

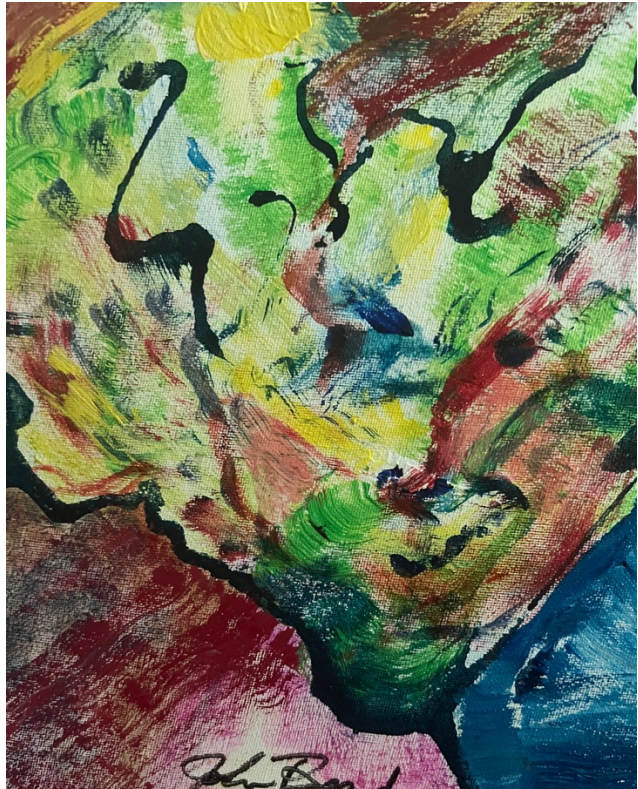
I'm the teacher and I've got a fool for a student, it's me.
It's true, or at least it's true enough. The hero's journey has begun.



I'm a person who paints and draws. Who wants to. Needs to. Is challenged, comforted, even thrilled, by, who is also dissatisfied with. So that this can get on, let's, you and I get on: accept that I paint.

I need a paint shirt. Here's one with holes in the sleeves, I never wear it out. So, I think I'll wear it out. It has the advantage of being too tight. I have gained weight. I will never be comfortable in it. Makes it perfect for making art for making art is never ever comfortable. Many illustrative painters like to throw themselves off balance when they are laying out a painting's composition. (They should also try it when they are polishing up those shadows.)

My work is always ambiguous. It is one thing, or person, and yet another sometimes more than two. The painting is of a woman's head but somewhere in the picture is also a man's face because a man is usually in the picture. Of course, it's ugly, but then Ugly must be recognized as the root of all beauty.



Just as all life should be seen as a truce with Death.
No one completely leaves when the body does.

We live in the minds of others. What we've done, what we've left. There is a market for what some people have done. That means that people are willing to pay for it. Some consider the market a sign of one's success or failure.

I'm a fan of a few failures. There's Rembrandt whose fame, and fortune evaporated when he switched from painting the "Haute Bourgeoisie" of Holland in the seventeenth century in favor of the suffering Jews escaping the Inquisition of Spain. His new style kept the smooth surfaces that were popular, but he added a Baroque flourish. "The paint is so thick that you can pick up a painting by the subject's nose." (Which may also have been meant as a cultural slur.)

Another of my favorite failures is J.S. Bach, who was eclipsed by his son C.P.E. Bach. I find Johann's cello pieces amazing. As the virtuoso Yo Yo Ma so brilliantly explained, the cello plays only one note at a time, yet the sound is polyphonic. To do this Bach uses the hearing of his audience.



Fools like me root around in the dust of the past and the ashes of reputations. Perhaps those very dust and ashes will nurture a grass that will take over the field.

Ask any gardener. Ask me, for I have been a gardener.
Both artist and gardeners are experts on regeneration.

Footprints of a Gardener

Illustration is practical. More useful than true. My gardens and my art have something in common: In both the creation is emphasized. From death comes life. There have been religions that have illustrated that truth. In the painting it is a gesture that begins it. Perhaps the memory of a past movement. In both the result is always in flux. In my gardens and paintings, I leave the footprints of the gardener; sometimes literally.

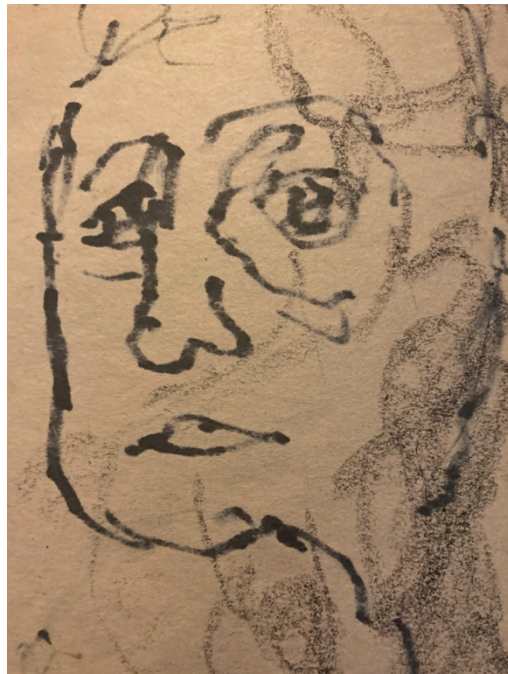
Incrementally I move, a thought here, a seed there. A canvas here, some soil there. I till the earth. I did last year, and I will till it until I cannot. When the weather forbids it, then I paint on paintings from 10 years. In each case the new is enriched by the old, and I by both. I don't invent the wheel; I inherit a painting tradition. But I must make it mine. A seed in the soil, a glimpse at the past. Intuition. A gossamer's glimpse.





Painting on old paintings is not exactly changing time but rather engaging it in a cycle. It's not so much correcting, but rather enlarging, seeing yourself as a continuum and in a larger continuum. I stop painting when it again feels alive.

It's an endless echo for the viewer adds his own. Everyone sees with their own eyes. For a moment our eyes meet. It is connection.



To revisit an old painting and use what is (now) obvious to me as to its past structure is to revisit what was important to me then. It refreshes my current thinking. However, to see the flaws in the old approach, without abandoning them, is bringing them into my current view. It's a form of correcting the past. Rather renewing it. It is dealing with both the past and the present. What results is an opening to the future.



Yes, I'm again painting on older grid structured abstract paintings, I deliberately change the emphasis from an abstract form to a recognizable figure such as a face.

It's the tension between these two references that maintains interest. The jump is intuitive, however the shifting of focus is intentional, as I've always tried to give an ambiguity of content: lines encompass a form as they destroy it; color highlights a form, but also melts it.

We observe a forming. A forming of our own, directed by the painting.



Humor plays a part in some of these compositions. Once I started using silly themes, I read that Ludwig often did just that. Anthony Tommasini in a NYT article pointed out that Beethoven wrote just as many brazenly humorous, even hilarious works, like the Presto finale of his early Piano Sonata No. 6 in F, could be the score for a slapstick silent film.



Thought becomes sensation. All thought comes from sensation. Now in painting it returns. Revisiting time— In a way reversing time's direction or rather the direction of its arrow. I'm often acutely aware what I was like when I first did the paintings I am reworking.

Touching the canvas is like opening a trunk of memories. My senses often slip their boundaries. Feeling opposite sensations can bring a clarity. Having my foot held can bring a tingle in the middle of my back.



Takes me back to where there was a boy on the farm taking off his shoes and sticking his feet in the ditch. Feeling at once both the cold water running on my feet and the warm sun on my back. Or back to when I would walk a half mile to pick up my sister from the school bus. There was a boy she liked at school, and he liked her toy chicken. When you pushed on its back it laid an egg. One day she came back so happy; “Timmy wanted to play with me at recess and said I didn’t even have to bring my chicken.” Or a chance encounter on a bus that leaves a tart taste on the mouth.



