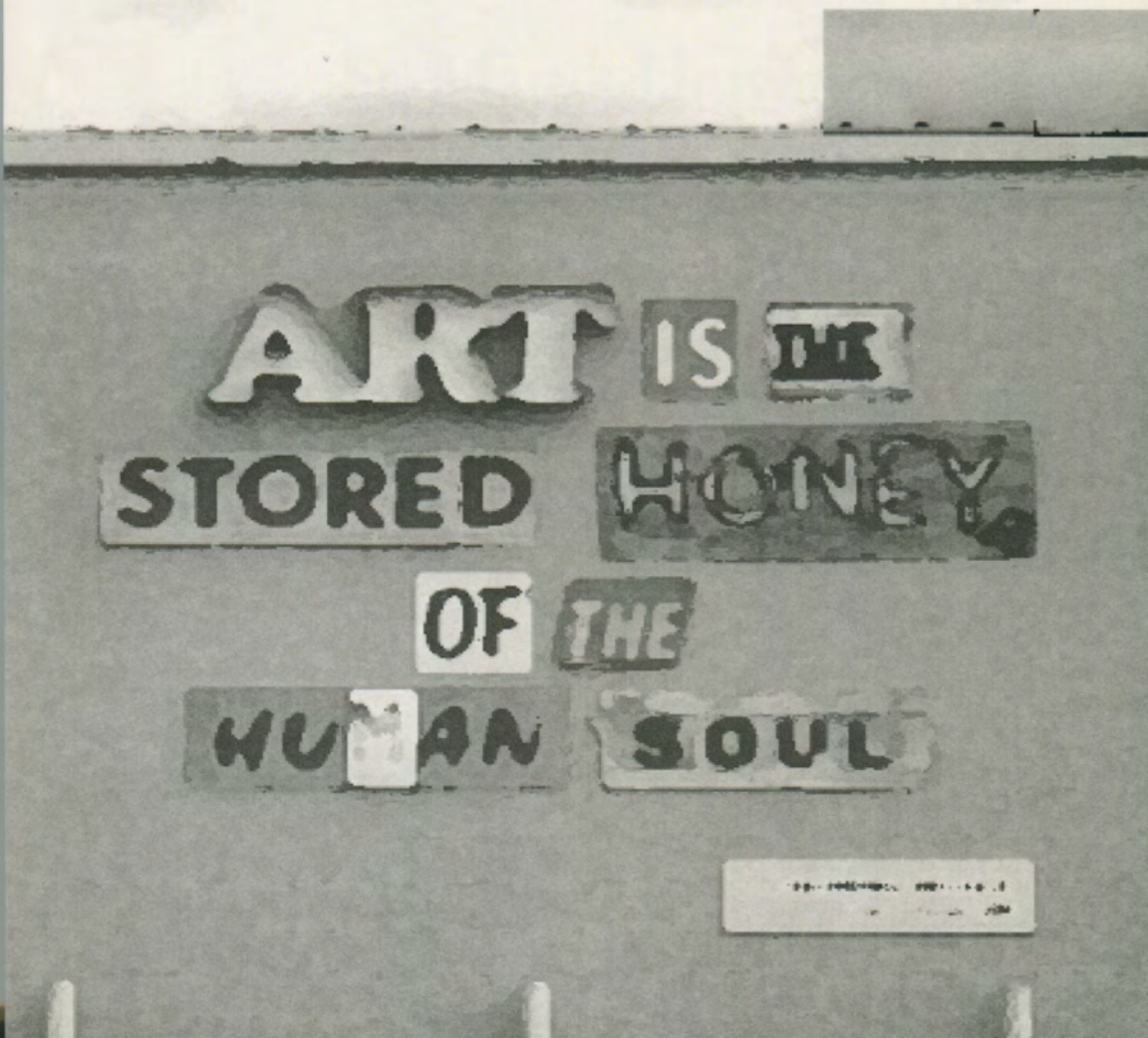
Pecan Grove Review

Volume IX
Fall 2005



Pecan Grove Review

St. Mary's University
San Antonio, Texas

Volume IX
Fall 2005

A special note of thanks to all who submitted,
and to all those students who were involved in
the very difficult process of selection.

Pecan Grove Review

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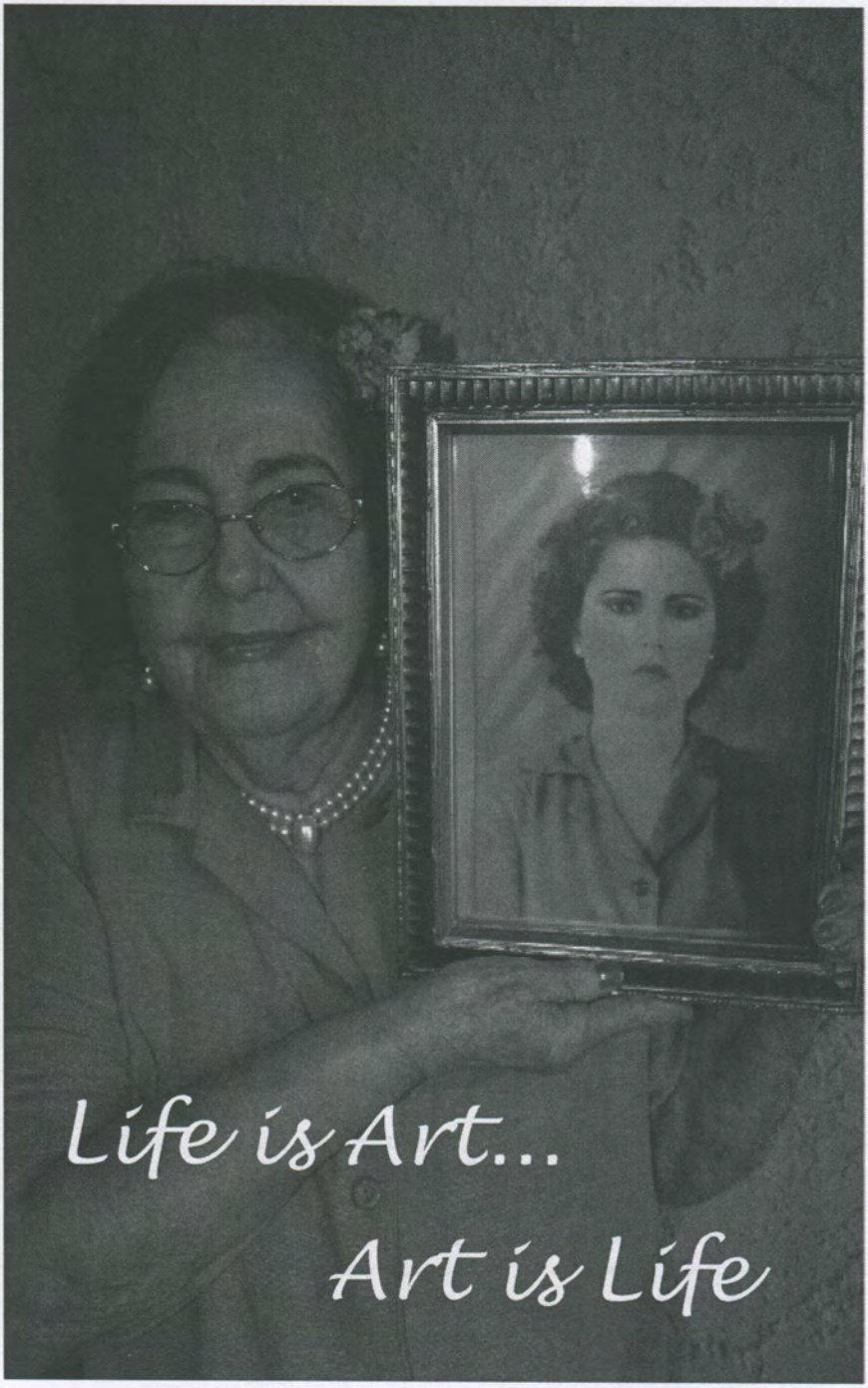

by Denise Santa Ana

Foreword
ART: Better Angel of Our Nature

This volume of *Pecan Grove Review* (PGR), with its focus upon art, ironically begins with references to war (several poems by Naomi Shihab Nye and "Achilles at Fallujah" by Mary Lynne Hill). Words and images relating to the war in Iraq are part of our daily lives now. When I feel overwhelmed by them, I often recenter myself by writing a poem. In 1861, as our nation was on the verge of civil war, Abraham Lincoln concluded his First Inaugural Address with an appeal to the "better angels of our nature." To me, art and its life-giving power is one of our better angels.

Art—what is its place in our war-laden or our peaceful lives? Is its value primarily in the transformation of the individual making the art, or can the community be transformed as well by collective encounters with works of art? How do both the process of making art, and the product which emerges from that process bring people together? How does an artist go about trying to teach the art of making art to others? These are some questions that were on our minds when we called for submissions to volume IX of PGR, and, later, when we sifted through responses. All the pieces contained within these pages explore some aspect of our questioning, either directly or indirectly.

During the Spring of 2004, when we were calling for submissions to this volume, the President's Peace Commission at St. Mary's University presented the Art of Peace Award to San Antonio-based poet Naomi Shihab Nye. We've included a significant portion of Nye's acceptance speech along with several of her poems which formed part of her public discourse. In "The Word PEACE", the speaker of the poem explores how the vowels of the word "peace" can be used to spell other words—words whose meanings bring people together and turn community into an art form.

Perhaps it is inevitable that being a literary journal, this volume pays particular attention to the power of language: how it is used in dialogue to gradually reveal to the reader a situation that the two characters won't bring themselves to fully express (Something Funny Happened to Me Today by Cesar "turtle" Gutierrez), how two languages can be better than one when expressing the emotional life of a family ("pig's feet y panza" by Veronica Garcia), as well as

the architectural value of vowels and consonants ("Long Before the Invention of Consonants" by JoAnn DeLuna). Living life in a life-affirming way can also be a form of art as revealed in "Walls: A Sestina for Eric and His Room" by Yvonne Briones and "Dedication" by Brad Boggs.

Yet, we also made a point of including pieces that offered insight into non-verbal forms of art such as Scott Schrader's essay on "Photography...Art...Life" and a variety of poems written by visual artist/poet Noel "Bella" Merriam. It is by special invitation that the essays of Merriam and Susan M. Oaks appear in PGR. Both Merriam and Oaks, who are dedicated teachers of art, are visual artists whose works have been widely displayed throughout the state of Texas as well as beyond our borders. Their essays "Connecting Learning Through the Arts" (Merriam), "The Piece and I Have a Dialogue" (Oaks) and "An Artist's Teaching Philosophy: Empowering the Students" (Oaks) are essential reading for anyone who cares about the presence of art in our schools and universities.

In various pages of this volume and especially toward the end, you will find visual ideas created by students in Professor Veronica Lozano's Desktop Publishing class (Fall, 2004). Each represents a personal vision for what could have served as a cover for this volume. We could use only one design for the cover; however, we chose to honor the diversity and importance of all the interpretations by making them part of the "text."

Finally, I think it is important to pay brief public tribute to the student editors, Caroline Hallman and Cesar "turtle" Gutierrez, without whom this volume (nor volume VIII) would not exist. Their devotion to art as writers, readers, performers and editors inspires me. It is young people such as these two who carry a disciplined and transforming vision into the world wherever they go. What they do, what we all do through our commitments to art on our campus and in our communities helps our nation rise above fear and the horrors of war to claim "the better angels of our nature."

