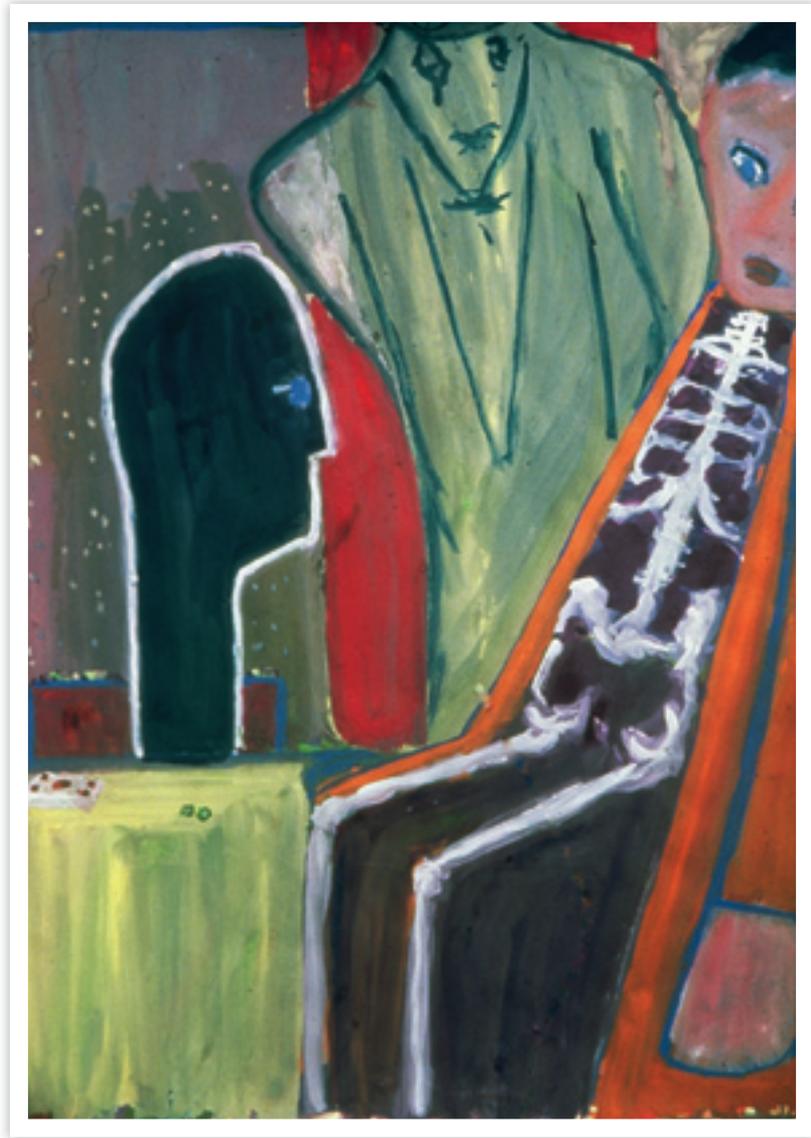


X-Ray Eyes



Rex Sexton

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“Consonant with the vibe of his written work, [Sexton’s] paintings convey a wide range of powerful emotions, especially through the well-drawn and expressive faces ...”

Kirkus Discoveries

“Rex Sexton paints another kind of reality. He is an original.”

Mac Gilman Gilman/Gruen Gallery

“Within his colors and forms lie the sadness of human isolation, the injustice of political systems, and the mystery of compassion.”

Robert Wayner Black Walnut/Robert Wayner Gallery

“Sexton’s blunt poignant approach to contemporary urban life is reminiscent of Grosz or Daumier.”

Spotlight Chicago

“Now the beautiful people have another reason to take a look ... Sexton’s whimsical scenes of Gold Coast nightlife.”

Todd Savage SKYLINE

“Artist Rex Sexton, who works as an Art Institute guard, has published a delightful book of drawings,

The Down And Out Recession Notebook

Henry Hansen Chicago Magazine

“Granton, Sexton, Schuman, Tanner, portray these gruesome issues (of life) in meaningful and fun ways.”

Chicago Sun Times“

It’s jump in with both feet and there is no net, no hand held, no words of support or encouragement.”

Jacqueline Roig

BOOKS BY REX SEXTON

Fiction

Desert Flower
Collected Stories

Fiction And Poetry

The Time Hotel
Night Without Stars

Artwork, Poetry, Autobiographical Notes
X Ray Eyes

About The Author

Rex Sexton is a Surrealist painter in Chicago. His award winning art has been exhibited in museums, televised on PBS, written about in newspapers, reproduced in magazines and included in national and international exhibitions. His novel “Desert Flower” was called “... *innovative and original* ...” by *Large Print Review* and “ ... *so skillfully devious it could have been written by Heinrich von Kleist two centuries ago in Germany* ...” by *Kirkus Discoveries*. His short Story “Holy Night” received an Eric Hoffer award and was published in *Best New Writing 2007*. His poetry and prose have appeared in cutting edge literary magazines and his recent collection “The Time Hotel” was described by another *Kirkus* review as “ ... *a deeply thought provoking ...compelling reading experience* ...”. He is married to the neuroscientist Dr. Rochelle S. Cohen.