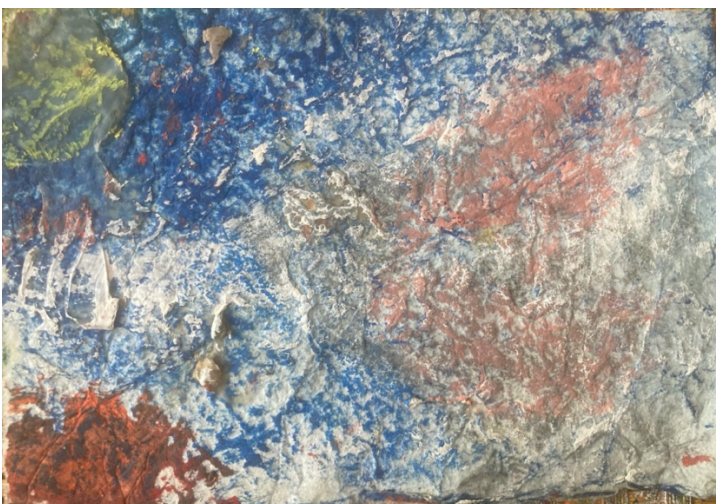
All the while the sweetness
of the memory
of a woman's red hair in the sunlight
is to know that
relaxation is a natural state
of a muscle.

In many ways,
my painting is an attempt
to give sense
to my chaotic world.



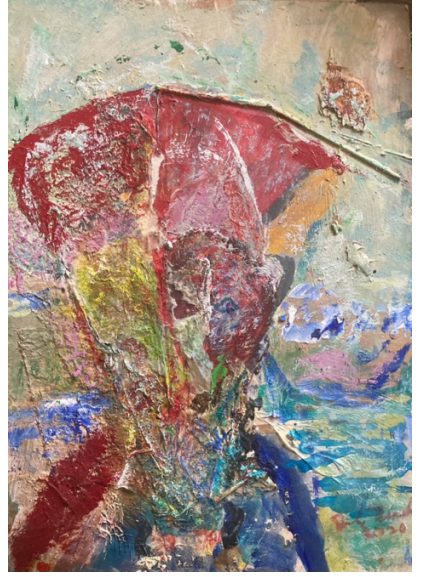
Painting is like thinking. It can go anywhere and come back. A spot of paint can be both space and surface. For some time now my work has agreed with my thinking on the matter. Or at least my eyes have gone along with it. Forms dissolve into the ground that supports them. But how can it? In relaxed thought my mind goes from one "object" to another. Feelings come and go, quite real—at least for the moment. These feelings are tied to my body and are bumped up by thought, but not tied to them. The same with my gestures. When I relax into them, they reveal another layer, less tied to words or concepts—a field of forms, or a face starts to set.





Then again at a future time, it changes its mind and I'm off. I'm there, but I, or at least the affective, calculating I have to get out of the way. If I don't and insist on running the show, the painting gets mad and sulks in mere autobiography. (Which I can assure you is pretty boring!)

In the total seclusion I've experienced since the virus hit, my painting has changed. I've been made aware of the happiness that can be found in the simplest things. I left my larger paintings and began drawing and painting on paper as small as 4 x 6", and I worked at it every day for months. I now have 5 books and a total of 400 small works. I hope they can please others as well. That hope always comes after I paint: if before, it's schlock.



My life is not a photograph, it's more like a tapestry. A tattered tapestry. Though I never did tapestry as my art I once quilted various different paintings into one work. The original work was maintained as the sweep; the pieces quilted onto it were the details.



When I garden, I often look up from the seedling and see the sky or the sea. Gardening is an inquiry, like painting is.

Seed is not all I scatter. Lately my mind has been scattered. I try to follow that scatter. Where does it fit into the tapestry of my life?



Incidental Faces

A bad car accident changed my painting. My head hit the windshield and my right eye burst, losing both the lens and the iris. The first operation was simply to reseal the eyeball. This left a lot of blood which was removed by extracting it with a needle. A local was applied, so there was no pain, but I was kept awake, and I don't recommend staring at a large needle coming at your eyeball. Since the iris holds in the lens, an operation was performed for each. The result is that what my two eyes now see are different. That is the case for all two eyed humans, but with the average person, those differing views are merged and the result is one image is "seen" ...not so with me. So, to see one image, I must shut one eye or the other. To see close, I shut the right, to see near I shut the left. To see far I put on glasses.



All art is autobiographical. My "action" painting after the accident found that the abstract gestures started forming faces with one damaged eye, as I now have. In doing so I opened up a new can of worms.

Eyes also reveal character. For the first time my work contains psychology. These faces keep changing the masks they are. Very much like the afterimages I see when I close my eyes to sleep.



I have long noted that my work, particularly the faces, uses the viewer's sense of sight to put together colors and marks that don't go together.

Seeing is a form of touching. I paint loosely until I feel I can touch the face. I want the painting to touch the viewer. I don't even care if the viewer touches the painting.



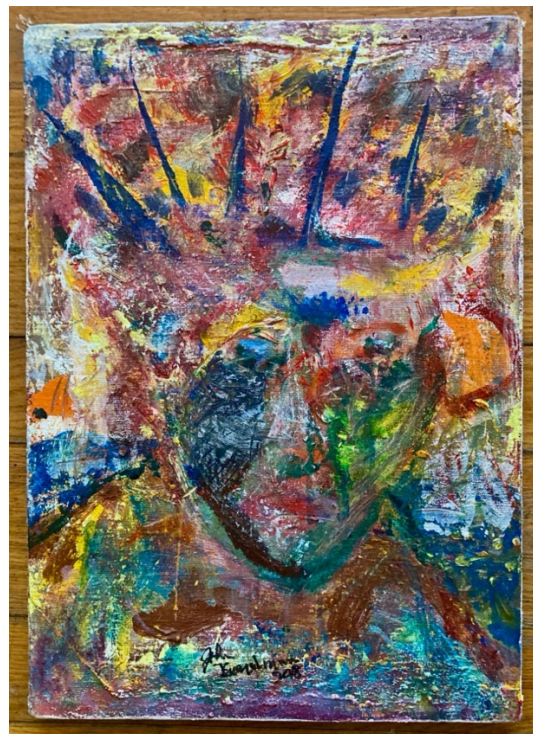
It's always been about the act of painting. Regardless of where I start, at some point in the process the image reveals itself. I would like the painting to share that process with the viewer, but if it doesn't, that's Ok.

One face will blend into another. Time becomes not one directional but cyclical. Time becomes a loop. An open line becomes closed. Thought becomes sensation. All thought comes from sensation. Now in painting it returns. In a way, it's like declaring something dead and then resurrecting it. I mine my images for details that will, if followed, transform the painting. Though I'm certainly not a minor, I am nevertheless a miner.



The best things are seen in the corner of the eye. I want the movement in my art to move the audience. Motion engendering Feeling.

Regardless of where I start, at some point in the process the image reveals itself; I want the painting to share that process with the viewer.



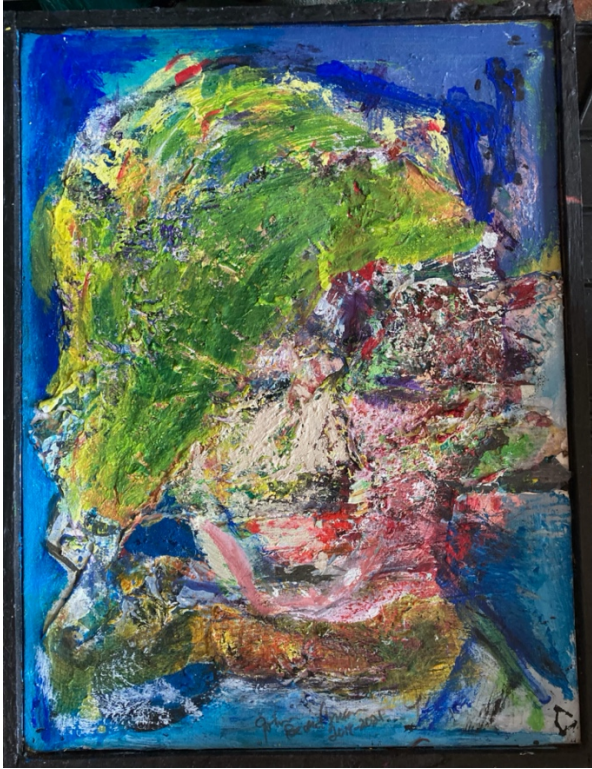
Ramblings and Rumbblings Tumbblings and Mumblings

For the past 3 years, I've experienced a serious pulmonary condition. I say experienced for the condition has given more than it has taken. Before I never appreciated the beauty of breathing. The result has been a veritable waterfall, like the nine or so that surround me in this Southeastern corner of Pennsylvania. (And it is still Sylvan).