—Cyra S. Dumitru, August 2005

Acceptance Speech for the Art of Peace Award

Naomi Shihab Nye

I am grateful to St. Mary's University for your dedication to peace dialogue and peace work. To accept a peace award when the news is—as it is—seems an anachronism. Wow, what a failure! Give that girl some overtime! We might get together in a vocal chorus—maybe the spectacular San Antonio Vocal Arts Ensemble would let us offer back-up—and hum at different pitches our shared sorrow over the misguided ways of things these days.

As a child, I was secretly worried that my first name spelled backwards read I MOAN. After all these years, I'm almost GLAD for it. Because, I do.

I moan daily, for every headline of violence. I moan and mourn in chorus with you, for so much inhumanity swirling in our precious world. So many lives lost. For what? So many cycles of sorrow and revenge. So many ways we might support and encourage one another undercut by righteousness, narrow thinking, rage, and greed. WAR HAS NO IMAGINATION. It's the sign I carried in every protest. I continue to believe it. War in the name of peace will not carry us very far.

I mourn the new page of the millennium, already scarred and torn. After all our studies of philosophy and religion, the collective wisdoms of the all the world's traditions, the studies of history and its patterns—we continue to kill one another. We continue to spend more on weaponry and warfare than education. And our government defends it.

I mourn such BAD BEHAVIOR. Where are all those early lessons we learned? I feel so wistful for them. Turn the other check. Use words to solve your problems, not fists. Weren't we sent off to school like that? Where are those crucial wisdoms now?

We must salute them and renew our belief in them on a daily basis. This you are doing with your conference and focus on peace and dialogue. Thank you.

The only way I can accept this award today is on behalf of all of you, all people everywhere, who have not stopped believing in language as a way of connection. Beyond the sad propaganda, beyond the threats and hollow claims, there is true language. Waiting, patiently, saddened perhaps by all the abuses it must endure. There is poetry which helps us see into things. Refreshing our spirits and our voices. Find the poems which you need and read them regularly. Keep them close. Trade them with one another.

I honor all school teachers and librarians who live by hope and imagination every day. I honor all people who work toward bridges instead of walls. I do not honor walls. I honor anyone who sees the humanity in those who might be identified as "other." I honor all agencies devoted to education and enrichment of life—the National Endowment for the Humanities is the one I know most closely these days and I salute the optimism of its thoughtful, uplifting projects all over this country.

I am proud to live in a city where the Tri-Faith Dialogue and Jewish/Palestinian Dialogue groups meet on a monthly basis. Where we could have two PEACE PARTIES and many people of the Jewish and Arab and other communities would attend. I am proud of our Peace Center and all its strong work. I am proud of those who speak out—thank you for hosting Jehan Sadat here at the St. Mary's campus some time ago—I am proud of Texans for Peace and the *Texas Observer*'s fifty brave years, of Gemini Ink's crucial support of expression in so many necessary ways, of Jump Start Theater and alternative programming of all kinds, of our great local universities which encourage connections and community involvement in meaningful ways. I was proud yesterday of John Branch's cartoon in the *San Antonio Express News*, both editorials, and the letter writer who wrote about the swaggering. We must keep reading, keep passing on the good news we can find.

If you have not read about the BREAKING THE ICE group of polar explorers, Palestinians and Israelis, who recently completed a dramatic expedition together, please search for them on the web. If you have not read about SEEDS OF PEACE, a peace group of Palestinian and Israeli teenagers, then please do. John Wallach, who founded the group, died last year, but his eloquent book, *The Enemy Has A Face: The Seeds of Peace Experience,* should be required reading

for all dialogue classes. A regular portion of any profits from my book, *19 Varieties of Gazelle*, are donated to Seeds of Peace …

I remember my Palestinian grandmother, a refugee who lived with great pride and dignity, saying at the age of 105, "I never lost my peace inside."

I think of a young teacher, Xander Maksik, who taught my book, *Habibi,* to his middle school students at a Jewish orthodox school last year … When the headmaster ordered that he take it off his reading list, Xander held firm. "Schools are for dialogue," he said. "The students are having good conversations about it. Anyway, it's a book that believes in peace, and one of the two main characters is a terrific and wise young Jewish boy!" Xander was fired from his job for teaching *Habibi*, but we don't have to worry about him—he's now teaching at the American School of Paris where dialogue about controversial topics is encouraged. May we all have the courage to do what he did—speak up when speaking is difficult. May we all continue to believe in the ties that bind. I am particularly grateful that Habibi was published in Israel in Hebrew not long ago, though I doubt very strongly that Ariel Sharon is reading it …

One of my local friends, Mohammad Alatar of Palestine, begins his presentations sometimes by asking simply, "Do I look like a human being to you? Good, then we can talk."

I keep a sad collection of news photos of the children in Iraq, Palestine, Israel, and Pakistan. How are we honoring their future? What lives are we giving them? It is the question EVERYONE should be asking every day as we decry all violence which betrays us. I would love this collection to become obsolete, to have a small bonfire for these sad pictures and toast a better world for them. Aldo Leopold, the naturalist, wrote, "We only grieve for what we know." And, we all know childhood. We should honor it in everything we do. I do not blame teenagers these days for not wanting to keep up with the news. How pathetic adults must seem to them.

Thank you for inviting me to read a few poems.

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The Word PEACE

Naomi Shihab Nye

You could find words or parts of words
inside other words, it had always been a game.
PEACE for example contained the crucial vowels of
EAT and EASY which seemed suggestive
in good ways. If people ATE together
they would be less likely to KILL one another
especially if one were responsible for shopping & cooking
& the other for wiping & cleaning & you took turns.
Then you started thinking, what does he like?
What might suit his fancy?
There should of course be meals
for all peace talks, yes, we understood that
long ago, as there is eating at festivals & weddings,
the generous platter, the giant bowl.
Those who placed a minor faith in rhyme,
might try PEACE & CEASE, as in,
could you please CEASE this hideous
waste of time & resources, when's the last time
any of you considered how lucky we are
to be BORN? We had grown too far
from the source, that's for sure.
A man spit ETHICS at me as if it were
a dirty word.
And what about apologizing to kids, hey?
After TEACHing them to use words to solve
their differences, what did we do?
People two years old were starting to look
a lot better than anyone else
& consider their vocabularies.
EAT was probably in there.
Sweet DREAMS & PLEASE which also contained those
Crucial vowels found in PEACE if anyone
were still thinking about it. This didn't always work
though, because some might say WAR contained the
first 2 letters of ART & you would not want them
for one minute to believe that.

During a War

Naomi Shihab Nye

Best wishes to you & yours,
he closes the letter.

For a moment I can't
fold it up again—
where does "yours" end?
Dark eyes pleading
what could we have done
differently?
Your family,
your community,
circle of earth, we did not want,
we tried to stop,
we were not heard
by dark eyes who are dying
now. How easily they
would have welcomed us in
for coffee, serving it
in a simple room
with a glorious rug.

Your friends & mine.

Achilles at Fallujah

Mary Lynne Hill

Standing openly on the walls of Troy, once-blessed Priam is the first to see the swift runner Achilles bear down upon Hector, breaker of horses, Priam's beloved son.

Witnesses see the Sunni insurgents drive away from a military base east of Fallujah. The men, drivers and passengers with faces masked by head scarves, race forward the SUVs carrying the Americans.

Lunging at Hector, Achilles the Greek drives his spear into the gape of armor between collarbone and shoulder, the spear point slicing the tender neck of the Trojan.

Bearing down, the Sunni insurgents fire assault weapons and launch grenades at the vehicles filled with the flak-jacketed Americans.

Death drapes herself over Hector; but the brilliant Achilles, not satisfied, taunts Hector's lifeless body.

The flames consume the four Americans; but the incited onlookers, not satisfied, wrestle the charred bodies out of the smoking skeletons of the vehicles.

The Greek comrades of Achilles crowd around the cooling body, each laughing as they take turns stabbing the corpse of the once-lithe, once-feared Hector.

The Sunnis of Fallujah crowd around the cooling bodies, cheering as they beat one of the bodies with a shovel, another with a metal pole, kicking and stomping on the head of a third once-feared American.

Triumphant, bent on shaming noble Hector, Achilles pierces the tendons between ankles and heels of the fallen Trojan. Knotting straps of rawhide through them.

Triumphant, bent on shaming the proud Americans, the Fallujans hang the dismembered bodies from the iron-green lampposts on a bridge over the Euphrates.

Lashing the knotted rawhide straps to his chariot, Achilles whips his horses into flight, dust swirling around the dark-haired man, the steeds roughly drag behind them toward the Greek encampment.

Attaching bodies to cars, to donkey carts, the Fallujans, whipped into a frenzy of delight, dust swirling, roughly drag the charred bodies through the main streets of Fallujah.

Priam gazes upon the site, from a distance, in horror.

The occupation police gaze upon the site, from a distance, in horror.

Listen

Amber Day

Can you hear it?

The glass orb foundation we stand on
Is cracking

I can't take a step towards you
And you can't take a step towards me

Yet we can't go back either
For we'll simply slip away

We would be better off
To let it break and fall

Into the dark abyss inside
Look, I can't even jump to your side

Or you to mine
Yet I can hold out my hand

As you hold out yours
Never quite reaching

But still on the same glass orb foundation
Always apart but never parted

Always touching but never touched
So we can only stand here

You and I
In perfect stance

In
Equality

Listen,
Do you hear it?

Mis-Quote

Willis J. Humiston

What do we expect to find
in the world?

What do we expect to leave
for the world?

"Life's but a walking shadow,"

full of dreams,
some fulfilled.

The brilliant sun of my youth
dimming due to death
and unanswered questions…
Why?

No parents, no children, no peace from war.

Thrice have I ventured into war's darkness
but whence will my redemption come?

"Out, out brief candle,"
but doesn't life burn yet brighter
the closer we come to the darkness?

End Quote

Willis J. Humiston

To make my mark upon the world,
daring this with my father at 12,
his hopeful words were not mine.

Wars. Wives, and not following the cross,
made my life one to bear.

My voice must be heard!

"To thine own self be true"
not my words but thoughts the same.

How do I reach, teach,
that life must be lived to the fullest?

Life, loves, a legacy?
Enrich the echoes of life!

Sharing truth,
giving voice to my words,
leaving my mark—
others can follow my trail—
soothes my "rage against the dying of the light."

Priest of Past

Cesar Cervantes

The Silence got to me. Never alone, but always lonely. Surrounded by voices, familiar voices, voices not heard but seen as mimed mouths moving. I smoked a cigarette and reminisced about my last encounter with the Priest. He simply said, "The only emotions we possess are Love, and Fear." Assuming this is true assuming that this entire experience wasn't a concoction of my mind spurred on by the suppression of my will then the Priest did in fact approach. He approached, in my most "fearful" hour. He walked toward me as though it were meant to be expressing truth in every movement and wonder in every stir, he called himself, the Priest of Past.