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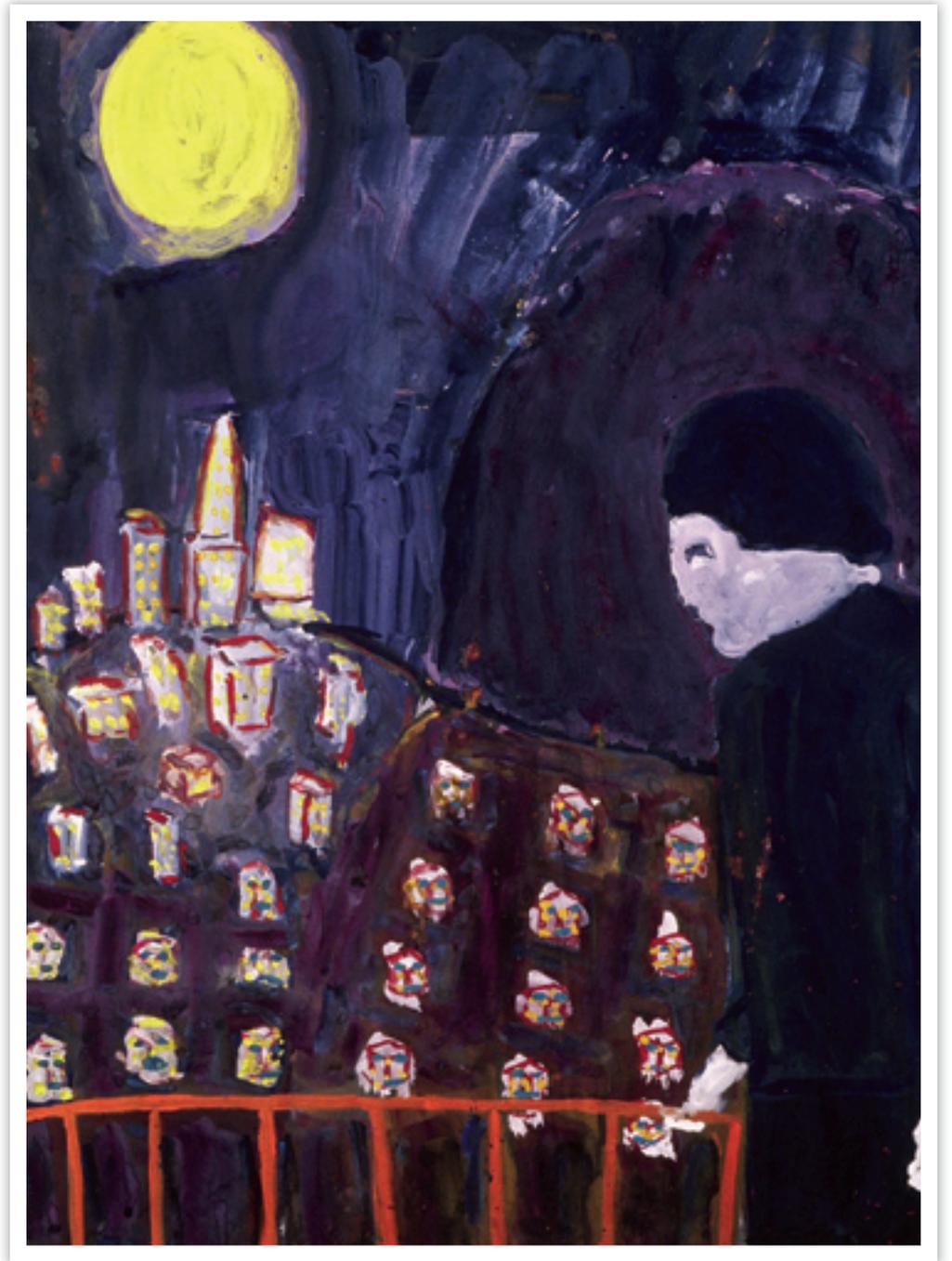