A smear of egg on the lip of a cup speaks of a lip gone by



My ship has changed its course and in doing so I am losing or perhaps loosening my mind. In any case I am senile. Speaking of loosening there's my bowels, and bladder for that matter. I have lived by the habit of my muscles. Comedy has chosen my situation, having nudged pathos and tragedy aside. I know a good movie could be made from my life. But who could play me? (Pity Charlie Chaplin isn't available.) Searching for myself, I must make many deductions perhaps Inspector Clouseau?



As I approach death, I have some urgent life's questions: Will I have to replace my socks? The nails on my big toes are poking holes in them. Will I outlast them? Why does age transport us so?

“Catch a falling star and
put it in your pocket,
Save it for a rainy day...”



In point of fact a “falling star” is not a star but a rock. In other words, not a luminous spheroid of plasma held together by gravity, but a burning rock. It's often the case with illusion. Speaking of astronomy maybe I'll be reborn. (Neutron stars do it!)

KEEP THE LOOPS LARGE

As senility sets in, I begin to see connections that were previously inconceivable. I find that I do a lot of intermodal shifting. It's a flexible instrument I've inherited. There is a constant learning. The latest thing I've learned is to use my infirmities. It's as if they complement my incompetence, like a spice does a sweet. They beckon an unforeseen path.

KEEP THE LOOPS LARGE



Why does age transport us?

I must be connected to an oxygen producing machine. A major difficulty is that over a 25' length the hose gets tangled and when it gets multiple kinks the supple is restricted. It's impossible to keep it straight, but there is no restriction when the loops stay large and don't get tight and kink. Some 20 times a day I have to remind myself to keep the loops large. When I don't the machine nags me with a high-pitched beep.

“Shoo fly pie
And apple pan dowdy
Make your eyes light up
And your stomach says howdy.”

What is a shoo? Or apple pan dowdy for that matter. What is this —songs attached to many things I do during the day? Is it a negative: signs of obsessive-compulsive behavior? Or is it a positive: expressive of joy in being alive? It may well be the latter for one thing my disease has taught me is HOW SWEET BREATHING IS.

My short-term memory has been damaged, but the long term has greatly improved. I understand how, in my senescence, I return to my childhood, but that ditty has to predate me. Why now? I was nine when the song was made famous by Dinah Shore. Is it really a (until now) hidden memory? Did my mother sing it? She did sing, that is until my father moved us, against my mother's wishes, from Youngstown to the farm outside Warren. She stopped singing.

Her song at that time could have been another Dinah Shore hit "Buttons and Bows"

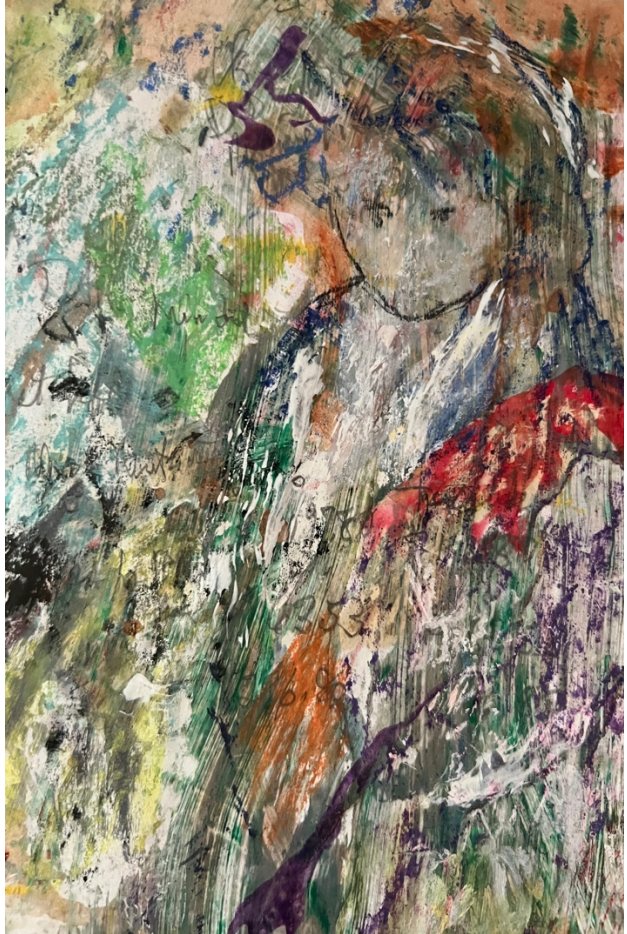
"East is east, and west is west
And the wrong one I have chose
Let's go where I'll keep on wearin'
Those frills and flowers and buttons and bows..."

Don't bury me in this prairie
Take me where the cement grows
Let's move down to some big town
Where they love a gal by the cut o' her clothes
And I'll stand out in buttons and bows

I'll love you in buckskin
Or skirts that I've homespun
But I'll love ya' longer, stronger where
Yer friends don't tote a gun."



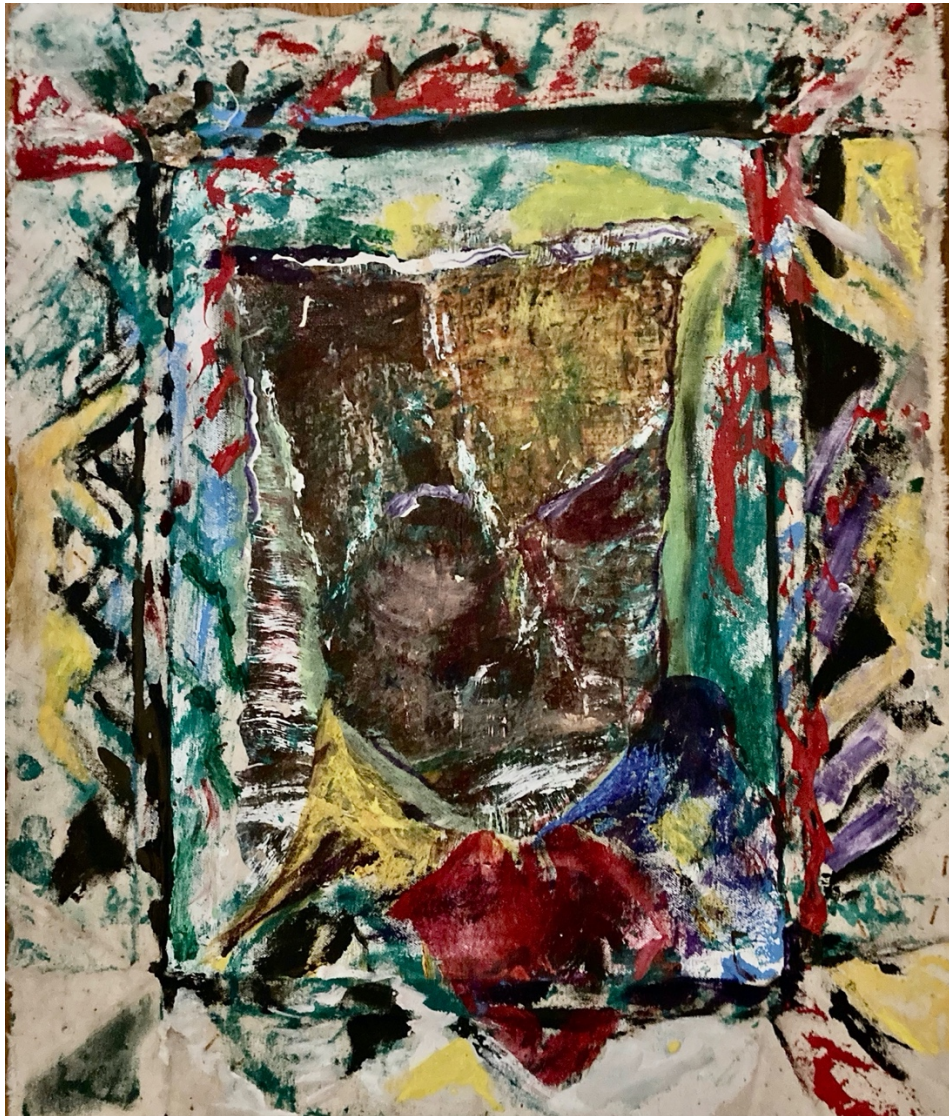
But my dad wasn't listening. And she stopped singing.