And this is my Account:

"The world is placed in sounds of chaos," he said. "A silent didgeridoo playing for the deaf ears of the people and a language of gibberish lies, and fantasies that is beyond our cognition. But the transition is within our grasp" he said. "It is in our words, it is in our minds, it is the essence of our very being if we could only deny our humanistic impressions: fatalism, pessimism, apathy, and disregard. Listen and bear the blessed ignorance of the people," he said." And take comfort in antecedent causation. Know that deterministic ways" he said, "will soon be embraced by the prophecy of the apocalypse. The decadence of society will no longer be the cause for pain" he said, "but rather realization of potentiality lost. And the Cliché of Love," he said "will finally have definition. And the enlightenment upon death will be the new milk of life."

GoodBye I

Michael Montoya

Not I
Not Now
Know Way
Know How

I Hear
Now Said
Way Past
My Head

Hear Words
Said Wrong
Past Time
So Long

Words Flawed
Wrong Cares
Time Lost
No Where

Flawed Man
Cares Own
Lost Self
Not Shone

Man Left
Own Being
Self Serve
Shown Seeing

Left Me
Being Right
Serve None
Seeing Light

Me My
Right Try
None Loved
Good Bye

Poetry and Things

H. Palmer Hall

It is fairly late at night and I am writing again for the first time in several weeks and I am thinking about poetry and I am thinking, too, about the year I was seven years old and my doctor told me that I was going blind in my right eye. Yes, I am thinking about that, but I am thinking mostly about poetry and only a little about surgical "procedures" and about how everything these days is a "Process." Everything, including poetry and the surgery that repaired my right eye, is movement toward something or, perhaps, away from something else.

I am thinking about poetry and I am afraid I am boring you, but it is getting very late at night and I am thinking about my medical examination this morning, and about the nurse who connected a dozen tapes to my chest and side and about her long red fingernails pressing down on the membrane that keyed instructions into the EKG. I did not watch the squiggle marks on the paper feeding out of the machine, but the sharp gleam of the nail polish and how she typed with the points of her nails.

When the doctor called later to tell me my heart was fine and my blood pressure was normal and my cholesterol was where it belonged and my prostate seemed normal and even my gall bladder (suspect organ) didn't have to join my right kidney in that place where body parts go when they are harmful and have to be ripped out, I thought then about poetry and about the process of semi- annual medical examinations that do not search for something, but for nothing, and about bright red fingernails.

To walk across the street is a dangerous thing, I thought, and to write a poem can also be dangerous. Writing the best poems must, I suspect, always be dangerous, as dangerous, at least, as crossing a street with our eyes closed. When I was seven years old and my doctor told me that I was going blind in my right eye, I went with my family to my grandmother's house in northern Florida. We drove from Southeast Texas as we did every summer and turned off Highway 98 onto a sand road that meandered through a wilderness until it stopped at a small bay off a larger bay. I did not think about poetry then, but the place was poetry and the place was dangerous.

The first morning I was there, I pushed a small wooden boat off the shore at Wakulla Beach and lay down in it, feeling my body rock with the low waves, and let the boat drift away from shore, my eyes closed in the hot sun. From time to time, I would open only my left eye and stare up at the clouds and wonder what it would be like to be blind in one eye, no longer to have depth perception. The boat drifted out of Wakulla Bay and into Appalachee Bay and by the time I sat up, and took the oars in my hands, I had no idea of where on that body of water I was. At seven years old, alone in an old 12-foot, wooden boat, I dipped the oars into the water and stroked aimlessly in what might have been the direction of shore.

Poetry is like this for me much of the time. I am alone in a large body of water and I put the oars in the locks and pull the water past me. It travels under the boat, the boat does not really move. For a poem to be good, to be worth writing, for me at least, it has to be like that and it does not matter where it comes from. I am staying up very late tonight and I am thinking about poetry and I am thinking about myself when I was a small boy and was told that I was going blind. Poetry is dangerous, I think, if it is poetry worth doing. Poetry is risk taking, pushing yourself and your words out there into water so deep that a single wave can drown you.

I remember when that small boat drifted farther and farther out and I finally sat up and looked around and could not see land in any direction, only a faint smudge back in the direction I had drifted from, I simply did not care. Someone would have found me after more time had passed, but I was lucky and the tide turned, washing in towards East Goose Creek and Wakulla Bay.

It is late and I am writing tonight for the first time in many weeks and I am thinking about those first moments when, as a young boy, I dipped the blades of my oars into silvery water and pulled the water under the boat turning toward shore. That moment was poetry, that single moment of awareness, and though I did not write a poem that day, nor any day after that for four decades, that day was itself a poem.

So, tonight, I am thinking about me when I was seven years old and about turning fifty-four on Sunday and about poetry and danger and surgery and blinded eyes and kidneys thrown into biomedical waste containers, but mostly I am thinking about poetry.

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Reflections on Writing, Publishing & Other Things
(Pecan Grove Press, 2003)

The Way of Welcomes

Eric James Cruz

As we walked
as we simply left our feet
the interminable shaking of
the river caught us

looking as a slow, stone mountain
gathered shadows before time ran
dark. What echoes crucified
between the air and valley

what leapt way past our vision
was less about light
our undoing begun with whispers
with something scarcely human.

Long Before the Invention of Consonants

JoAnn DeLuna

I'm thinking, what exactly could this mean? As far as I've been around, there have always been consonants.

The time it's referring to (whoever this "it's" may be?) is a time before me.

Consonants have definitely been around before my parents have been around. I know this because they use consonants, and they never reminisce about, "The good ol' days… when we didn't use to have consonants…"

Then again I sometimes wonder whether there was a time in their lives when they were around to see no consonants; they often get mad in vowels, "¡AAAAAaaaaaaaaa!"

I too forget there are consonants and sometimes get disgusted in vowels, "Eu'oooooooo."

And sometimes, when there's a cloud—just over MY head, I hurt without consonants,
"¡Aaaaiiiiye!"

Perhaps the time it's referring to (whoever this "it's" may be), is the moment right before I wake. I never notice consonants in my dreams.

Then again, I never notice whether I dream in color or in black and white. Can I dream in consonants? Do I dream in vowels?

Maybe it's not a time at all, but more like a state? A state of being… a state of motion… a state of altered states…a state of consonant, of constant consonant.

Whoever thought of a world without consonants? My sentences would be like this.
u i e i . fl ("Just Like This," without the consonants.)

Poetry

JoAnn DeLuna

It's waiting, just there, waiting… waiting… waiting… it's peeking over the mirage on the road of a long trip; it's that water you think you see, but when you get close to it, you see it wasn't really there, or was it?

Waiting… waiting… waiting… behind the smile of a stranger. What made him smile? Waiting… waiting… waiting…in the bounce of a curl. It's there, just waiting in every revolution, in every spiral.

It's the quiet kid in the back of the class, waiting… waiting… waiting… for someone to acknowledge him.

At times there are just simply not enough hours in the day to sit down and devote time to these "clips" of life.

Will I be good enough to be spoken through?
What if I don't hear them?
Or I see red, when it's really violet?
What if I insult instead of innovate?

What if I don't write?
What if… What if… What if… What if… What if… I just write?

It's four-dimensional. It's IV-dimmentionul. It's 4-dimenchinal. It's for-dimenshonal

Museo de la Momias

Diane Gonzales Bertrand

For thirty pesos, a visitor can see
what happens to human flesh
after generations underground.

Displayed in glass cases in Guanajuato,
sullen human husks expose for the curious.
Bits of bone, skin, and hair. Some
wear boots or a veil,
ensembles for the dead. No
soothing those cherub babes locked
up in a cryptic playpen.

Walking through a nightmare,
not quite dead;
that purgatory state
nuns describe for lost souls.

I don't know what horrifies me worse:
crowds leering at the mummies
or candy makers selling
a chance to gnaw caramel bones.

At the LA County Museum

Noel "Bella" Merriam

The guards make me move back
when I get close enough to your canvas
to breath on it, inhale your marks,
revel in the sienna sheerness of your paint
the sureness of your umber brushstroke
as you captured this woman, white dress
draped over rock solid arms and legs
she is older than Greece, old as the earth
yet youth speaks from her eyes
her classical nose, upswept hair
you knew exactly what you wanted to say
it is beyond anything I have words for
and yet I know it I understand it
she is me she is you she is the young Picasso
rearranging our views of the classical
each umber and sienna breath I take
pulls me in deeper to the ideal

Photography...Art...Life

Scott Shrader

The question was posed ... "What is photography to me? "

Photography is many things to me, but before I attempt to write it down, I first would like to explore what photography is in more general terms.

Traditionally, photography has been defined as "a recording of light on film" ... although here in the digital age we would now have to alter that definition to read "a recording of light on photographic media."

The definition seems so simple and straight-forward, but in reality photography is so much more. It has power. Photography has the power to evoke an emotional response in the viewer—the power to deceive, the power to tell the truth, and the power to confront a viewer's reality. It is a link to our past and a way of preserving the present. Photography has the power to take us to places we will never have the opportunity (or often even the desire) to visit. It can place us in the midst of the fray in a war zone, or transport us to a tranquil nirvana in one of the far corners of our planet. It can take us places where few have ever been—to the deepest depths of the oceans or to Mars and beyond! A camera in the hands of a skilled practitioner becomes a very powerful tool indeed.

What is photography to me? The question was posed to me, and it forced me to ponder. I have thought about it while standing behind a tripod composing an image, while driving to and from work, while developing film and printing photos in a traditional wet darkroom, and while sitting in front of a color-calibrated, computer monitor processing digital images.

Photography is everything to me. It is both my livelihood, and my place of refuge. It is my therapist, my counselor, my psychologist, and my mistress. It is my connection to God. It is a treasured gift from above. Photography has afforded me opportunities that I would have never dared to dream. It has taken me to remote areas of the planet where few have tread before me. I have seen natural events and phenomena that happen every day...but very few have ever witnessed. It has made it possible for me to live out some childhood dreams.

Photography is my lifeline. It is what gives me energy. It is my passion. It is so much a part of who I am and what I have become that I find it difficult to separate myself from it. I experience the world through my photography.

It is my nature photography more so than any other genre of my profession that helps me to feel whole and grounded.

The land is what impressed me initially. First, it was the peace that resulted from being alone in a location that seemed to be untouched by man. Later, it was the feeling of tranquility that I experienced when I realized that I wouldn't encounter another human for several days. Most recently, it was the connection to the land that I feel when I am walking in places where quite possibly no human has ever set foot before. The land itself becomes sacred. I find myself walking gently so as not to disturb the fragile environment. While breaking camp I spend a significant amount of time erasing any sign that I had ever been there. Over the years I have developed a reverence for the land. The land is a refuge for me, a place where I can experience a spiritual awakening and feel a genuine closeness to God.

The photographs I take are an emotional response to my experience of a place. I have been blessed with the luxury of time—which allows me to not only see, but to experience as well. I believe that experience is the building blocks that make up who we are.

Through my travels I have been fortunate to spend time in places that seem to have a certain mystique about them—places that seem ethereal, places where a rich silence surrounds the natural beauty. To hear the clash of antlers echo across the valley in the crisp, still air; to stand in the midst of an ancient migration route and witness a natural event that has been happening since before the dawn of civilization; to watch in awe and amazement as the lights of the Aurora Borealis dance across the arctic skies—these experiences are the inspiration behind my photography.

My hope is that my photographs will serve as a reminder that a primal world does still exist, and that we have been charged to preserve and protect this precious gift for future generations to relish and enjoy.

Zonnebloemen (Sunflowers)

Cyra S. Dumitru

Inside each moment
a painting by Van Gogh waits
for release upon a canvas of air.