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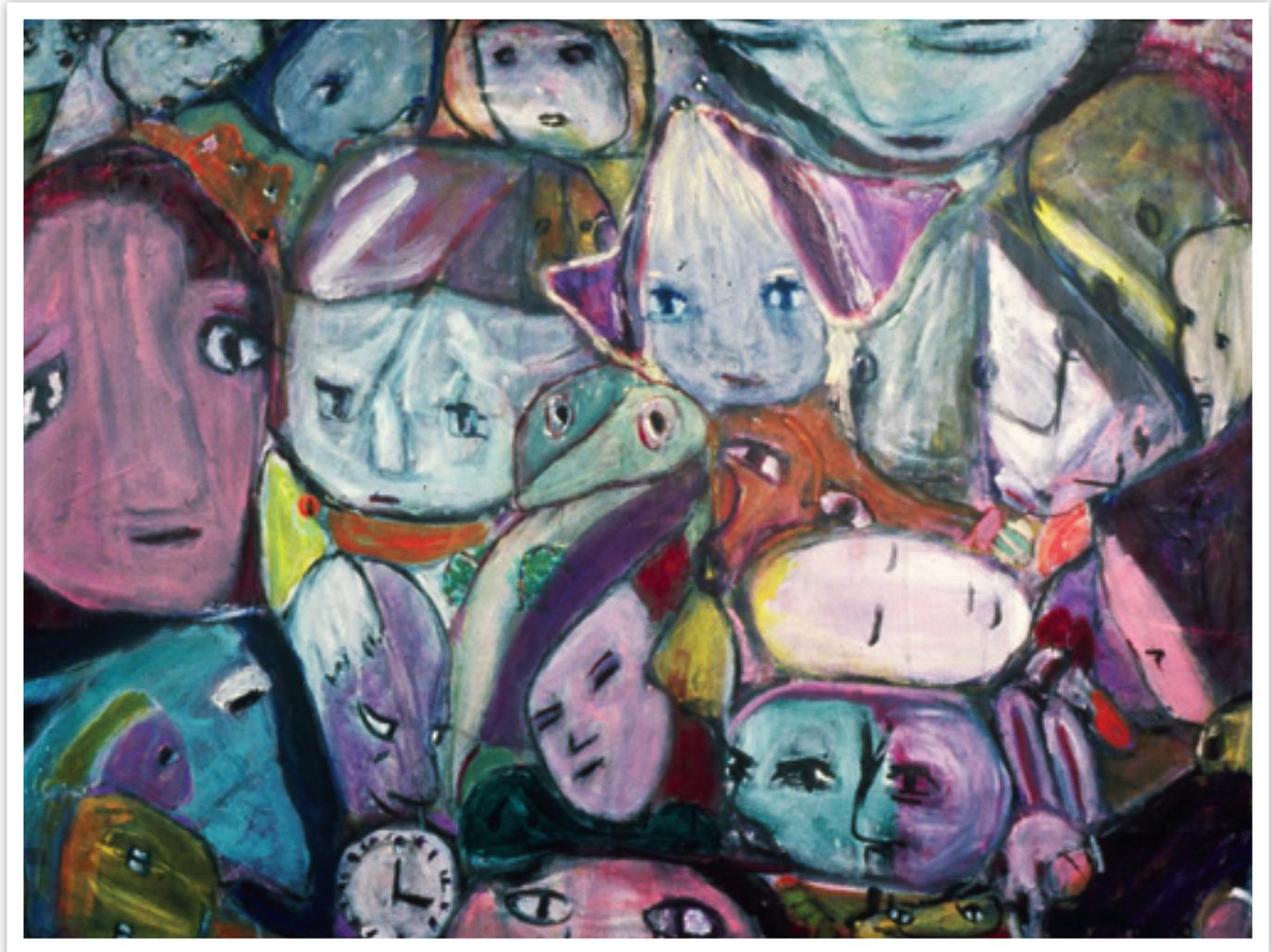
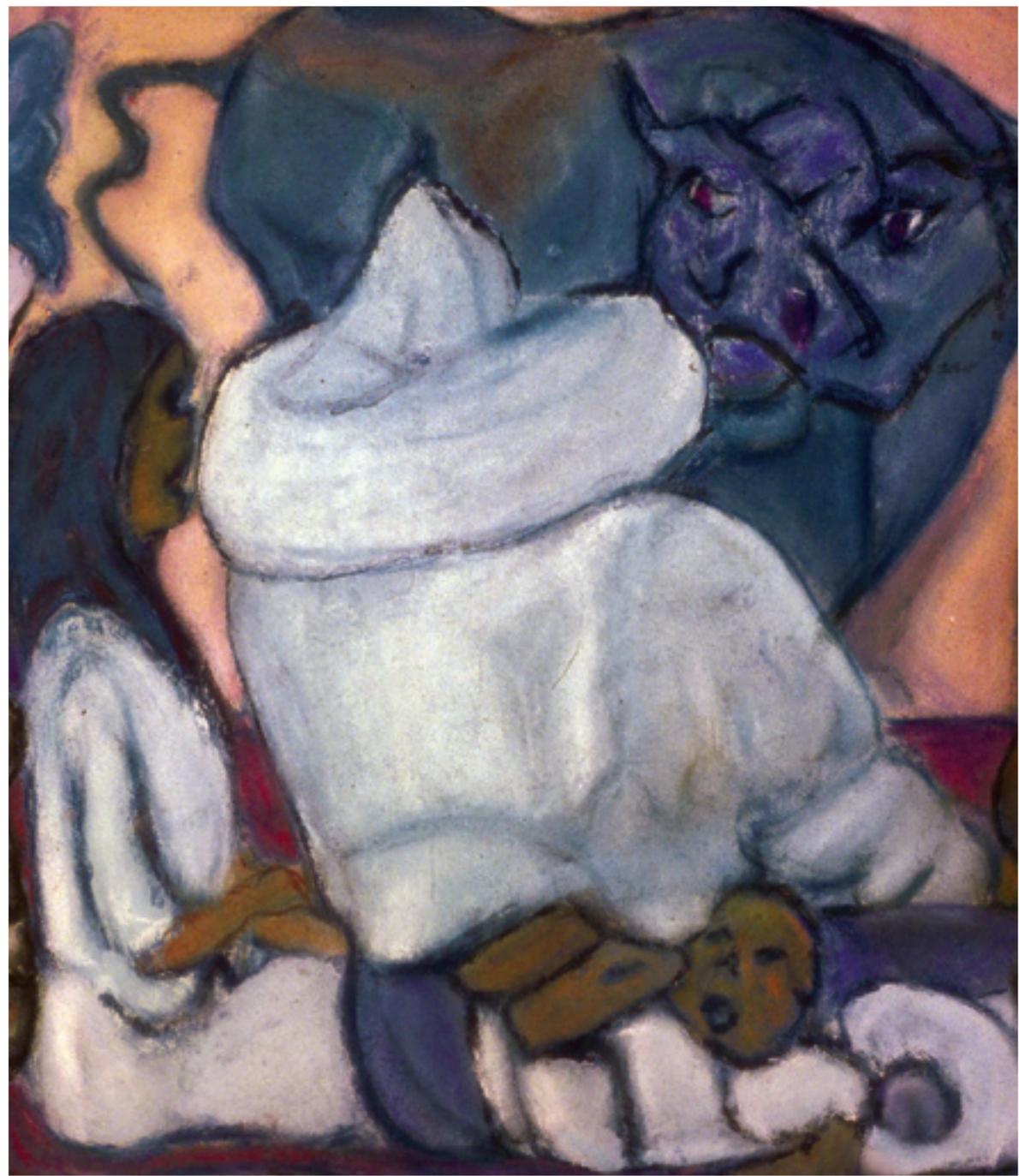