Have you ever seen drunken cows? well our farm had them. At least once they got into the silage run off. As you may know silage is first made by taking the green corn stalks and putting them in a large cylindrical structure—usually attached to the barn. The resulting fermented remains are mixed with the hay and fed to the livestock. In the fermenting process alcohol is produced which is drained off outside the silo. This area is cordoned off, or should be, from the livestock.

I remember an earlier incident, walking home from school. Three older boys started pushing me around, daring me to fight. I said “I will fight all three of you, but one at a time and only after I changed into my old clothes. So, they waited outside while I went in and changed. I came out and was beaten by each in turn. Then the strangest thing happened. They were impressed. In face the leader put his arm around my shoulder and said, “You must be Irish” I took it as a complement, and said yes, for that was the part of my heritage—one set of grandparents that I identified with. But then we moved to the farm.

Once I was installed at a high school in Braceville, Ohio, I immediately fell for a classmate: Mitzi Nye. She was not impressed. When the graduation class pictures came out everyone exchanged their individual portraits with everyone else. We also wrote an inscription. I wrote on hers, "To Mitzi who was in my class, but I was not in hers." She did not accept that, and I gave her a, now forgotten, standard salutation.



Of course, I was rather acutely aware of religious prejudice. I was a Catholic in a Protestant village. Maybe it was that, maybe not. Though I learned a lot by being an outsider. I played basketball with kids from the other side of the track. For some reason I never did learn, there was also a black community. It was there that I hung out and learned a lot. I have just reconnected with someone I have never forgotten: Howard Broom. I broke my reticent attitude to even Facebook when I found him there.

I've been accused of being a hoarder. I defend myself by saying that I'm not buying into the nag that all things are meant to be judged in terms of either what's absolutely necessary for my immediate life or approved by the general public as being of intrinsic worth: precious metals, jewels, money, real estate, etc., etc. In some ways the "Ephemera" have contributed to my sense of self. I may just like them. In some ways they relate to the story of who I am. I am reminded of what Karl Marx said: "Under Capitalism all that is solid melts into the air." I would change that to any such "Basic Cultural Values."



I'm an atheist. I've often said that if you believe in God then you can believe in anything. For many years I believed in the tooth fairy. (I had proof: tooth under the pillow, nickel in the morning.) Then when I'm in a bind I say, "Please help me."? Who am I asking?

Given my disease I'm a "Snotmacher".

I'm also a dream maker. For many years I have been able to remember my dreams. First as lurid images, then as the seconds go by as vague shapes. Most recently I have had very clear images that I have recalled when I wanted to go back to sleep. Now that my sleep has been frequently interrupted by a sharp pain in my heels (most in the right—I believe it's called neuropathy). I get up and walk around, do some stomping or rocking horse exercises then take some of the easier Sudoku puzzles to get back to sleep. Lately I have been able to do without the monotony (hence the easy puzzles—the hard wake me up.) I have taken the images of the last dream, change some details (perhaps the color of the mire I'm stuck in) and go to sleep with a new dream.



Main question: "Who am I?". Of course, I'm a faxpayer. Don't know how to make my printer send a fax so I must pay to send one. One of the more serious ways I've defined myself is as a painter. (Not houses, though I've done that.) As a boy (by then on the farm) I saw the Life article on Jackson Pollock. Impressed, I cut open burlap sacks and threw left-over paint on them.



Born in Youngstown Ohio in 1937, I attended St. Patrick's grade school. I was a good student and an altar boy. Once serving a high mass, my task was to use the censor. Well, it wasn't drawing enough air, so I pulled the lid open and swung it—a bit too high and a burning charcoal briquet fell on the brand-new carpet. I didn't hesitate I scooped it up in my hand and put it back, closing the lid. My fingers took no time to blister but I went on serving. "Agnus Dei Qui Tolis Pecata Mundi, Dona Nobis Pace"
I'll say this, the nuns were convinced I was bound for the priesthood. They would make such a fuss over me that once when I saw a flock of them fluttering down the hall, I hid in the small broom closet that was tucked under a spiral staircase. The closest I got to that goal was a class I took in Cleveland on Apologetics, given by a Jesuit. Still remember a lot of the Latin but never did know how to spell it.

“Wake up all you sinners wake up,
Come open your bleary blue eyes,
And start the day’s lessons and lies

Sell him out your own brother you lout,
And knock your poor mother about,

The Lord above you is praying
And saying, “Come on get up and get out!”

I was also good at math. Won a scholarship to Case Institute of Technology (Later Case Western Reserve.) I was headed towards a lucrative career as the nerd who could also be a manager. I was at the time far from learning that happiness comes when you stop, not chase. I was the only student in the history of the school to have received a perfect score in Quantum Physics. I had fellow students in my dorm beseeching me “You gotta help me, I’m flunking”. In trying to explain it I had to learn it. Teaching creates learning. I was so smart!

As to my resume, I can also add that I graduated from Oberlin College, have a certificate from the Sorbonne, worked with Stanley Hayter in his “Atelier 17” in Paris. I have had one person exhibitions at various NYC galleries: Allan Stone Gallery, O. K. Harris Gallery, Denise Bibro Gallery, also others elsewhere. ENOUGH OF THIS!

While in Cleveland I dated an art student: Olive Corbin. So, I signed up for a watercolor class. Young chaste love, what a gossamer web! I was hooked! Or speared: the wound and the bow. (Not by the girl, but the art.)



“If I had the chance to do it all over, would I, could I?”

For an old man strapped to an oxygen machine it's hard to believe that I was once a certified deep-sea diver. I'm also a very talkative member of the Silent Generation.

Then again perhaps by viewing the past through eyes of a certain sadness, I exaggerate the past.

“Am I blue, Am I blue?
Who knows why an April breeze never remains
Why stars in the trees hide when it rains
Love comes along, casting a spell
Will it sing you a song
Will it say a farewell
Who can tell?”

Am I blue?
Ain't there tears in my eyes telling you?”



Today I lost my breakfast. No, I didn't vomit. Cooked a plate of food and then gathered up my pills and made some coffee. Since some of the pills have to be taken while eating, I turned to my food. Where is it? I did find it eventually however it took several turns about.

As I realize that I do not know, I shrug my shoulders and that muscular movement relieves my mind. Much of what we feel is imaginative is actually brought about haptically, by our sense of touch. The dictum I wish I could follow is from Mr. Kant: "Dare to know!".

I answer him with a song:

"How little we know! How much to discover
What chemical forces flow from lover to lover!
How little we understand what touches off that tingle,
That sudden explosion when two tingles intermingle."