The trick is knowing how to open
the moment, unleash the yellow heartbeat
throbbing upon the stem.

Knowing how to let the paintbrush lead
you in measured abandon
through the astonishment of being—

the burst out of nowhere
of sunflowers large as dinner plates,
serving up flaming fronds

of brown-eyed stars.
Oh, to live where the valves open
and close in a constant chant

pulsing the river of life
through miles of small veins and back
again, thick with the pilgrimage

the brushstrokes of color
bursting into bloom, bloom that can
tremble you into believing

that currents envelop you always
in color, despite thin shadows
of brown glinting along the corners.

Drawing

Noel "Bella" Merriam

My art is a hunger
the constant claim
over my senses
the instinctive marks
I need to make
my hands moving
in rhythms of life
time space
divisions of shapes
multiplications of meaning
layers of creation and motion
that dance across the paper
movement incorporates itself
into spoken lines
the veil of time descends
the moment passes
the paper is still
charcoal, erasers
drop from my blackened hands
and my soul steps back
so my mind can see

Ute Lake

Brad Boggs

Lazy shades
of summer
ooze onto the canvas—
golden grass, sun-baked rocks,
meeting the emerald lake
that Mother paints under a cloudless blue sky.

Brutal sun scars the sky.
we hide in the shade,
relieve our feet in the lake,
escape summer's
heat; but not the rocks,
laying there like dirty canvas.

Sneakers of canvas
propel me towards the sky
as I leap from the rocks
into the wet shades
below. I love summers
at the lake,

we are free like the waves
lapping against the canvas
boat cover, hanging partly in the summer
water, as the sky
falls in blue shades
upon the rocks.

We use the rocks
as diving boards above the lake,
towels as shades,
like the canvas
cover protecting Father from the hot sky
typical of a Ute summer.

These shades come alive as I remember the summers
trapped in this canvas. The sun beat those rocks
while we swam in the cool water beneath that timeless sky.

Walls: A Sestina for Eric and His Room

Yvonne Briones

She had returned from college, found her house
changed. Her youngest of three brothers
had taken her room, which now was painted
a horrible shade of green.
The walls glowing like limes
told her that his hands were responsible.

You see, her hands once made them blue.
A calm haven amidst a busy house
with sky like walls to comfort her-
a place even her brother enjoyed and
she left it for him. He painted it green,
changed her haven, her room, her home.

Will she ever feel the same in this room?
Her hands run along the windowsills,
green with envy that they are no longer hers.
Her house is no more than her hotel
for the holidays, for it is now her brother's
and now these are his walls!

The very same walls that she trimmed white-
the very same room in which she found peace, at
the very same age of her youngest brother.
Like hers, his young hands must have grown tired while
painting. He too must have needed a place in the house --
only his haven was the perfect shade of green.

She suddenly understands the glowing green
paint that drapes her old walls. And realizes
that despite the changed house there is still
room for her no matter how long it has been.
Her hands and his are eight years apart. And even
though they grew up different colors, he is her brother.

Her brother walked in just then and
asked, "What do you think of the green?"
Placing one hand on her shoulder, waiting
with his other proudly resting on his vibrant new walls.
"I love your room." She smiles. And together
they discussed the comfort that makes up their house.

It was a good feeling to be back in her house, back with her brother,.
It was good to be back in that same room despite its new green color.
She felt the same old comfort; still between these walls, still at her
hands.

Glowing Horizons

Caroline Hallman

To be a painted cloud
salvaged from the dull life of white.
The sunset chooses Her
to break from the white routine
to be purple
to be pink
to be dipped in orange
and then carefully placed
about the sky canvas
so that humans and animals
can fall in love under melting brush strokes.

Life is so short for Her
yet worth human love and art.
She dies 365 times a year
to handcuff our eyes.

Cliffs become snakes
become explosions
become ponds
become Monet's 'Water Lilies.'

The landscape grows dimmer
The secret almost gone--
the pinker the clouds become
the purpler the edges
the fewer orange hints.
This majesty is retreating to Her bed chambers
while we are left restless
breathless.
Hot pink and purple
orange
where we used to be white.
Brush strokes—
what breezes would look like
if they could be captured.

When we used to be thick masses—
scattered.
When we used to need each other—
drifting.
When we used to be awake—
sleeping

Sleep

Veronica Garcia

It's like being awake
awake wandering through life
wondering to find familiar faces
faces of those you know, love, or lost

It's the fear
fear that comes and shakes you at night
when the night's blistering breath comes
comes and sweeps between your sheets

It's like being wrapped
wrapped in feathered arms
arms holding you near in calm warmth
so near and warm you no longer lay, but float

It's slumber
a deep slumber that takes you
it takes you to an unconscious state
a state of mind away from life
to a reality of dreams.

Surrealist Story

Thomas Deibel

A wall that turns into a window that turns into a door opens to reveal a cat that turns into a dog that turns into a lizard that climbs the door that is now back to a wall as it reaches the top it meets a fly that turns into a spider that turns into a web that it gets stuck in where it is seen by a bird that turns into a worm that turns into a snake that gets hit in the head by a shovel that turns into a wet noodle that turns into a machete which lops off its head that flies into an ocean that turns into a river that turns into a pond where the head then phases into another dimension to form a very small wall that turns into a window that turns into a door that I open.

Something Funny Happened To Me Today On My Way To Reality...

(A short story inspired by Salvador Dali's "Giraffe On Fire")
By Cesar "turtle" Gutierrez

It was supposed to be a still evening because the wind wasn't blowing yet. Somewhere across the Dali Flatlands, he could see a fire flicker and travel.

"The giraffe's on fire again," thought Shaheen as he walked across the dry grounds of the world. The universe never ceased to amaze him as he wondered why the wind suddenly blew against the recently deceased sunset and the light and his shadow did not flicker like a flame.

"My shadow, blowing in the wind, now that would be weird," he pondered.

Shaheen looked south and wondered why Tree Woman was chasing her girlfriend with a knife.

"Maybe she is just trying to put away the silver ware," he reasoned with himself. Then he realized that Drawer Girl was dancing by herself to the music coming out of her spine, and he knew that Tree Woman had probably tripped while doing the sharpest tango and was just trying to catch up to her life partner.

Shaheen looked down and began to wonder if shadows cry at night under so much stress and darkness.

"But, no," he began to say to himself. "Shadows aren't people. They are just us getting in the way of the light. They have no feelings, no voice, no soul, nothing."

The sun was setting on some western horizon and the shadows were growing longer there too, just like his had before. Shaheen was just dandy with this because shadows couldn't feel pain.

"They aren't metamorphic beings, because I am not. Heck, they aren't even beings. It's just my body getting in the way of light at a different angle."

Shaheen wondered, that if shadows could have feelings, how they would react to people always walking on them.

"Or, or, do they get knocked out if I win a bout of shadow boxing?"

Shaheen wondered what tongues their names would be spoken in and if us solid folk could understand them.

"But, we can't. Shadows can't talk. They can't feel pain. They don't have a heart. They are just a reaction of light," he softly reasoned inside his rough mind.

"I'm so silly for thinking that they could do all that stuff. I should be realistic."

Shaheen thought about it all and decided to let it go and reached into his pocket and pulled out his cigarettes. He removed one from his pack and flicked it into his mouth. But, he forgot his lighter on the nightstand at home. He looked up in the distance to see the fiery giraffe running by.

"HEY GIRAFFE!!" he yelled.

"Yeah," the giraffe replied.

"Got a light?"

The giraffe walked over nonchalantly, and out of breath, and bent his neck down. Shaheen lit his sin stick and took a puff and smiled.

"Thanks a lot, buddy."

"No problem."

Shaheen continued his stroll and all was right with the world.

nigi, no nigi

Caroline Hallman

The late night thoughts listen
to me roll in and out of dream containers.
my eyes get so heavy they are not my friend
anymore, only the lady
in my head, she is a nice person,
but cunning like a wolf.

In my dream land I am a strong maigan.
All everybody wants is bisindan
to me. I am not anishinabe
like them, conforming to little muk-kuk.
But I am all equay
and they all want me as nigi.

I am so scared to be a friend
sometimes. I could be like a wolf
and little red riding hood you up, lady.
Around me people listen
for mistakes. I feel trapped into containment,
wanting to be like them, good people.

At the age of 300 I woke up anishinabe
in my dreams. All my animal nigi
didn't talk to me so I put them muk-kuk,
feasting with the other maigan.
It would make sense, bisindan
and realize they're against me, even equay.

In dreams they call me a lady.
But I don't feel like much of a person.
When it comes down to it I can't listen,
I can't hear the friends
that snap at me like wolves,
banish me to containment.

It's disgusting sitting in the muck of the muk-kuk.
The beautiful equay
puts it on her face and maigan
come out. They dance as anishinabe.
We are all everywhere nigi;
we sing and bisindan.

Still in my dreams I listen for containers.
Some are friends, some are bad ladies.
Some eat the people. Some are wolves.

Night Driving

Thomas Deibel

Driving 1:00 AM. I figure I write or die b/c this poem's gotta get out, one way or another. Resonating wire brushes slide across the snare and heat rising and I have to pee. | It's hard to write while driving and you can't see, words fade together, but they have to be written. Well, I'll turn the light on. Signs and orange barrels rush by and I drive with my knee. A panicked mark of ink signs near death. | My third scrap of paper is a bank envelope from another life. I bitch to God about the poor journalism of REAL TV. It's been 15 minutes and I need to boost cruise control 10 mph. Empty highways make me happy. Twin radio towers flash their silhouettes to the cloudy night sky and I move on to the bank receipt. | I'm beginning to wonder how many scraps of paper I can find in my car and further more, how long I can drive with my knee. White Ranch and Santa Rosa are starved for inspiration. It's 1:23 and I pass Club Fantasy. | All nude, BYOB. A cop stopped 2 cars…I'm impressed – That's not my exit! | How many receipts do I have? 1:36 AM, truck full of bails of something just passed, I moved. Excuse me, I have to hold the wheel and change the CD, turning down cruise control now…construction…what can I say? | Writing on trash now. Oh, I love this song…Queens of the Stone Age; Rated R is a great CD if you ever get the chance. You know I bet I missed the "End of Construction" sign…I'm gonna speed up a bit, driving w/ your knee | gets swervey after a while, hope I don't get stopped…"sorry officer I had to write this poem, see?" That will get me far. Driving 1:50 AM. –almost home-

My Song

Luis A. Cortéz

Be sure to always carry your song
taught my mother as my new day began
watching Huitzilopochtli cast shadows on the lawn.

A child am I—eager and headstrong.
She said as her ocelotl strayed from the clan,
be sure to always carry your song.

But as the heat of the day moved along
a path was set before me—now a young warrior man
watching Huitzilopochtli cast shadows on the lawn

And though I walked choosing paths both right and wrong
she patiently reiterated as only a mother can
be sure to always carry your song.

So now my afternoon is not before long
I stand looking forward with her words at hand
watching Huitzilopochtli cast shadows on the lawn.