For Rochelle Cohen, Charles Rice, Richard Seltzer, Bryan Miller, Jacqueline Roig, Tom Harney and
Robert Wayner.













THE STUDIO

Back and forth, left to right, like a moth around a candle, like a bat in flight. Hand and eye mesmerized, watching the slash of blazing colors criss-cross, collide, slowly erasing any trace of the screaming face that stares at me starkly from each blank canvas like a maniac unleashed, until it is magically replaced by occult incantations and voodoo rites which people take for art – line, form, hues, shapes, all rainbows in a dream of amazing grace.

It is cold in the studio, dead of winter in the windows, sky a shroud, yet fever bright from incandescent light. I shiver and inhale another coffin nail. On the canvas, faceless strangers come and go, as shadows sweep across a land where mists envelope each pale ghost lost in a nimbus about to disappear like smoke.

As I was made to vanish everyday long ago when I began this mystic, art making ritual at the school of The Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Chicago, where the nun's would banish me, perfunctorily, from the classroom to the coat closet where I was supposed to sit in the dark and repent for drawing in my notebook instead of pondering my textbook and failing to pay attention to whatever they were saying about math, history, geography, religion.

The ragman's horse drawn wagon ... the vendors and the junkman ... the blind man tending his news stand ... the derelicts picking through trashcans ... the knife-sharpener bent over his whetstone, sparks flying in every direction ... the pushcarts clattering through potholes ... the pigeon lady tossing her bread crumbs ... the organ grinder's uniformed monkey tipping his cap to everyone for money ... the storefronts' food displays, gathering flies under the awnings' shade ... the maze of narrow, ramshackle, streets crowded with houses, tenements, factories ... the pig trucks, cattle trucks, poultry trucks, criss-crossing from every direction, (chased by the mutts who add to the bedlam) ... the nuns sweeping down the parish steps, winds rippling their holy black habits ... the priests in their robes and vestments praying in candlelight and incense ... the old women in babushkas telling their rosaries in sanctified stillness ... the legions of raggedy kids swarming the walks and streets and parks (amidst a menagerie of birds and cats and squirrels) – I drew everything in the neighborhood, plus devils, angels, circus clowns, spaceships, clipper ships, dinosaurs, and my daily banishment to solitary only contributed to my delinquency. In the dark and silent closet I would lay on my stomach where the light filtered through the crack beneath the door and draw more.



STATESIDE

The whirl of white dresses between the matrix of mirrors, morph into a wreath of white ashes in this soldiers reveries, as the same steady fingers that helped the wounded in war, prayed for the fallen, shot the enemy down, begin to tremble, in the dazzle, as the ballerinas go round.

Leaping ... twirling ...pirouetting ...

