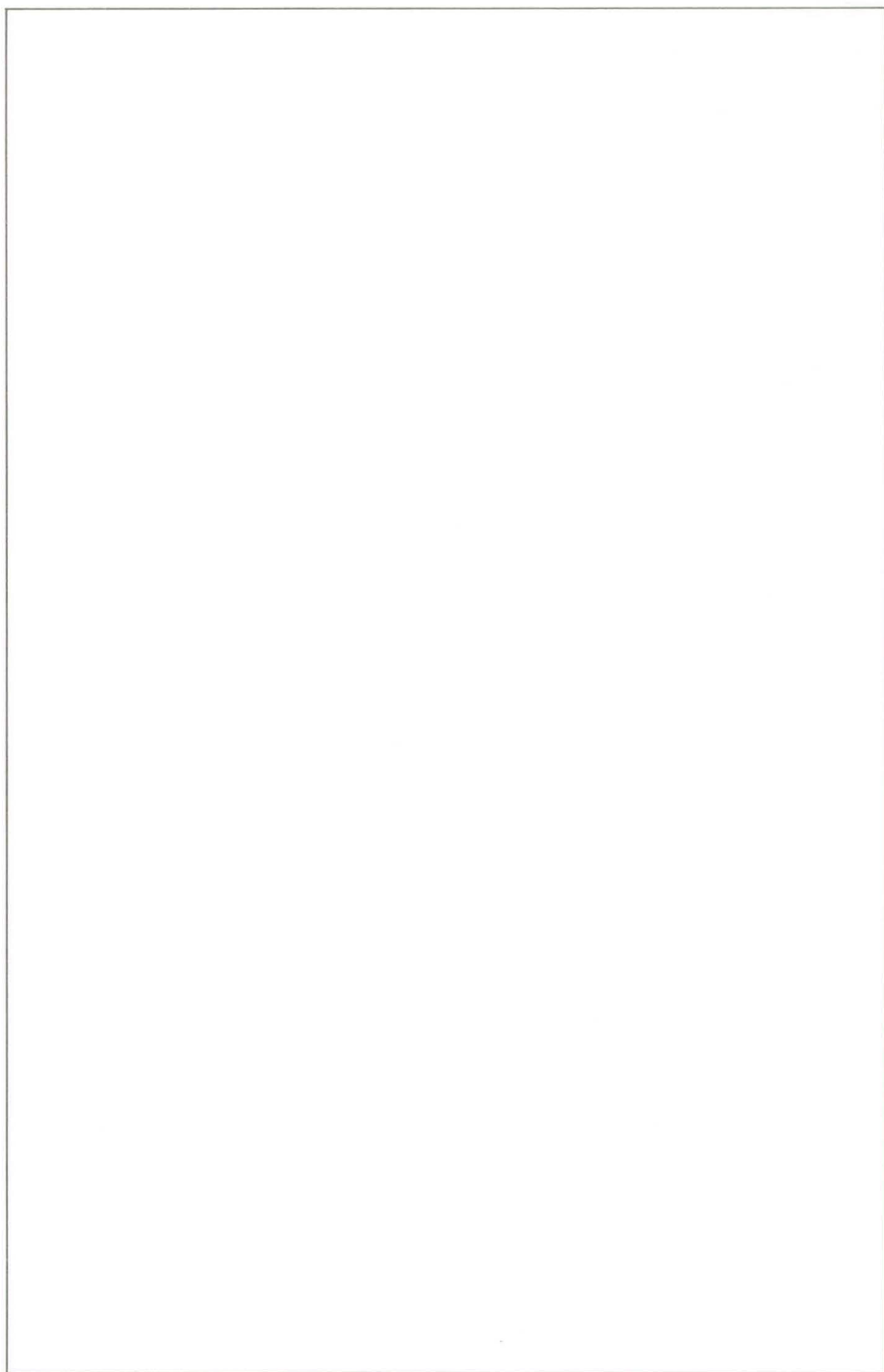
DALE ZIEROTH teaches at Douglas College and the Banff School of Fine Arts. His new book, *Night Passage*, is expected from Anansi this fall.

BIRK SPROXTON teaches at Red Deer College, Alberta. He has a volume of poems forthcoming from Turnstone Press. He is the editor of *Sounds Assembling: The Poetry of Bertram Brooker* (Turnstone).

BRENDA RICHES is a Saskatchewan writer of fiction and editor of *Grain* magazine. Her work has appeared in numerous literary magazines and may also be found in *The Capilano Review* #11 and #14.

ERIN MOURÉ's work has been widely published in books, magazines, and anthologies. She is currently living in Montreal. Her latest book is *Domestic Fuel* (Anansi).

With his agreement, BARRY McKINNON's "Thoughts/Sketches" is not republished in this issue. See *TCR* #32.



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In this Issue

An interview with

LESLIE POOLE

fiction by

JIRÍ KLOBOUK
BRENDA RICHES

poetry by

ANN JAEGER
ERIN MOURÉ
BIRK SPROXTON
EDITH VAN BEEK
DALE ZIEROTH

Coming Next

A special drama issue containing a rehearsal journal and the text of
Six of One

by LEONARD ANGEL in collaboration with GISE COLE

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