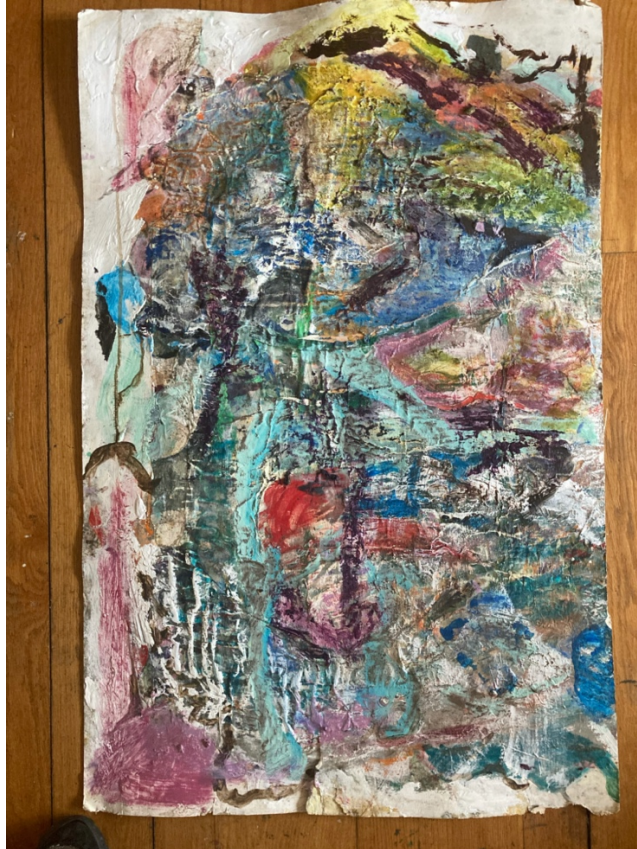
Although the song is about the energy that is created by kissing, the fact is we can discover that "glow" in a realization of many everyday actions. It is also true that we know so little.



So many claims to, once having digested Kant, to being "creative and free". Andrea Wulf 's recent publication: "Magnificent Rebels: the first Romantics and the Invention of the Self" deals with some of the implications of what she calls "the new 'das Ich' (the Ego)

philosophy. As Immanuel so wisely said "freedom isn't at odds with morality: it's an essential condition. If I'm not being myself but a follower of established ethics and morality, I am not being myself." That is a great "sin" (says the non-believer) When I am painting, I am expressing and forming myself.

I often make a painting and then paint on it again later (somewhere between 20 minutes and 20 years!) For me a painting is never done. I used to say, if you want this painting to be finished, BUY IT.



Degas didn't respect a sale. Patrons who wanted to keep his work just as they bought it would hide it when he visited, for he carried a set of paints and would paint on them. This was, (and is?) legal in France for the work of an artist is always hers, or his.

In America money reigns and the object is ours if we've paid for it. I once had a viewer at one of my exhibitions who offered to buy a particular painting. (The price was certainly right.) But then he said: "Can't wait to get this home. I paint a bit myself and I'm going to put some green over here, it really needs it". But that didn't sail, so no sale.

Claude Monet quote "I'm never finished with my paintings. The further I get the more I seek the impossible and the more powerless I feel. Color is my daylong obsession, joy, and torment. Aside from painting and gardening I am good for nothing. I would like to paint the way a bird sings.

(I'm one up on Monet for I also cook.) I have always enjoyed planting and watching things grow. I also often feel the leaves and sense life. (My ex used to say that I molested the plants) In any case a peek at a garden I once had can be seen at www.beardmans.ca. You will also see the house I built. I even copper smithed the roof. I realized my dream when I built that summer home in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada. I even copper smithed the roof. A friend and local neighbor bought the property and made it into a vacation rental.



My medical condition now has me limited to pots on my back porch.



I don't do social media, but my sister Patricia Gillis has made interviews with me and matched the words to my pictures. They are on my page in Facebook. This is the same sister that composed and printed a book on my painting done in Cape Breton. The book, "Studio in the Woods" shows the woods in Cape Breton where I used to hang my large paintings. I've reworked almost all of them. When I review the book, I am reminded of how much the forms in my art have to do with nature. The setting was perfect. Of course, it no longer exists. (As you can see, I owe much to Patty. I don't think that when she was three, I taught her how to tie her shoes is enough.)

Images are Struggling to Get Free

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It's not so much correcting, but rather enlarging, seeing yourself as a continuum and in a larger continuum.

I stop painting when it again feels alive.

It's an endless echo for the viewer adds his unique sight.

Everyone sees with their own eyes.

For a moment our eyes meet. It is connection.



One of the ways I stimulate a new approach to old paintings is to crinkle up the canvas and paint on the wrinkles, forcing a restructure. Wanting to have a wrinkle in time?

I've always had a shifting focus. That is also in the paintings. A line or color can define the shape and destroy it. That ambiguity lets the viewer finish the painting. They have to use their empathy to "read". In some ways our bodies connect. I would hope that they finish it differently each time they view it. Paintings that satisfied me yesterday are unfinished today. In many ways my paintings are better now that I have faced my illness. In understanding my body and using it to find ways to accommodate I have a greater understanding of this wonderful thing, a human body. It has made me happy.

"Well, I don't know what's coming tomorrow
Maybe it's trouble and sorrow
But we'll travel the road
Sharing our load side by side."
(Well, I don't see anyone by my side???)

Henry Matisse believed that his illness led to his best paintings-the later collages. (Though they are monumental, I still prefer his earlier, more intimate, sensuous work.) Space is the breath of art. Matisse's collages project that understanding. They also stand as testimony to Modern Art's old saw that "Less is More". Many contemporary artists have shown that that also sells, and for astronomical prices. (To the millions in auction!) I still prefer his earlier, more sensual, work. When I see the beauty in things, I become embroiled in their media.

I want to put this hopeless mess of a man on paper, canvas and in print. That's why I paint pictures where the images are struggling to get free, and also fading away. That's me.



It is important to be in the moment, however one must also be aware of the longer view. To be aware of the glorious sunset is fine, if I'm not standing on a cliff that is breaking up.

Numbers have character and feelings have images. Clouds can look like the sea. When they're low the treetops become ships. Dementia is a place where time loses line and becomes three-dimensional.

Images are the blood of desire. My scapes aren't just land, but they are reduced. I'm tasting a part of life I had only experienced in my mind. Of course, I'm not actually tasting it rather I'm making an informed imaginative leap. What has been gathering like dust is now part of the web of perception.



Speaking of webs; for months I had an ongoing fight with a spider. She would weave her web across the top of my doorway. Every day I brushed it out. When I came back it would be there, I would take it down again. This happened 3 times and then I won! The spider moved the web to the side of the door. Once it caught a seed from one of the trees. I so enjoyed it dancing on that spider's web. We are friends and neighbors now.

If only I could get her grace of structure in my paintings!

(I'm sure it's a she! For though the males can weave, they aren't as good as the females and they're usually out looking for females— strange how that is regardless of species!)



I rarely dwell on the links of lineage though I'm reminded of mine when I watch my children or grandchildren or look at some very old family photos. They also remind me that I am advancing in age by the day. Each day is a fresh start on an old vehicle: me.

I paint on my old paintings for I want to redo myself. Though that desire is serious, I'm not prepared to accept the established order. Then again, my tongue is a little trigger which often gets pulled before my intention can be brought to bear. This creates problems with their attendant difficulties with friends, neighbors, and family. The problems are greatest with those closest of course. It is easier for me to change my paintings than myself. Although the one does indeed alter the other.



Outside the kitchen door is an old, gnarled birch. Would that I could be able to sprout new branches as it does. (Besides it has Chaga mushrooms on it.)

I'm the offspring of my past cohabiting the present all blended with resignation. There is a certain murk in intention. Who knows what, in that mysterious mixture of modalities hashed by the whims of time, will decide what is the now. It is only at the end that I find a sturdy neural delight in what is. I am, for the most part, alone. I find that solitude is a type of freedom. Or have I chosen that as the shield of the unworldly against the obstinately worldly.

When I was young, I had a fearless expectation of success and with the severity of youth, not a speck of doubt in my coherence. ...

“Those were the days, my friend
We thought they'd never end
We'd sing and dance forever and a day.”

Gone are the grandstand days. One thing is certain, whatever the dreams, they must meet with the meanness of opportunity. Or will the current wave I'm riding leave a mark? (After all mountains were once earth's waves; for that matter life itself came from lifeless atoms randomly bouncing off each other). Will my work undergo a fortuitous recension, or will my paintings be swept aside by the broom of oblivion? My desires disapproved as extravagance or condemned as a messy habit? Or in the service of a failing? My ex was spot on when she said that I made paintings by cleaning my brushes on canvas. (Do you think she meant it as a compliment?) Are my paintings simply drifted relics of my time?