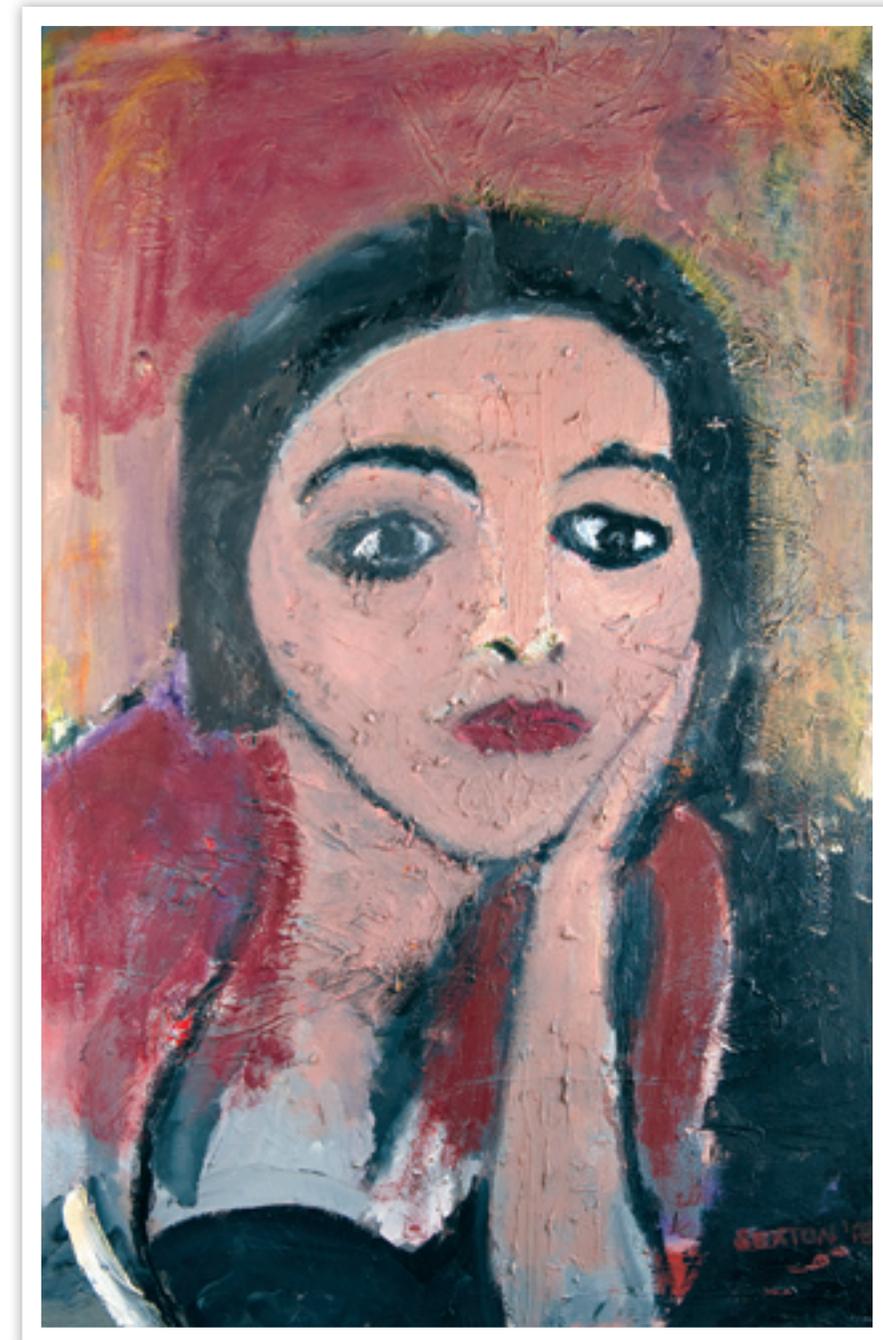
I sit on the floor in a corner of the dance studio, drawing circles, spirals, parabolas on my ragged sketch pad, trying to capture the poetry in motion flying across the polished floor boards to the plunk of a piano.

One two three four what are we fighting for – round and round up and down ...