And when her sun sets hours after my dawn,
I will whisper in her ear as I hold her hand,
be sure to always carry your song
watching Huitzilopochtli cast shadows on the lawn.

pig's feet y panza

Verónica Garcia

los pájaros sing outside la ventana
as the sunlight crisps las paredes rosas

hanging from the edge of la cama
my foot is cold abandoned by la concha mi abuelita made

running to la cocina with my hair tirada
I bless myself before Jesús Cristo who watches over la mesa

outside mi papá is pulling las yerbas
and mi mama laughs with la chismosa next door
but inside Abuelito creates magic in la cocina

this scent of tradición-Mexicana is indescribable
a distinct smell that in la madrugada
it crawls into you and makes your toes curl

to me it is the Sunday morning almuerzo con la familia
for Abuelito it is México en las montanas
pero for Papa it is the traditional remedy to a brutal hangover

los gringos say it smells like shit
but si tu tienes una familia like mine
you too encantas the wonderful smell of menudo

limón y cebolla
pig's feet y panza

menudo
the ultimate satisfacción for mi boca

Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

JoAnn DeLuna

-hypothesis that argues that
the language
a person uses determines his or her
perception of reality.

I will never be able to translate exactly how it feels to be, en el olvido.
Nunca podré traducir.
Because its not "the forgotten" as the immediate translation suggests.

I can say it's like being in a daze,
pero solo un mexicano te podra decir
que es más pesado que eso.

Es, el olvido— tu te olvidas tu misma,
hasta se olvidan de ti.

You're completely lost in a moment, in a thought, in an emotion, in a feeling,
And you're not necessarily thinking about anything, but at the same time
You're thinking about EVERYTHING, without even thinking.

En el olvido, no importa nadie ni nada— ni la vida
por que en el olvido, no existe nadie ni nada
nomás existe el inmenso dolor.

While in el olvido, a relationship is estab between the pain and the person experiencing the pain.
It is understood the pain will allow the person to do everything the person once did before they reached this state, with one exception:
The person won't undergo any MORE pain, but will equally experience no MORE joy.

You are given the bare necessities to survive, but not enough to live.
But yet by some miracle, you continue to live,
when you wish you wouldn't.

Pero no hay nada mas que hacer pero aceptarlo.

But at least you know things can't get any worse,
because there's no where else to go but up,
after you've been en el olvido

Dedication

Brad Boggs

Thin, ruddy skin
stretches across a chiseled jaw. Two stilts carry his

teetering body
into the morning sun as it slowly blazes across the yard

igniting each blade of grass. He lifts a
frail arm

to remove his dirty cowboy hat revealing a thick mat of
gray hair.

He begins to recite the rosary as the truck roars to life.
—This new day is christened.

Down the road the cows call to the
old man

as they await their morning feed. The truck comes to a halt.
Caliche dust settles to the road.

A cattle crowd, each with a name, gathers to greet him.
A wintry wind whips across the steel fence now rusted orange. A

skeleton's hand
unhooks the gate and swings it open to pull the truck through.

He tears open a large sack of alfalfa cakes
—musty odor of dry weeds.

Skin rips
across high cheekbones as

he struggles
to lift the feed sack, empty its contents into piles.

Legs almost splinter
like matchsticks under the weight.

"That man is so stubborn," Grandma says to her morning coffee.
He calls it dedication.

Scars

Eric James Cruz

There are clouds passing,
    half winds true enough
to howl into pulse
    and leave shadows to our
own delights. In a light drenched world
    notice those frail

buttercups quivering yellow
    in the garden. My home is
past your row of picket fence—
    why not creak the gate and smile
as tea glasses sing
    with sweat? Hard times

comfort no one, love comforts
    those few believing
such a heart can dwell in man. I offer
    my groaning porch
calloused hands moving over strings
    songs born of minor chords.

This one is last
    years reckoning of loss
the story of my father's face:
    Have you ever used your eyes
searching a place in dark
    for ice or something colder

as moon light trails near the house
    just enough
to lessen life?

Egyptian

Noel "Bella" Merriam

clay
dusky deep red
drying
in the sun
caked and crumbling
on my fingers
this sun
we worship
we need
this sun
which the falcon
wears on his head
like a crown

cool Nile water
green
as a crocodile's dream
washing
away clay
easing off
the silt from my mind
gold and black
gold and black
song of a simple flute
etched into sunbaked clay
if it was so long ago
why does it seem
so close

I know my heart
weighs more than a feather
today
yet still
I would like to dance
in rose red
golden gilded slippers
amongst whispering papyrus
reeds thick around my ankles
spinning, leaping
beneath the pyramid's shadow
I would be
as tiny
as a firefly

Connecting Learning Through the Arts

Noel "Bella" Merriam, MFA, MBA

Clay has a memory. Deep within its molecules, it knows when it has been divided and separated, and unless you connect two new pieces in the correct way- by scoring, using slip, and smoothing the seams together, the separated clay will never adhere. It may stick together as long as the two pieces of clay have moisture in them, but once it begins to dry, it will remember that it is two separate pieces and they will disconnect.

Maybe humans have a memory similar to that of clay in the way that we learn. If we all have multiple intelligences, as Gardner's theory purports, then learning just by rote and focusing on the verbal and mathematical intelligences which are the primary emphasis of our schools today could be like trying to join two pieces of clay without scoring, adding slip, and smoothing. The learning could be fragmented – it won't stick and meld into one stronger, unified intelligence.

Could the learning through the arts be the new model for creating learning that is connected? If children learn best by doing, then the answer is yes. Any primary curriculum area – math, language arts, reading, social studies or science – has a connection to the arts. Studies have shown that the arts are a dynamic force for learning, and learning through the arts enables children to transfer their new arts-based skills and knowledge to other topics.

Creative thinking is gaining momentum in the business field, and what better way to prepare our children for success in the future, both scholastic and career, than to teach them to be creative thinkers? Our society needs children who are thinkers, who have the capacity to synthesize information from a wide range of sources and evaluate their choices for a course or plan of action. There is not just one right answer in learning through the arts, just as there is not just one right answer in developing new technology, implementing new business strategies, or creating a new hypothesis in science.

Too often we underestimate the potential for deep, meaningful learning that is interconnected with different areas of life in our children. They are capable of absorbing complex information, learning distinct vocabularies for different fields of study, and long term retention of information – especially if they are actively engaged in the learning process. This doesn't mean learning shouldn't be age appropriate – but by setting up a learning environment that is challenging, yet achievable, children will naturally and often enthusiastically push themselves to higher levels.

Today we are faced with the double-edged sword of mandatory testing – yes, it brings the majority of our students up to grade level in reading and writing and math – but at what cost? What price do our children, their teachers and our society pay? On the positive side, as an artist, storyteller and poet-in-residence, I have noticed that over the past 12 years, children have become increasingly aware of basic language arts elements. They can often identify the main character of a story, and their confidence in their writing is vastly improved.

Yet on the flip side, I witness teachers who are stressed about taking time away from endless, repetitive test-taking preparation (even though they confide in me how much they miss having the arts in their classrooms, and how much they see the hunger for it in their students) and I encounter children as young as 7 who are terrified of "doing it wrong" when given the opportunity to draw something as simple as the sun. In standardized testing, there is a right answer and a wrong one, but in the arts there is not.

We need to balance learning for children, so they can express themselves, and feel the freedom that comes from creative decision-making without fear of consequences. Through their art, education will become alive and authentic for them. It will revitalize them for more traditional aspects of learning. It will allow them to see and feel the connections and themes between the curriculum areas they are learning, between themselves and other people, and to time: the past, present and future. Learning through the arts will connect the entire scholastic experience for them, so that it becomes a whole, and so that they have a complete, unified memory of what they are learning. Something that will stick and become permanent, like clay which has been joined properly.

Seven Years Later

Noel "Bella' Merriam

The sorrow
a dark and winding path
has a destiny it can fold into
a vessel to contain it now
we have walked
through the wall
of fire

My mother works in clay now
she is not afraid of it like others
her slender brown fingers
like elegant twigs
prodding the moist earth into shape
she describes her new bowl
how she will engrave it
with triangular men
from Guatemalan weavings
images we have always been wrapped in
and below it will say-she pauses
holds my eyes with hers
It is not a dream
she holds her breath
and I draw mine in deeply
I am there with her, following her
hand in hand on the path completely
her gaze grows deeper
Do I know what that means?

Yes I return exhaling yes…yes
We can enclose it, encircle it
but it will never be a dream
the tragic adventure was real, the pain
left behind to soak into the earth
to swim in our subconscious
and somewhere along the way

she has become the triangle,
three equal corners balanced
and I have become the spiral,
ever encompassing, drawing deeper
But we were painted
by the same brush
all I am comes from her
the fear and the courage to name it
to face it to swallow it without flinching
to throw a broom at the shadows
and sweep them from our rooms

It is not a dream, I repeat
uncovering how now it is all tangled
with black threads and twisted around us
and always will be, always will be
her smile is the sun warming
pulling butterflies down from branches
to be with us floating on the air of today
this is all I know
yes she says yes you *know*
we breathe evenly now
and by knowing together with so few words
we are able to lift our wings
and fly above the path
after placing soft
a Guatemalan cloth
over the vessel we have created

An Artist's Teaching Philosophy: Empowering the Students

Susan M. Oaks

As an art teacher for twenty years, I have worked with a wonderful range of students throughout San Antonio as well as in other Texas communities: from lower income to more affluent, from "gifted and talented" to those with learning differences, from four-year-olds to adults. My goal is the same with all students. I try to empower students to think for themselves, to use their own ideas and to come to their own conclusions about what they are going to create.

Amazingly, it is more difficult for high school students and adults to make their own decisions artistically than it is for four and five-year-olds. Once the five-year-olds trust that they can make anything out of a vast supply of materials (crepe paper, empty boxes, old CD's, ribbons, assorted fabrics), they are on their way. According to research, process is more important than product when working with young children. Young children need to explore and be encouraged to use their own ideas. They are empowered by doing art activities with few directions and with freedom to discover for themselves.

The older students have difficulty dealing with an assignment without parameters (other than time) possibly from past negative experiences that have created inhibitions ("You're not doing that right!" or "That other girl is the best artist in the class." or "Give it up, you'll never be good at art."). For this latter group of students, I try to help them get past these inhibitions and to access their unique creative abilities through heavy doses of encouragement, and by removing performance expectations and standards. Once they recognize that they have freedom in their art, they often develop something extremely creative and different from those around them. After getting past their barriers, those who want to get more in-depth and pursue art can be ready for more intensive instruction in technique. I understand that this is different from many

approaches that emphasize technique and product first; however, I believe that creativity and self-expression is ultimately what fuels technique, not vice-a-versa.

Preparing the Classroom: Important

Preparation

Having ample supplies ready is elemental: glue containers clean and easily pourable, scissors that are sharp and workable, markers that are fresh, plenty of scotch tape. It is distracting and frustrating for students when glue doesn't flow from the bottle and scissors aren't sharpened, and small details like that aren't prepared ahead of time. Without these preparations, the student is thwarted from expressing ideas. Having something as simple as plastic cloths on the table is helpful because the student doesn't have to worry if glue spills on the surface.

Getting Started

I give basic instructions such as "Here are the materials. You are allowed to use what you need. You may choose colors that you like and create anyway you want. Use a small amount of glue." Most of the time, I'm tested when the student doesn't know me. For example, one student approached me and asked, "Are you sure I can paint what I would like?" I said, "Yes, I'm sure." She waited a few minutes and returned to ask me the same question. After the third time, she returned to her table and created a wonderful painting, free and vibrant. My theory was that she had to be sure that it would be alright if she created her own painting without input from me.