As it stands now, I'm not quite a has been, not quite a never was.

Recently I've become aware of how lucky I've been in fame having bypassed me. It's permitted me to avoid the trap of simply repeating what the market demands. I'm free from fortune's amnesia.

What I've lost in ambition I've gained in adventurous experimentation and, above all, determination. I'm free to be an artist. (Am I rationalizing failure?)



Painting is both a salve for my pain and need, and a shield protecting me from the pains of the everyday.



More than that I am free to play like a child most of my life. Perhaps my condition is not so much senility as second childhood. (Is there a difference?) Or is it just a ruse that I use to avoid setting my ambition on eternity? Not living, but living on?

Although I'm in the last fifth of my century my days have become longer for my needs are less. I have the enthusiasm (and the ego!) necessary to delight in self-consciousness as I survey the ground over which I have been creeping these many years.

The watch mocks my idle time, but I embrace it. Perhaps I'm seeing ghosts now that I'm closer to being one. I experience most things as caught in a web.



I no longer have grief and its side dish guilt for I have eaten enough of that in my life. Out with that damage! The years have no patience; but they recycle my early years that then fled by; the old have returned.

I again remember walking home from where the school bus dropped me off by Eagle Creek and sitting on the bank of the ditch with my pants rolled up and my feet in the water. I can almost feel the same sun on my legs. How can I say the glory of these past swamps? They have become woven with the sense of my contentment.

As I write these notes my hand shakes so. The characters of the letters are often illegible as if written in a different language. However, it's also a nifty way to create staccato images. For I work with creative intention just as you may look with creative inclination.

I have pulmonary fibrosis and a good portion of my day is coughing and spitting out phlegm. I'm waiting on the "phlegm" fatal. Without oxygen for even a minute, the O2 level drops to 82. Anything below 88 is considered dangerous.

I also have trouble seeing. An auto accident burst my right eye and I have to have a series of operations. I have already told this story but allow me to indulge...#1 remove the blood that had filled the interior. #2 sew in the artificial iris. #3 then the easiest, slide in the lens behind the iris. #1 was the scariest for I could not be put under for fear of an eye movement. My head was blocked and a local was applied. It was successful and not at all painful. However, I was conscious and could see a large needle coming straight into my eye.

The result is the two eyes see different depths. The left eye, the natural one, sees more clearly things that are the nearest. The left, with the artificial iris sees distance. (The condition is called diplopia.) They couldn't quite match the color but so what? Many artists have had eyesight problems, strange huh.

It's summer! Watermelon time. Both for eating and as a tool for painting. A rind when smeared across a wet color makes another shade and changes direction as my wrist moves. (That wrist movement will still be here when I'm not.)

What a difference a day makes. Yesterday the fog had, like a vapor fallen, made sprinkles on the leaves. Today I look up and the leaves on the trees give green echo to the sun and turn the sky beyond into dancing blooms. Trees are vain. They're always changing color, dancing around wanting to be noticed. Flowers don't talk but do smile and wave.

In my labor of imagination is the discipline of reason. Reflex and Action start but Will persists. The reverse is also true: Caprice often usurps both. This reveals subtle actions inaccessible by any other lens. Then again, I could just be doing what all humans do, create a memory that justify a feeling: physical sense makes rational sense.

“Chickery chick, cha-la, cha-la
Check-a-la romeo in a bananika
Bollika, wollika, can't you see,
Chickery chick is me?”

“That'll do, that will do.” Someone said that: I'd like to know who.
What is fermenting in this old belly?
Perhaps the beginning of the end of now.

I want my work to have the perpetual echo that I find in life's assonance.



Go fly a kite,
Or: The Sound of Mucus
Let's go high a flight
Up to the highest kite
With tuppence for paper and strings
You can have your own wings
Don't let go
But don't be a show
Be a bird not a turd

Let's go fight a high,
Up to the highest sky
Do let go,
Be a show.

Oopsie Daisy,
Don't be crazy,
Life's all hazy
I'll live in a maze,
The rest of my days.

No one sees things as they are,
They all want to be a star,
I told you get back in the car.

Peace and poppies.
What a shallow rill
Is the stream of pleasure
Nevertheless, I wanted it still,
This house of Treasure
In no small measure.



My main fear is not dying it's not living.

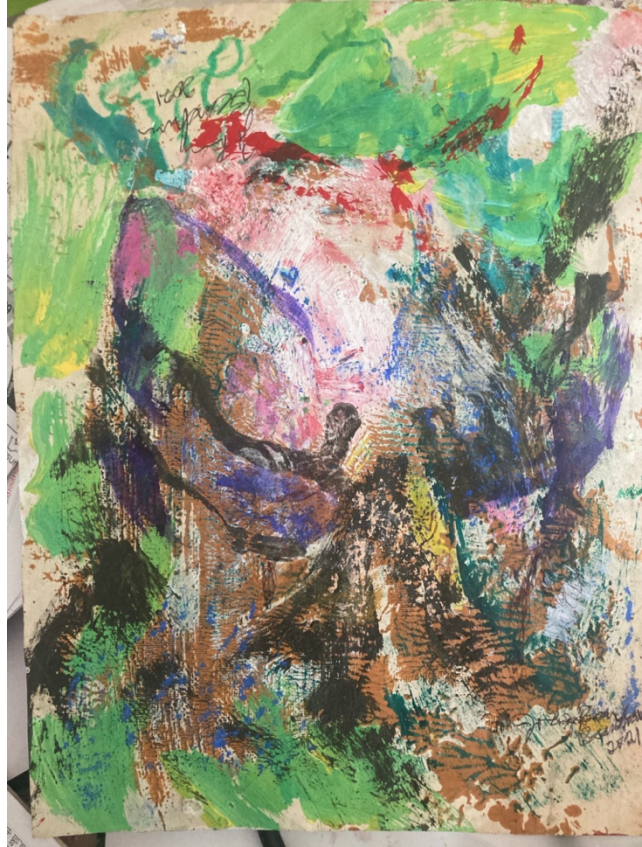
Why does tradition always exaggerate?
Why is hindsight clearer than foresight?

My work always hovers between design and depiction. It's sort of a Heisenberg principle of uncertainty. In art it's called ambiguity. Antsy or Angsty?

The bigoted mind sees only through a tiny hole that does not permit sight from many angles. The premise of the movie "The Producers" That "Springtime for Hitler and Germany" would be a comedy. Today it's not funny.

Paying attention is pure delight. To strike a match and see it light is to connect with the cave man and his flint stone.

I want to replace my lawn with the sour green moss. Consumer heaven: Etsy sells moss!



Sometimes the light seems more eager than others. Working on a puzzle when in the corner of my round eye I keep seeing what I think is an object when I turn to look at it there is nothing. Nothing except the roadway is a bit slicker in that spot and the light seems brighter.

Because my eyes are in the front of my head I move in a linear world. Birds' eyes are on the side, and they fly through a three-dimensional world.

I am an open door, if you please, but what you find when you pass through may not please you.

I'm a great fan of sloppy modalities.

Kid can I nap! (I try not to kidnap. Now catnip is something else.)

The Alzheimer's joke is that every day you make new friends. I don't experience that; however, I can watch old programs which seem new. And what I notice recalling is rarely the plot but some incidental visual.

Senility takes away a lot, however it gives fresh visions or rather awareness of past associations of visions. A table leg to a downward turned head can be seen as a person; a coffee smears a face.

We all make sense of what we see, or what we smell. A scent becomes sense.

My daughter Chloe has commented on the importance of a given context. As she said: "A different set will change people. Most of what people have and achieve comes from a

predetermined set: a vocation, a career, education, etc. Not many people can up and change themselves." Her visit, though not without its conflicts, has been extremely beneficial to me. Not only the many chores she does for me. We are social beings and though I cherish solitude, I acknowledge the importance of physical companionship.