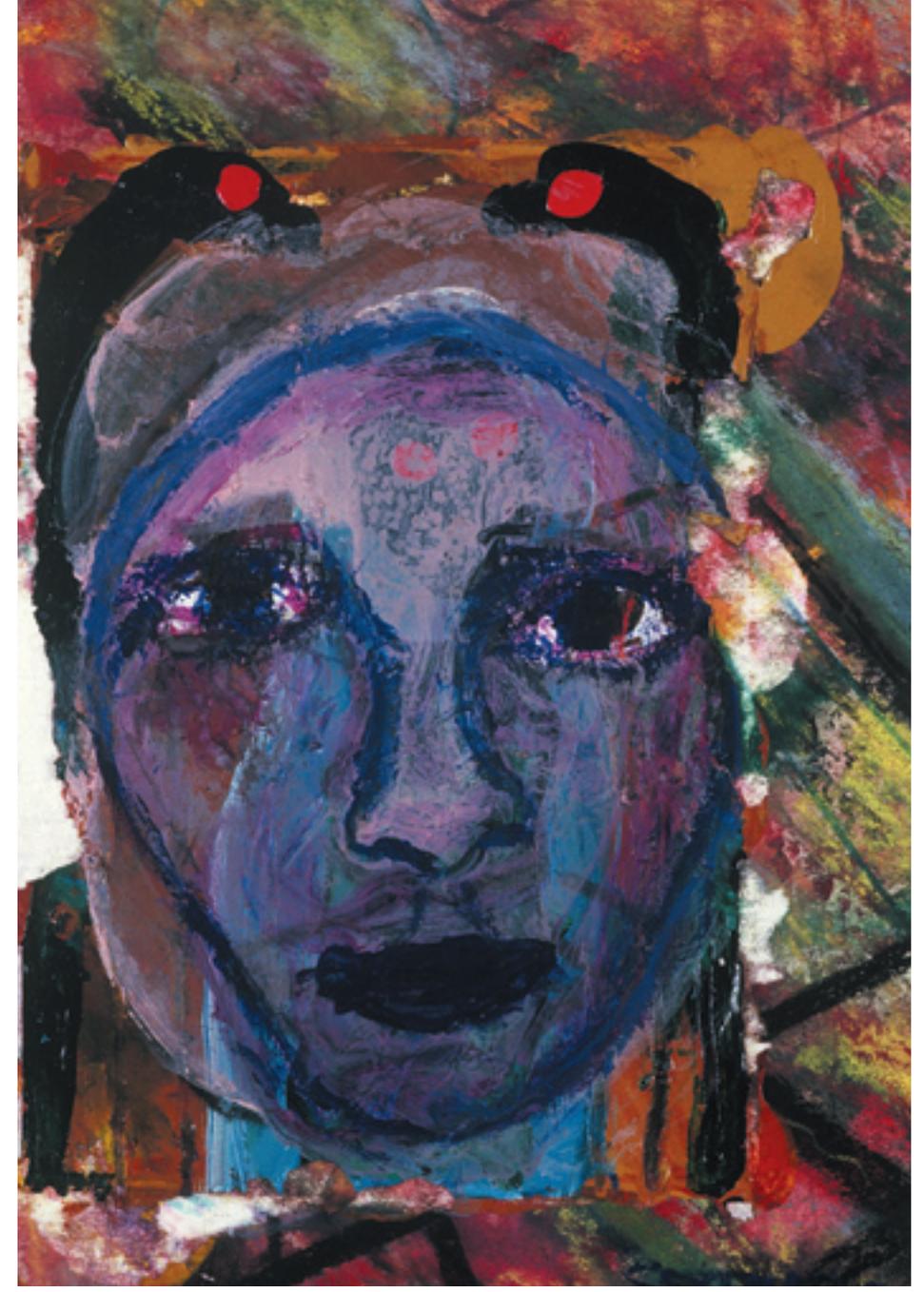
“Nowhere is everywhere,” I muse, hung over from the night before, “when nothing is anything and everyone is anyone when no one is someone. But everything is nothing when something is anything and everywhere is nowhere when somewhere is anywhere and no one is anyone when everyone is someone – so nowhere is somewhere and everyone is nowhere and nothing is everywhere ...”

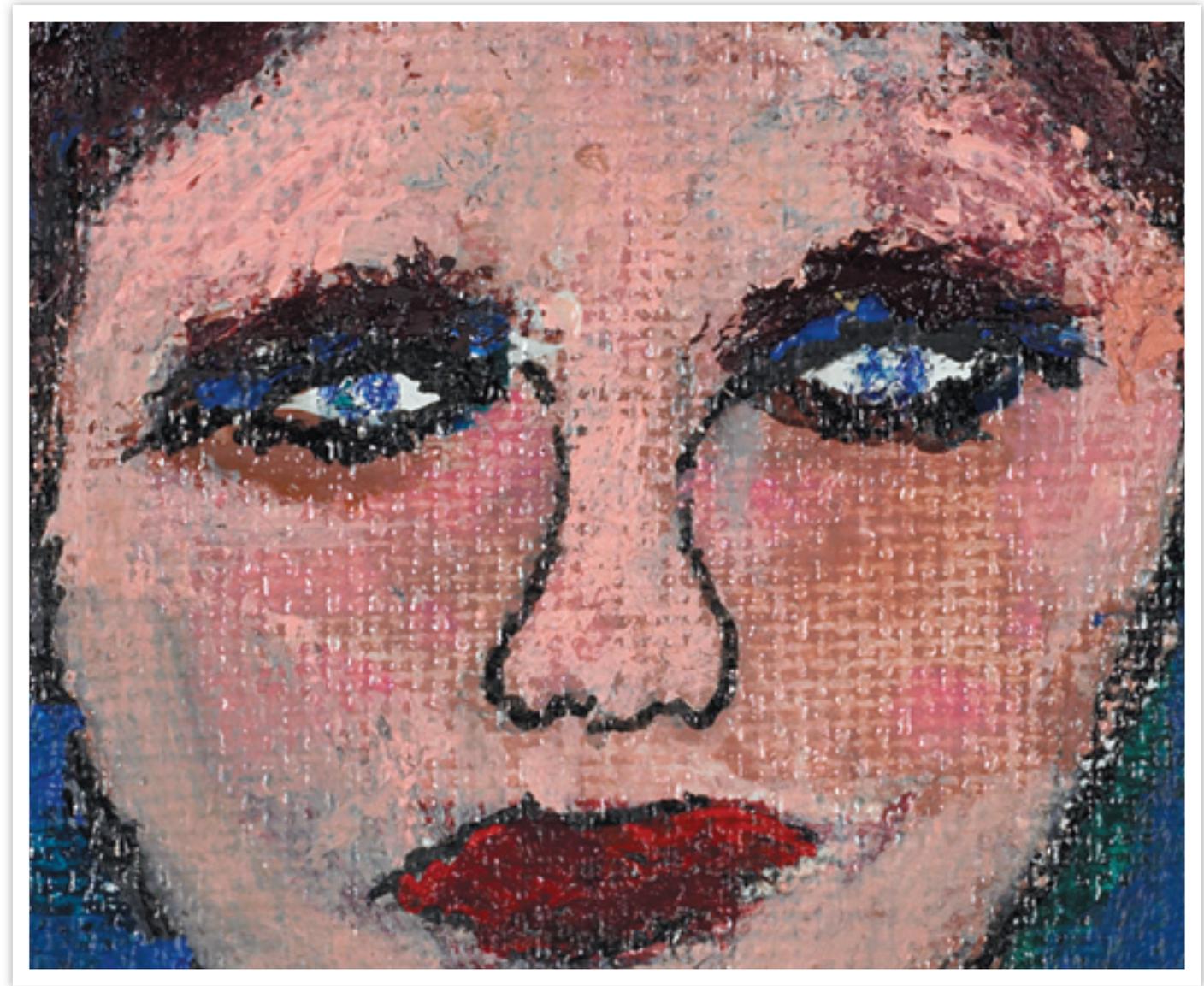
When I went off to war, I knew I would never come back – a premonition of my rotten luck. And I didn't, at least not with my mind in tact, which is why I used the G.I. Bill to go to art school.