Atmosphere

I prefer to keep walls clear of artwork because students tend to copy what they see on the wall. I keep my voice as low and quiet as possible. Talking to an individual is done if help is needed. I do this to allow the rest of the students to concentrate and focus on their work. I model this behavior to honor the students while they work.

Honoring the students while they work is crucial. The art activity is serious for them. When a student completes the project, I hold it in front of her and let her see what she has done. I give neutral comments such as: "These colors are quite unusual, you worked hard and focused on this project." I would rather have her focus on whether or not she likes the art than depend upon my evaluation as a teacher.

I never praise one student's work over another. Students will copy what the praised person has done, or feel defeated by not receiving praise for themselves. I see art as non-competitive. I see it as a way to make choices, to feel a sense of accomplishment and to be a future appreciator and patron of the arts.

The Heart of a Student Freed Up to Express Itself

In the classroom, there is nothing more exciting for me than to see students get past the barriers that inhibit their creativity. As an artist, I appreciate great works, but as a teacher I value even more the heart of a student freed up to express itself. Whether it is in a practical area like preparing well ahead of time, or creating a good working atmosphere, the goal is always the same: helping students to see that there is creativity in all of us waiting to be explored, refined and encouraged.

The Piece and I Have A Dialogue

Susan M. Oaks

I have been a fiber artist for more than thirty years. I work on my art everyday and amazingly, the ideas continue to flow.

As I begin to work on a new piece, there are no rules. I give myself permission to create freely and enthusiastically without restrictions. I work alone and no one sees a piece until it is finished; I want no interference from an outside comment. I have open-minded ideas which I allow to change as I watch the piece develop and become its own unique object. The piece and I have a dialogue.

The beautiful yarns that I have purchased through the years are a joy for me to see. By looking through my vast supply, my heart leaps. I wonder what will happen to these materials as they grow into a piece. Sometimes I get so excited while I am creating that I stay up late into the night to see what is going to transpire. Since my process is a slow one, I watch the piece grow into itself, take on a life of its own.

I continue to be motivated to work and to evolve as an artist. And, by honoring my own process as an artist I am also able to honor the process that students go through. When I work with students, I can allow them to concentrate and think and decide what they want to create.

Turn, turn, turn: an ode for Susan Oaks & her vessels

by Cyra S. Dumitru

1.
There is a language of turns
spoken only by certain hands,
not that the hands themselves

are certain, they know only
to follow the longing of color
to be touched, pressed gently

into form, some small curve
that embraces spaces
and holds its own,

dignity of utter silence,
being for the beauty --
so free

2.
Here is one such quest:
gold thread coiling,
thickening the twists

and turns of our lives
into something we can hold,
trace with our fingertips

place on a windowsill
beside the clay pots
and snapshots of sunsets

All our lives we turn
again and again during sleep
then waken to turn

to the people we love
offer our touch
through wrong turns

and curving back
to find another way to turn
over a new leaf

3.
We see these vessels as finished
fully turned, as if they had circled
themselves into being

like birds spiraling, wings
aglint with noon, with light
that lives whether or not we notice

See through these burnished coils
to the wings, the hands that flared
hour after hour

while the silent soul spiraled
in flights of silk & cotton & wool
trusting

the feel of where
to take the
next turn

Returning Takes Too Long

Cesar "turtle" Gutierrez

Lenny sat in the booth next to the window inside the Jim's on Broadway, across the street from the SBC building at sunset. He had never sat in the 'No Smoking' section in all the years he had hung out in that diner. It had been a few years since he had even been inside of it. It had been a while since his world had been orange.

Lenny sat there and stared into his glass of water and continued to give in to his primal urge to stir it around. His nose continued to grow more congested as he tried hard to fight a cold. For some strange reason, the congestion brought about the aroma of his first girlfriend. He stared out the window at all the cars that passed by and wondered what had ever happened to her. He wondered if he actually missed her or was just curious.

As Lenny was about to look back down into his iced water his cell phone rang. He looked at the name on the screen. It said, "Carol." He hit the green answer button.

"Hey."

"Hey, Lenny. What's going on?"

"Nothing."

"Where you at?"

"Jim's."

"Where at?"

Lenny sat there in silence for a second thinking back to all the times he had sat inside that restaurant when he really didn't want to. Nights when all he wanted to be doing was something else with someone else. He began to smell his old best friend's cigarette smoke as Carol was trying to get his attention.

"Lenny…Lenny…..LENNY!"

"Huh? What?"

"Nothing. What 'Jim's' you at?"

"Broadway."

"I don't believe you."

"'kay."

"I'll be there in 15 minutes."

"Cool."

Lenny sat there as dusk began to take hold and the outside world began to turn blue. The inside of the diner began to turn gray.

The tables stayed beige. As the cars whipping by turned on their headlights, the waitress brought his club sandwich. Her nametag said 'Irma.'

"Here ya go, babe."

"Thanks."

"Long time since ya been in here."

"Yeah."

Lenny never looked up at her, just stared off at his own thoughts and memories. She left him a straw and left him alone so she could bus a table. The sandwich sat there without any tomatoes and he wondered why he still didn't like them after all the years of change. He didn't think much longer of it as he reached down and took a bite. He released himself from his thoughtful stupor. He wondered why it took him so long to ever come back here. He took a drink and wondered why he still only ordered water.

Carol walked in and sat down across from him with a plop. Lenny looked up at her from his meal.

"Hey."

"Hey you. What's going on?"

"Nothing."

"Sounds like a blast."

"Enh."

"It's been a long time since you've been here."

"Yeah."

"Why'd you come here?"

"No clue."

"Hoping to run into anyone in particular?"

"No."

"Then why did you come here?"

"Don't know. Just did."

"Is it because today is the 19th of October?"

"Happy birthday."

"Thank you."

"No prob."

"We were supposed to go see a movie tonight."

"Yeah."

"Are we?

"Sure."

"Then why are we here?"

"Really don't know."

They sat there in silence for a moment and Lenny just continued to eat his sandwich. Carol finally spoke up.

"You burned some bridges that night."

"Yeah."

"That why you're here?"

"No."

"You told Chris and Arlene you would meet them here that night. You promised."

"Yup."

"You've never been one to lie."

"I didn't."

"Is that why you are here?"

"Maybe."

They sat there again in an uncomfortable silence as the tension mounted between the two best friends. Carol took a fry from Lenny's plate and dipped it in the ketchup. He did nothing but take a bite from his pickle. He finally formed a thought as he crunched the kosher spear.

"I've never broken a promise, don't plan on doing it. And yeah, I've burned some bridges but I never wanted to cross them in the first place. This was just my way of finally paying my respects to their ashes."

"Uh-huh."

"Just my way of sticking to my morals."

"I know."

"Besides, I burned nothing. I only added gas to the flame. Doesn't make it my fault."

"And the fact that Chris is dead now doesn't bug you?"

"No."

"Why not? We were all family until that night."

"Sometimes, you just have to do it. You just have to get up and say to yourself ' I'm not gonna take that shit anymore. No more abuse, no more disrespect. No more being a child.'"

"This coming from the guy in the Smurfs t-shirt."

"I'm an adult now. He never was, never would have been."

"You didn't show up to the funeral, either. That pissed off Arlene to no end."

"No wonder she never says hi at school anymore."

"Have you even bothered to see his grave?"

"No. I didn't care then, I don't care now."

"Then why are you here?"

"I don't break my promises."

"So then, yes, that is why you are here. Not because you feel bad about anything. Not because you need closure. Just because you wanted to keep a promise?"

"Yeah."

Lenny sat there trying to find words to defend himself; he knew he was under attack. "I'm not a bad person, I'm not a bad friend."

"Best one I ever knew, either way." Carol sat there and grabbed another fry. "He always asked how you were. Except that last day."

"I don't blame him."

"Sad thing is you were right."

"How is that sad?" He paused and took a drink of water. "How was I right?"

"He never grew up."

"What about me?"

"You still haven't grown up, yet."

"Yet?"

"Come with me tomorrow---to leave flowers and cigarettes for him."

"Weren't we going to a movie?"

Carol reached across the table and grabbed on to Lenny's right hand and began to plead with him.

"Just come with me…please?"

"I told him he would die like that. I can't believe you still give him those things."

"I still loved him like the brother you always said he was to you. He was still my friend."

"Alright, I'll go. Maybe I can finally tell him everything."

"Arlene will be there, too."

"'Kay."

"You can tell her, too."

"She already knows, they both did."

"Maybe it is time for you to say it, for them to hear it."

"Yeah…..yeah."

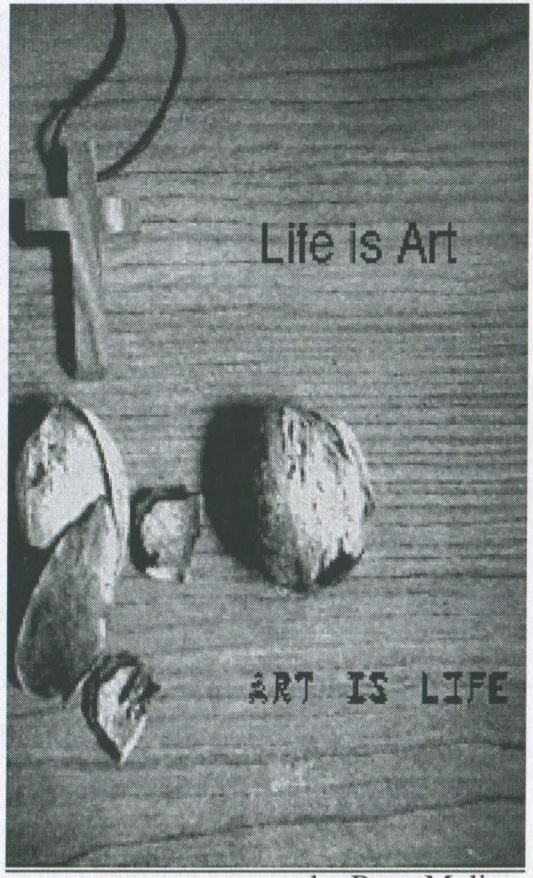
Lenny and Carol both wondered about how everything had changed—how they were adults now. All they could do was finish the food together and think about the lives ahead of them and the one left behind.