Having it all—the good and the bad is the thing. Who said, "Living the full catastrophe.?"

Just a little snot on the way to becoming a booger. Oh, the feeling when there finally is a success. When you get the booger out—even if it takes some nose hair with it. But the booger just comes back. Why does it sound like I am talking about politics? Or a little shit becoming a turd—or the president. Oh, the poetry of poop! The birds have decorated my deck chairs. Is a small turd worth a flush? Will I outlive my supply of toilet paper? Certain questions arise at a later stage of life. In spite of the loss of the current reality or at least the operative reality there is an unguessed space almost tactile.

The best games never end. And there's always hope, a mendicant.

I have an urge to paint that seems to come not from me but through me.
But from where?



I started as an action painter. More correctly a process painter. Because of my diplopia, I'm aware of the difference between what each eye sees.

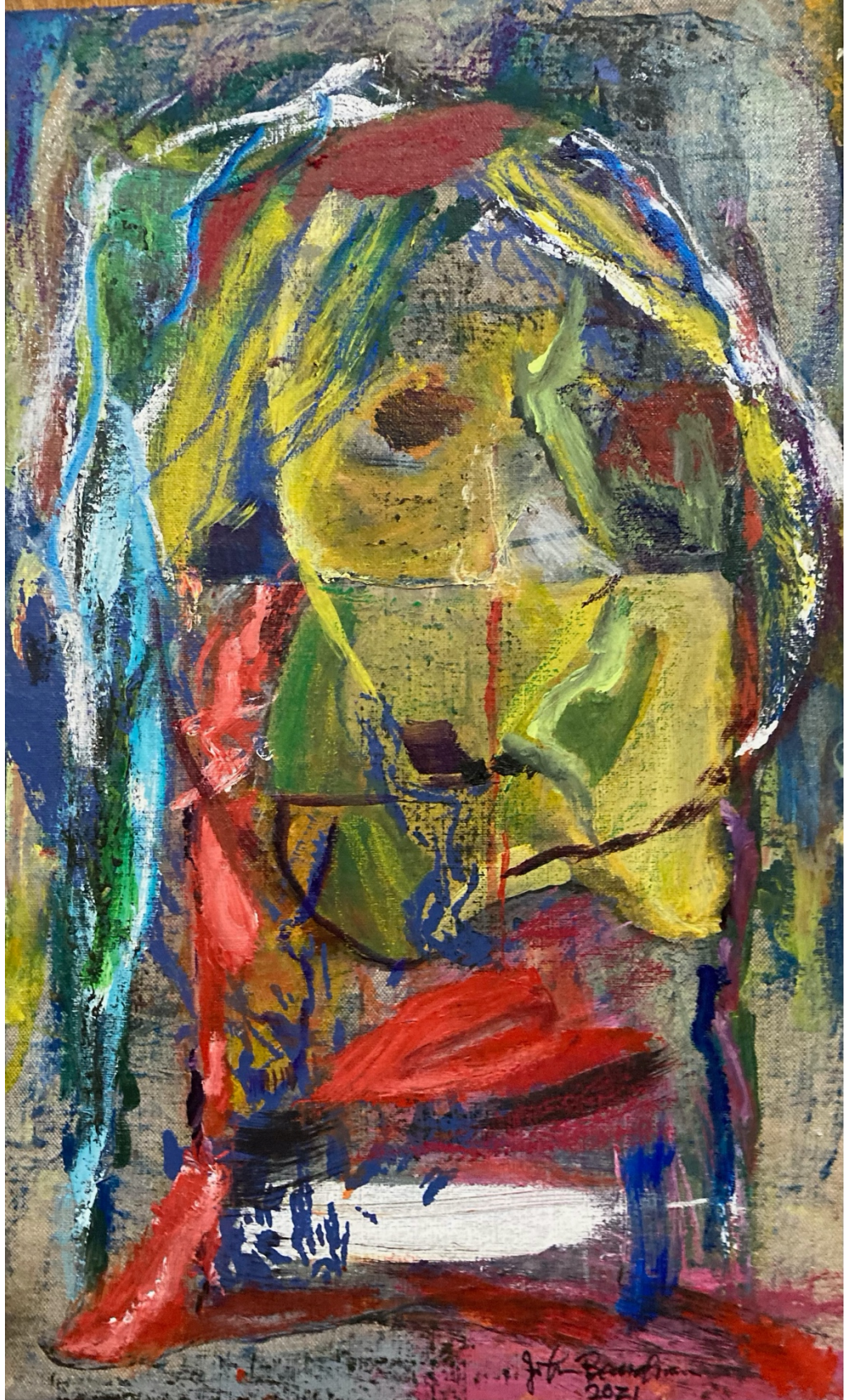
Normal vision merges the different views not one. The ability to focus is different.

My painting changed after that, although the process of finding out what I'm doing as I do it remained in place.

The actions now produced a face with two different eyes.

Rather like a forced rhyme, it swerves between the banal and the profound.

No two eyes are alike.



The broken vindicates humanity. It is both purposeful and personal. When I start a painting, I'm swimming. As I continue, I'm being swept by a current stronger than me. When I'm finished, I find my persistent self-waiting.



I love when I manage to make a line a trapeze. Not so fond of the fact that I can do it only incidentally; in the twitched pause between my words, a circus was born. With a bend of the paper as the graphite rubs a 3 becomes a queen.

An eraser from the top of my pencil fell on my hand. When I looked down it seemed an emerald.

I looked up and saw a cathedral of trees. Framed by the windowsill the sun was coming down from the middle to the altar above to the crossroads below

I do a lot of work that has multiple vantage points. I call them flips. Sometimes it's a horizontal flip sometimes a vertical sometimes, more rarely, a four-way flip.

One piece of paper or canvas is 4 art works. This has to do with the Janus concept. It also recognizes the fact that things seen from a different point of view look quite different.

Nobody sees the same as we do.





Reading a book, I glanced up and saw a hair. I thought it was a trick of the weave in the carpet until I picked up my book and turned the page.

Minds instinctively grab onto patterns and once fixed are hard to break.

Had some great comments but I put them in my notebook. Now I can't find my notebook. But I'm sure they were brilliant!



My Apple computer sits to the side of my iPad on which I'm doing this. The logo is shiny and a mirror. I see it out of the corner of my eye, but I don't "see" it, I see the reflections of the objects on the cabinet by the wall. That is my eye sees the shapes of the black objects, but my mind makes them insects that are moving, in spite of knowing better this keeps occurring. The "cockroaches" won't be put down. Stubborn.

The seeing part of my brain is not talking to the thinking part. Perhaps there is a subconscious urge in this painter's mind that subordinates the thinking part to the seeing part.

Last year's stubborn leaves are finally falling. They must be ashamed for they are blushing. Spring can't be far behind. Old Mother tree is getting ready for the youngsters to come.

I'm an old man and I'm often cold. I put a blanket on my lap and it's full of moth holes. It's like me and my mind. I'm comfortable but falling apart. Penny wise and pound foolish is my motto. I use newspaper to mop up spills and put off applying for a medicine grant that could save thousands.

Numbers have character. 1 is stern. 2 is cavalier, 3 is sensual, 4 is flippant, 5 is belligerent, 6 is worried (or haughty) 7 is militant, 8 is fecund, 9 is wise, 10 is inquisitive. This identification is only true when handwritten, especially by me.

Art is where we confront things that often displease us.

An original song to the tune of Amazing Grace:

“Amazing greed how sweet the sound that saved a saint like me.
It was greed that taught me how to fear,
and greed my fears relieved.
Oh, blessed was that happy day when first I did deceive.”

(Should be the anthem of the United States.)