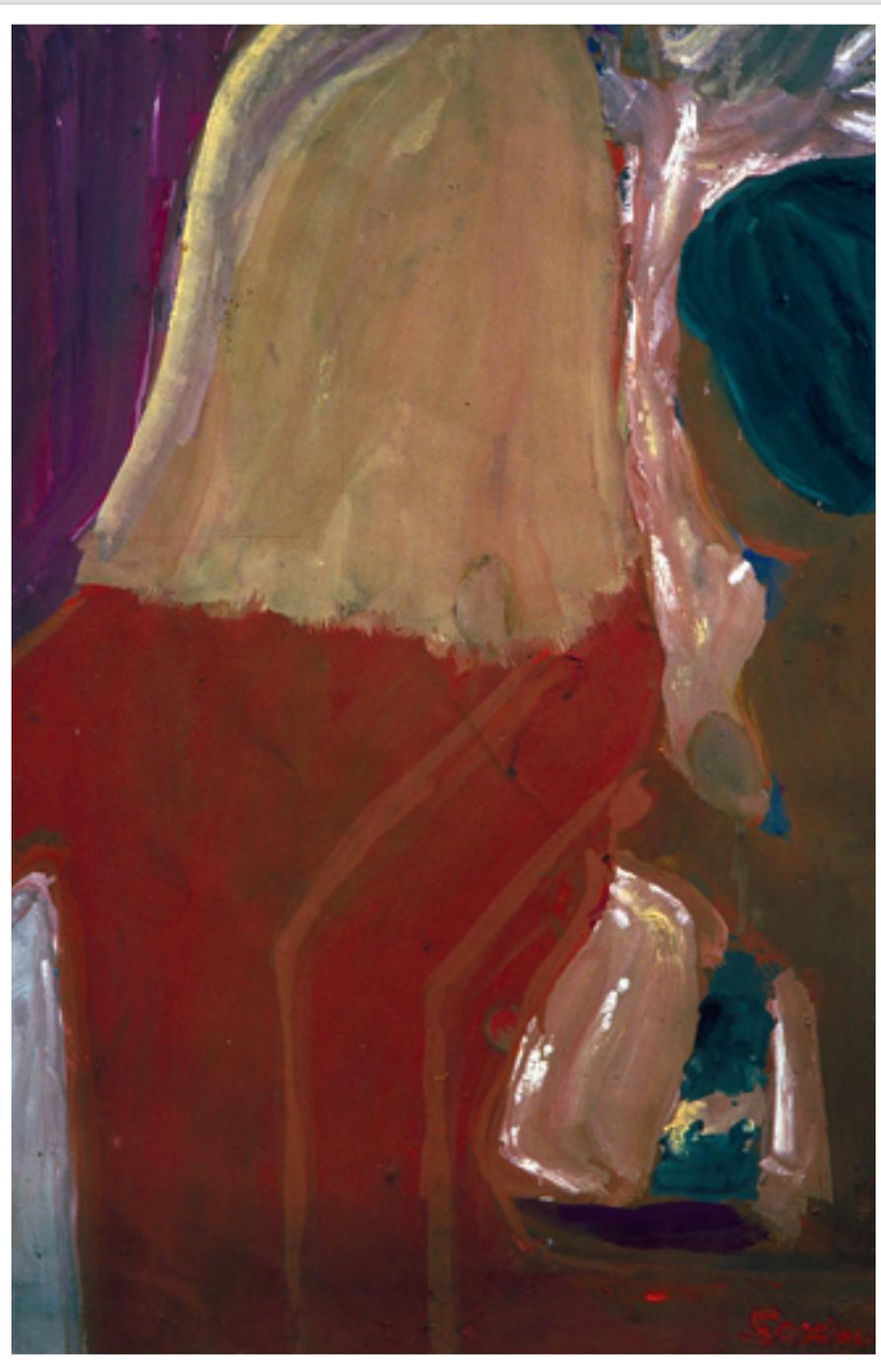
Up and down round and round.