Art is Life, Life is Art

Cover Design Ideas

Desktop Publishing Class

(Fall, 2004)



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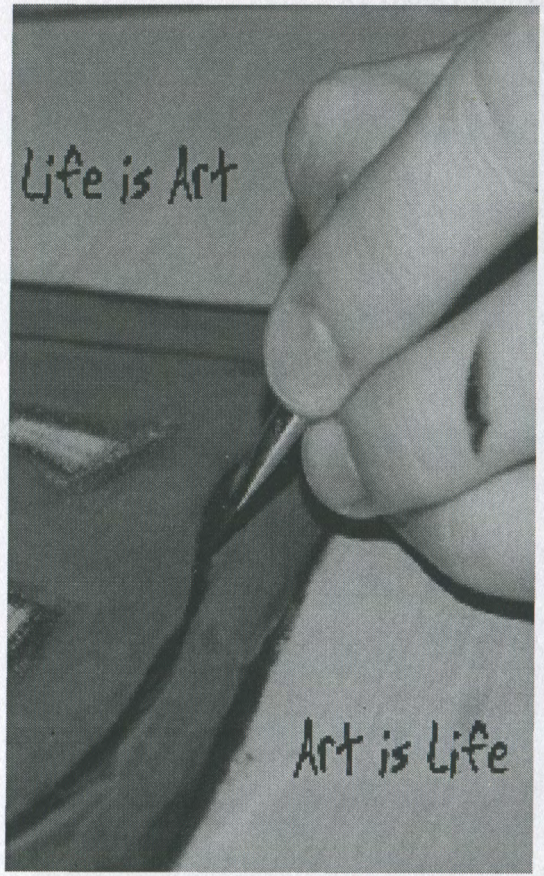

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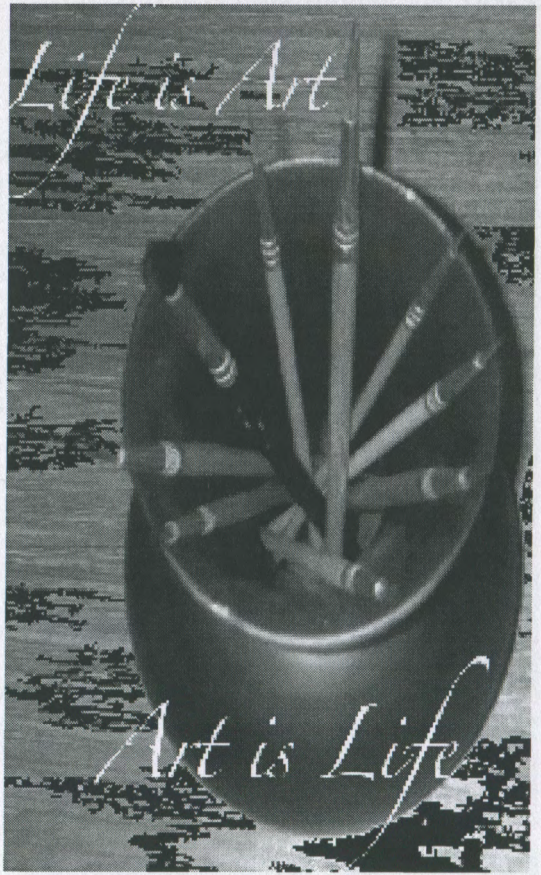

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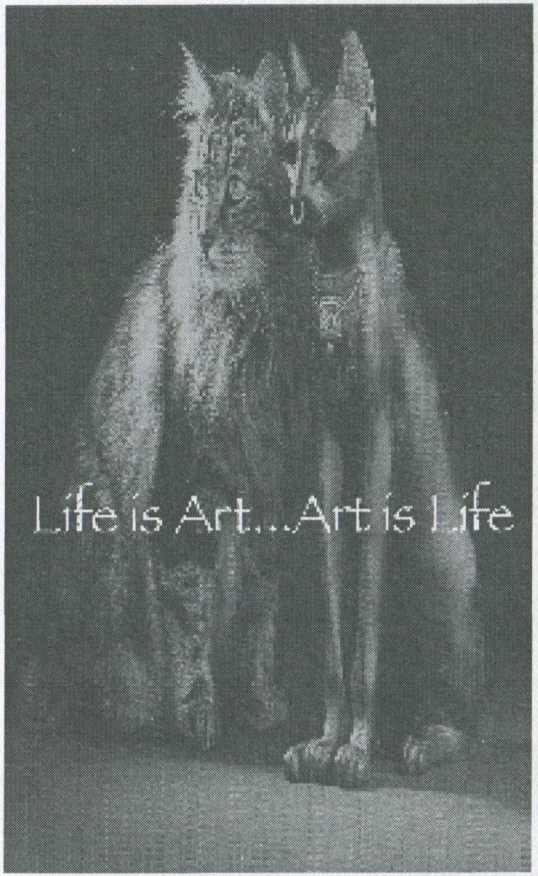

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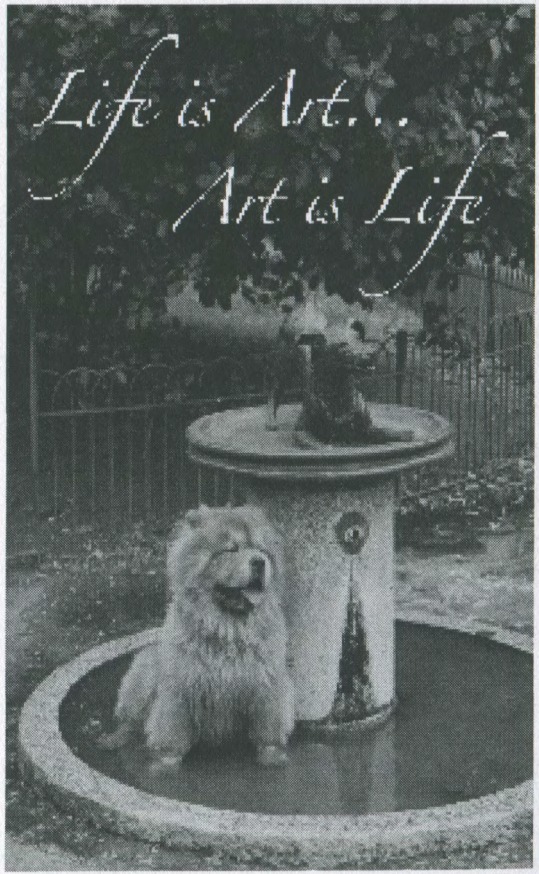

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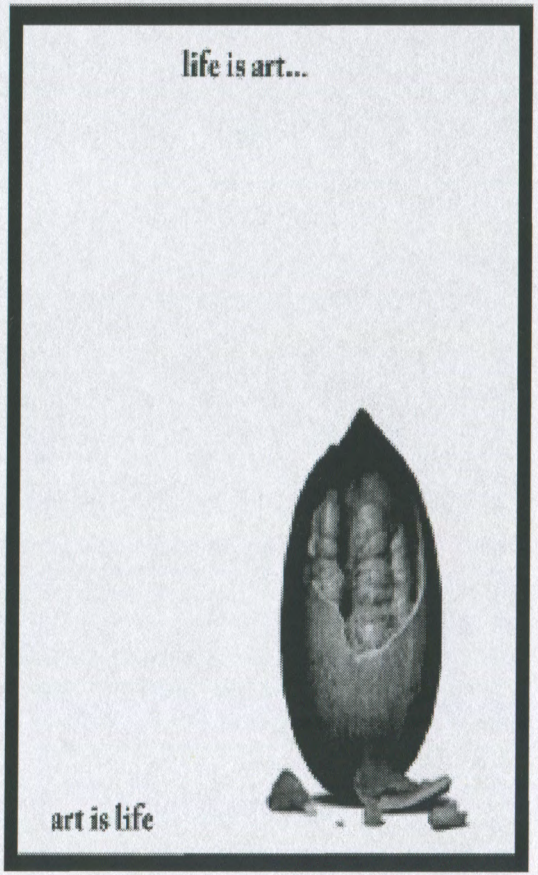

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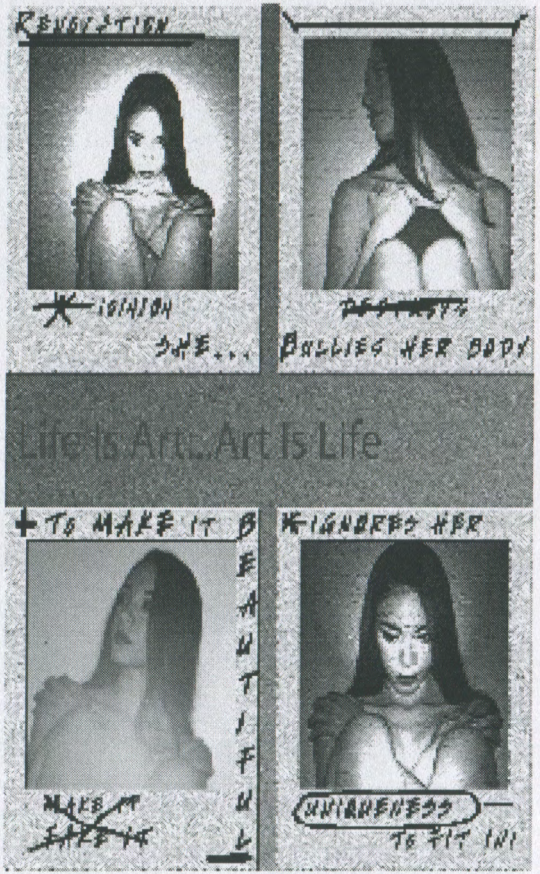

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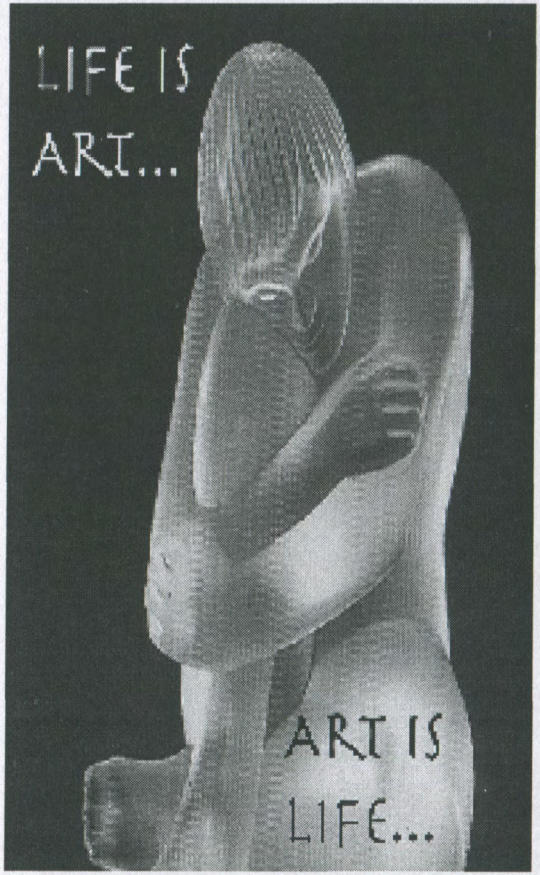

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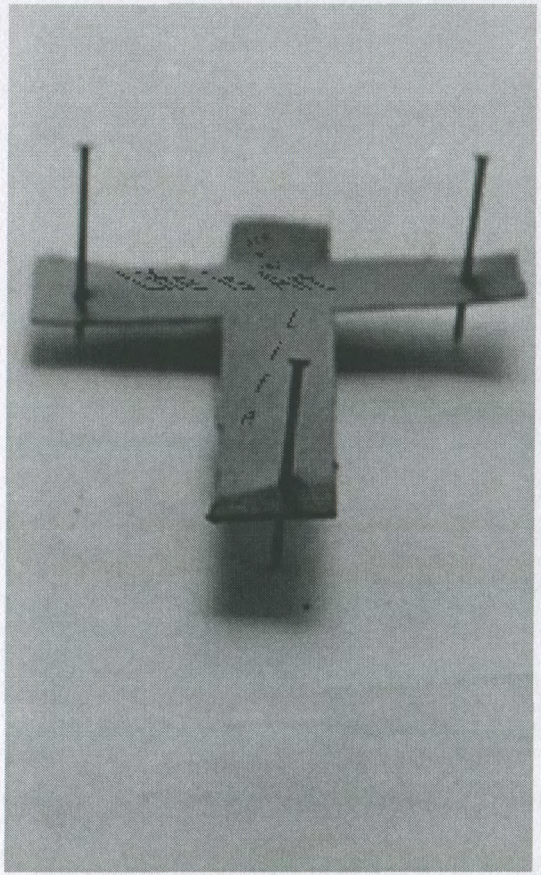