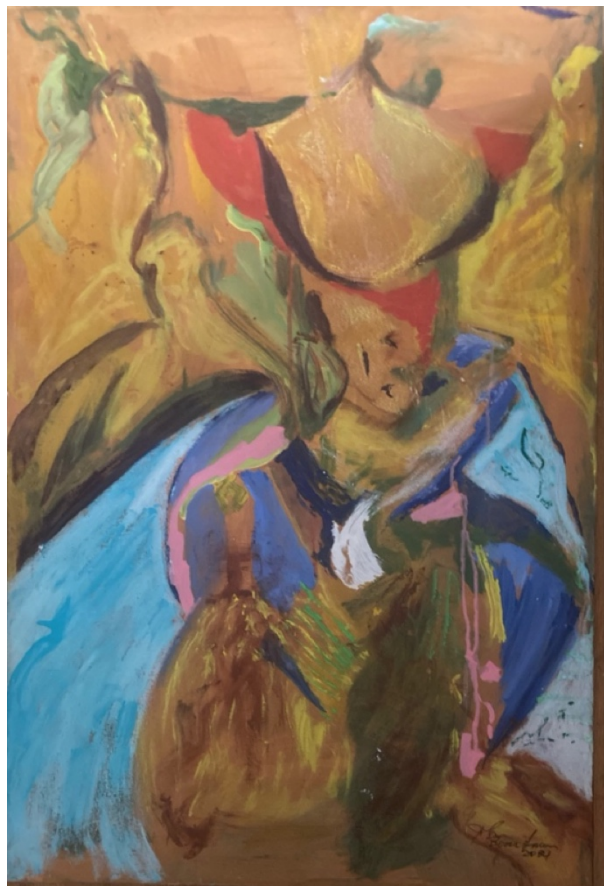
Went on the back porch sat down in the recliner and the sun threw a blanket on me. I opened my eyes, and the green tree was red. Only my knees got burnt. As a child at the beach, I got so sunburned that at night I had to get to sleep on my hands and knees, so painful was it.



I was 13 when I realized that the night sky was not orange, and that there were constellations of stars in a dark midnight blue sky. Sometimes grey in the day orange at nighttime.

In Youngstown, Ohio there were 5 unregulated steel mills, polluting the air with chemicals which would irrevocably harm my lungs. It also played havoc with the bird's reality but were more dangerous to the insects who were drawn to their extinction by the pollution of the light.

Stars, in a midnight blue sky were also not seen. I had not experienced constellations, much less the galaxy. That peaceful night that was filled elsewhere with the soft sounds of insects didn't exist here for the sounds of machinery. The noise of our world has also played havoc with the animals that communicate by songs and calls.



My balance is off. I've yet to fall, but I do a lot of flailing about. This morning my slippers wore a slipper. Wearing slippers, I stumbled, and one foot went into one of my extra slippers.

What is the fear of feces about? Why is it the most prohibited word in our culture?
"I got a shit, you gotta shit, all God's children gotta shit.
When we get to heaven, we gonna shit, shit all over God's heaven."

Changing my mind or rather my mind changing me, not just at a given moment in time but in a moment that has no time.

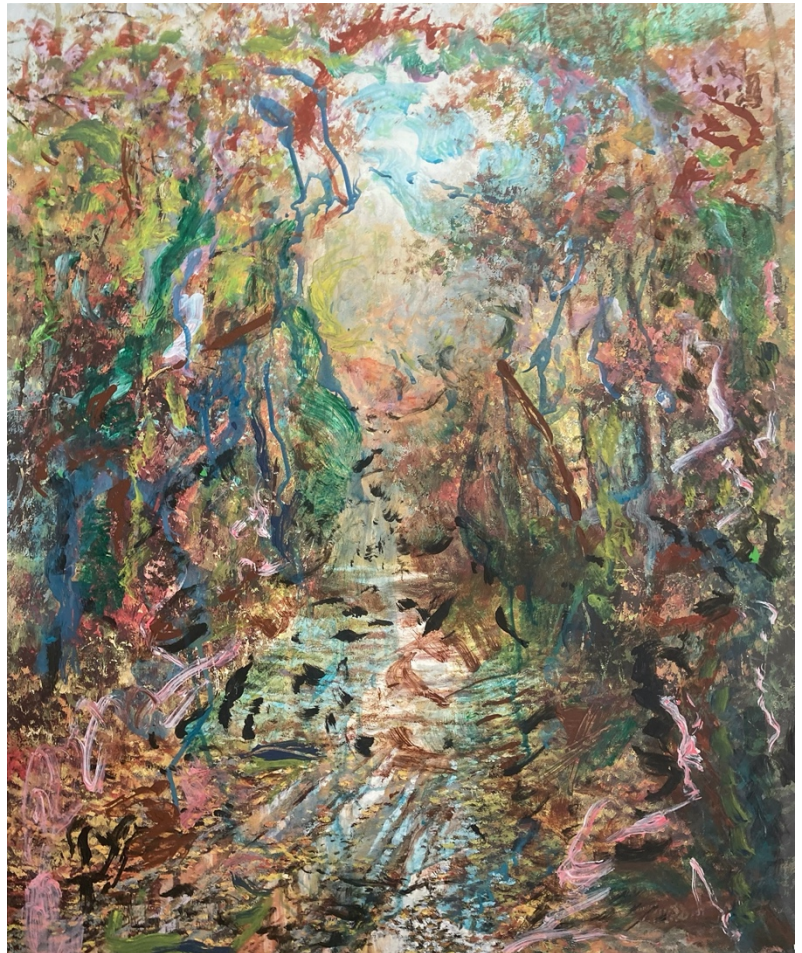
Nothing can be added or taken away - from me - or it.

Change is the only permanence.

The only fixity I have is of the alternating impulses called habit. Breaking that is difficult. When that work is done what I have done is given form to a moment. By giving it form it is outside of time, it is timeless.

When the painting is viewed, the viewer goes through a similar process. The only extension of a moment is depth of experience.

The only extension to experience is depth of consciousness.





Johnbeardman.com



“I look at life from both sides now,
from win or lose and still somehow
Life’s illusions I recall,
I don’t know life at all.”

Look at clouds or paintings, from both sides, something lost, but something gained.

When I lived in Michigan, I taught an adult ed class and one day a student invited me to her home for a meal. It was there that I met Kip Serota, her husband, an architect. While Jo Ann was finishing the meal (Normal for that period) Kip and I took a walk on the railroad tracks. He became my best friend, and we had many adventures before he died. Kip used to walk 6 miles a day. He once asked me to join him and agreed that it would not be one of his marathons. We set out on a new path in the woods, and he tried a shortcut for my sake. Well, it was shorter, a mere 4 miles, but it necessitated wading through a swamp with mud half-way up to our knees. I cursed him most of the way, while I still had my breath.

It was at his house that other friends of his gave us a concert after supper one night. The friends were Chuck and Joni Mitchell. I can't hear "Both Sides now" without getting choked up. Joni went on to become world famous. After their divorce Chuck restored old homes.

It seems as though I piece my life together with songs. It is scattered with songs, one might say tattered with songs—always old songs, usually before my time. It's my mother that I'm recalling, or at least my mother before the farm.

“My time is your time,
My partner, my partner,
It's dancing time.
The clock says ten
Won't you say when?”

I'm ready, go steady
When we begin
The time is right,
I think we might,
Just chance it and dance it
Away tonight “

Rudy Valley made that popular 8 years before I was born. My mother sang it - before the farm.



To experience the fullest impact of art, one must have no intention; suspend any judgment or "holding" and go completely and willingly into something that is, in a sense, not you.

Listening to a Mozart one must become the "horn." Just as, when in a contemplative mode, the Universe slips into a grain of sand, so here a great "fullness" is experienced in the "emptiness" that is at the juncture of a figure and its ground. Or, to return to my past example, although the "Orange Sky at Night" is a dangerous pollution, since it is also a beautiful memory of a past me then, as limited as I am, I am enough.

“Memories light the corners of my mind,
Misty water-colored memories,
Of the way we were.

Scattered pictures of the smiles we left behind,
Smiles we gave to one another,
For the way we were.
If we had the chance to do it all again,
Tell me, would we?”

Could we?

Thank you, Barbra.

And Hoagy

How little it matters; how little we know.

There are still a few Chugs left in that slow train to death day.

For butter or wurst.

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