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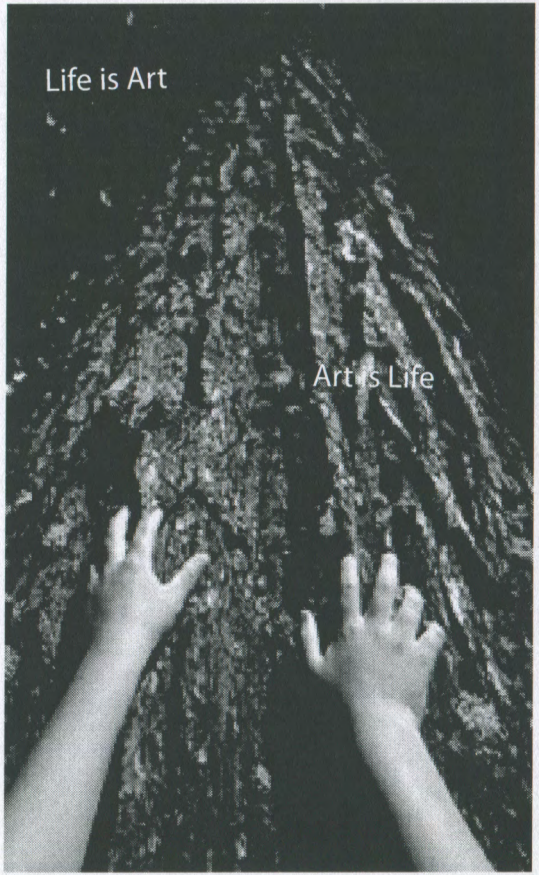

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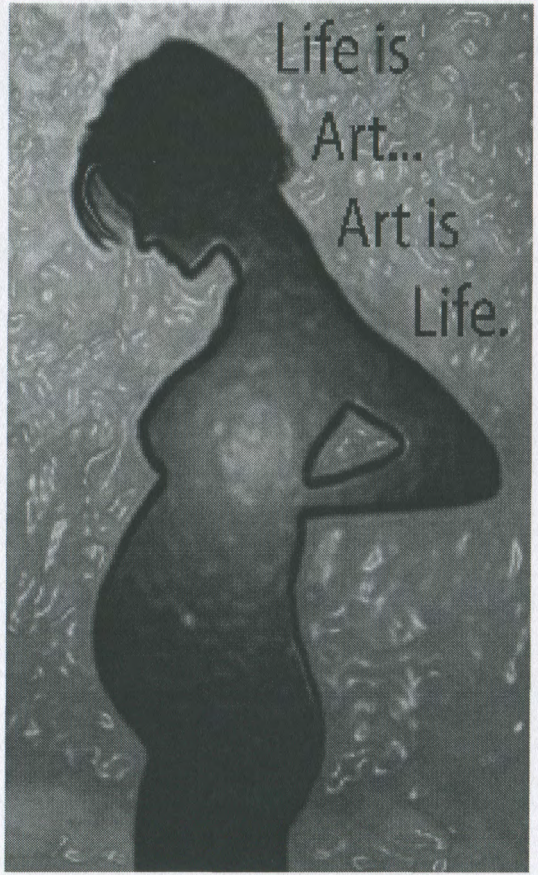

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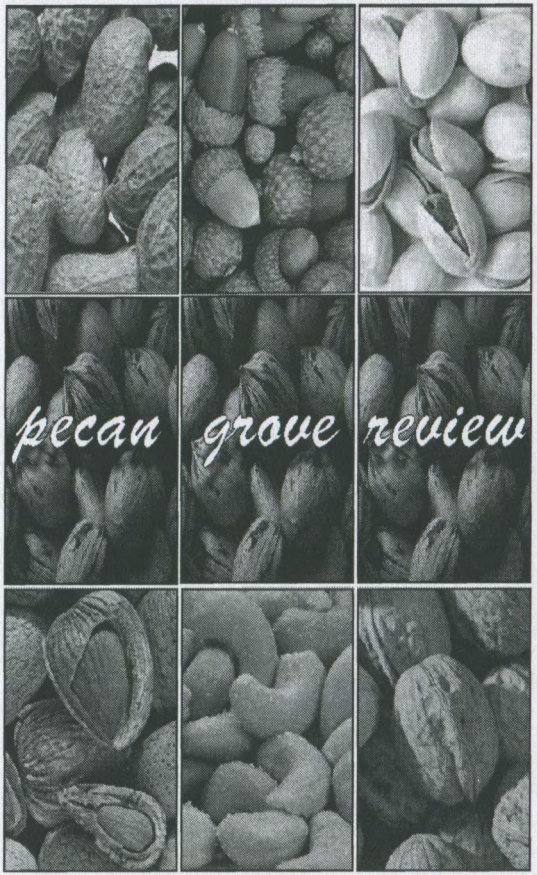

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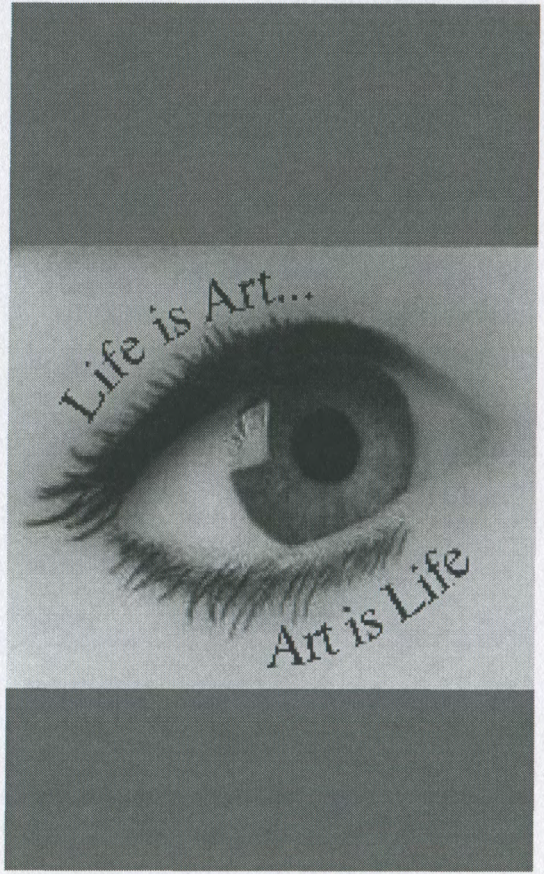

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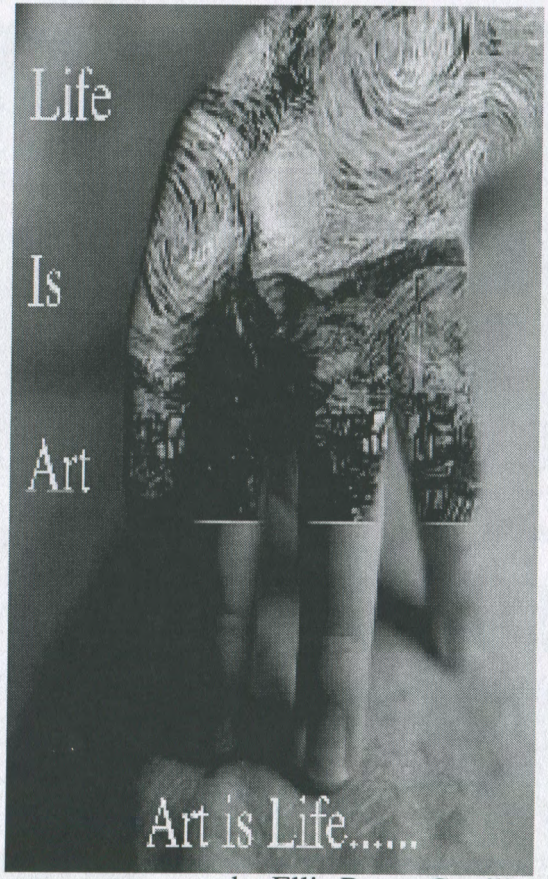

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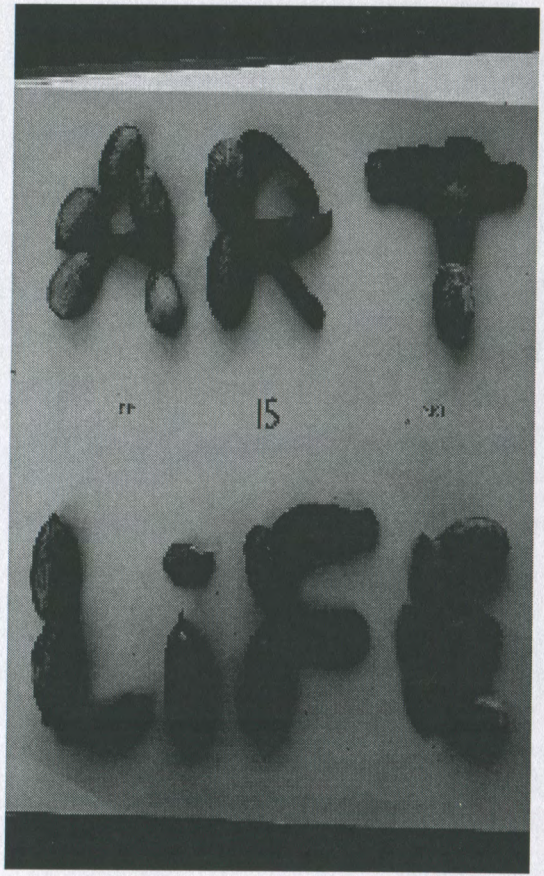

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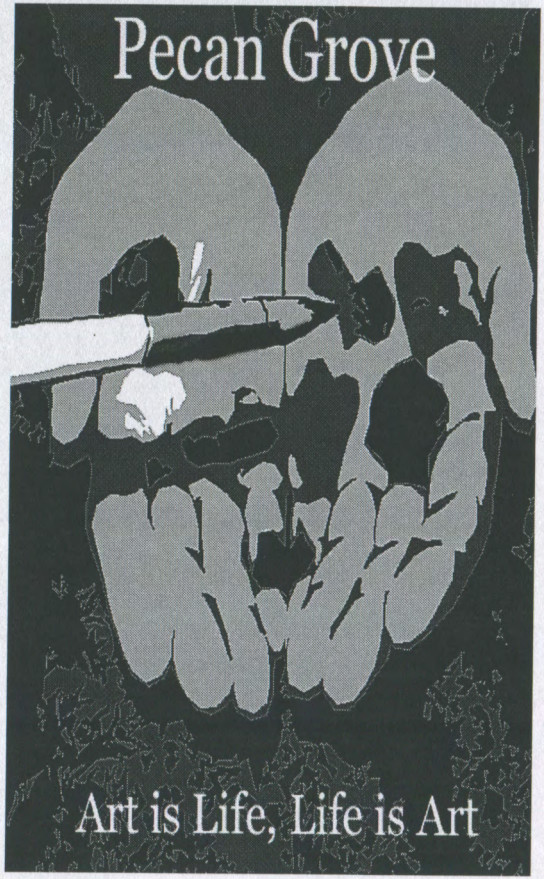

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