FAIRY TALES CAN COME TRUE, IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU

Snow White in a glass casket was what I had been aiming at with my Surrealistic portrait of the Dead Zone's crack racket, trying to symbolize the lost soul in the black hole of the ghetto, and the living-death-quest of hopelessness all around us. But the chaos of contours I created in the fairytale beauty's features, after I started drinking and slashing paint on the canvas, and the undulating rhythms of brush strokes with which I concocted her coffin had her come out of my backstreet fable as an angel wearing a death mask of sable, asleep on a billiard table. So maybe "Dust" was the thrust of my journey into oblivion in a game you can't win because a drug is a drug and there's plenty of "Dust" in the hood. Besides, while Picasso said that what one paints is what counts and not what one intended to accomplish, he also said that if you know exactly what you're going to do there's no point in going through it. Life lives as it does, I guess. I'm no Picasso, let's face it; but neither are you. Dead of winter, I look out at the falling snow from the window of my ghetto studio. Ragged figures roam the streets below, dragging through the drifts – bag ladies, homeless families, dead-enders, penniless pensioners. And more each day, as the cubical people lose their lives in the sitcom world and join us in hell: shivering, pale-faced strangers who come and go, the likes of which none of us has seen before. As the Dead Zone grows, wedding rings, good luck charms, Rolex watches fill the pawn shop windows. I grab my sketch pad, draw an old wrought iron oven. On the top of it I put a kettle. Inside I sketch the portraits of Hansel and Gretel.



AMERICAN PIE

Better to blackout than be;
 better the bottom of the bottle
 than reality – dead end days,
 sleepless nights. Why paint,
 why write: about the old
 lady in the alley asleep in a
 doorway, the raggedy kids
 playing in the gutter, their
 families living in squalor,
 the derelicts, lunatics, pimps,
 pushers, muggers, killers,
 the lost vet begging for cigarettes?
 Scenes too real to find a refuge
 in bookstores or museums,
 amidst the soup cans and
 American flags, and the golden
 words penned for the aesthetic
 ruminations of future generations.



ALL THE PRETTY BALLERINAS

*Night's lost wander,
 amidst phantoms you'd flee in dream,
 through ghost haunts, spectral walks,
 dead zones fogged by smoke and gin.
 Uptown, downtown, round and round,
 falling down . . . as they dance in black dresses
 around the rim of each drink
 the daughters of darkness
 who circle the brink.*

“She’s beautiful.”

“She isn’t done.”

“Who’s the model?”

“Death.”

“You’re crazy! Hey, I know that girl!

She’s that ballerina, your old flame.

How come you never paint me?”

“I only paint what I hate.”

“You do not.”

“War, plague, famine, betrayal –

I’ll paint you, call it ‘Midnight Angel.’”

“Where are you going?”

I move from the couch to the easel,

take a hair of the dog on the way,

squint as the sunlight sets the canvas

ablaze. Fat Cats, the Jet Set, the artsy

social whirl, play in my memories of the
 pretty ballerina, along with some specter
 of myself, who quickly became an
 inconvenient oddity amidst that rarefied
 swirl with my hard scrabble sketches
 of working class life, battlefield drawings,
 paintings of the down and out, too gritty
 to be shown in any upscale gallery.
 “Why are you doing that?”
 I ghost the goddess with a solvent-soaked
 rag, fade her beauty, erase her eyes.



NIGHT SWEATS

*The scary lair of sleep
 where white mice in lab smocks
 dance around alarm clocks.*

I am moving, not moving
 somehow being propelled,
 a step at a time,
 around the broken chairs and tables,
 between the crushed beer cans and empty bottles,
 passed the pile of unpaid rent bills,
 toward the easel in my garret corner.
 The sky-lit loft is an aquarium of starlight.
 Munch-like moons haunt the heavens.
 Van Gogh constellations swirl the sky.
 Atop the nightstand, paint jars sparkle like prisms.
 The ghost-white canvas shines with astral light.
 I am painting, not painting.
 Slanting forward, I slash the canvas
 with road signs, religious symbols, astrological charts,
 corporate logos, chemical formulas, designer labels,
 mathematical equations, secret signals ...

The creatures from my cracked world, cautiously, climb out
 from their demimonde tableaus – their brut art rendered gin
 mills, strip joints, dice dens, night clubs, jail cells, missions,
 soup kitchens, back street labyrinths, blind alley flops – bag
 ladies, homeless families, penniless pensioners, beggars, winos,
 hookers, junkies, grifters, gangsters, orphans, runaways, -- my
 non-sellable oeuvre of the near-dead, and the might-as-well-
 be – which includes my sallow “Self Portrait In Straight Jacket,”

rusty dope needles sticking through my head ... They slither down the warped walls, crawl out from the festering stacks, crowd around me with their dead-end eyes, watch me as I work.

I repaint us all in a castle in the clouds, feasting around a royal table, dressed in finery, flush with merriment, while cherubs circle chandeliers, and virgins dance on marble floors, and rainbows arch across a kingdom where ketchup is no longer a vegetable to politicians, and lives are no longer negotiable to corporations, and liberty, equality, fraternity reign, and no child is left behind.

Anything is possible when nothing is real.



WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

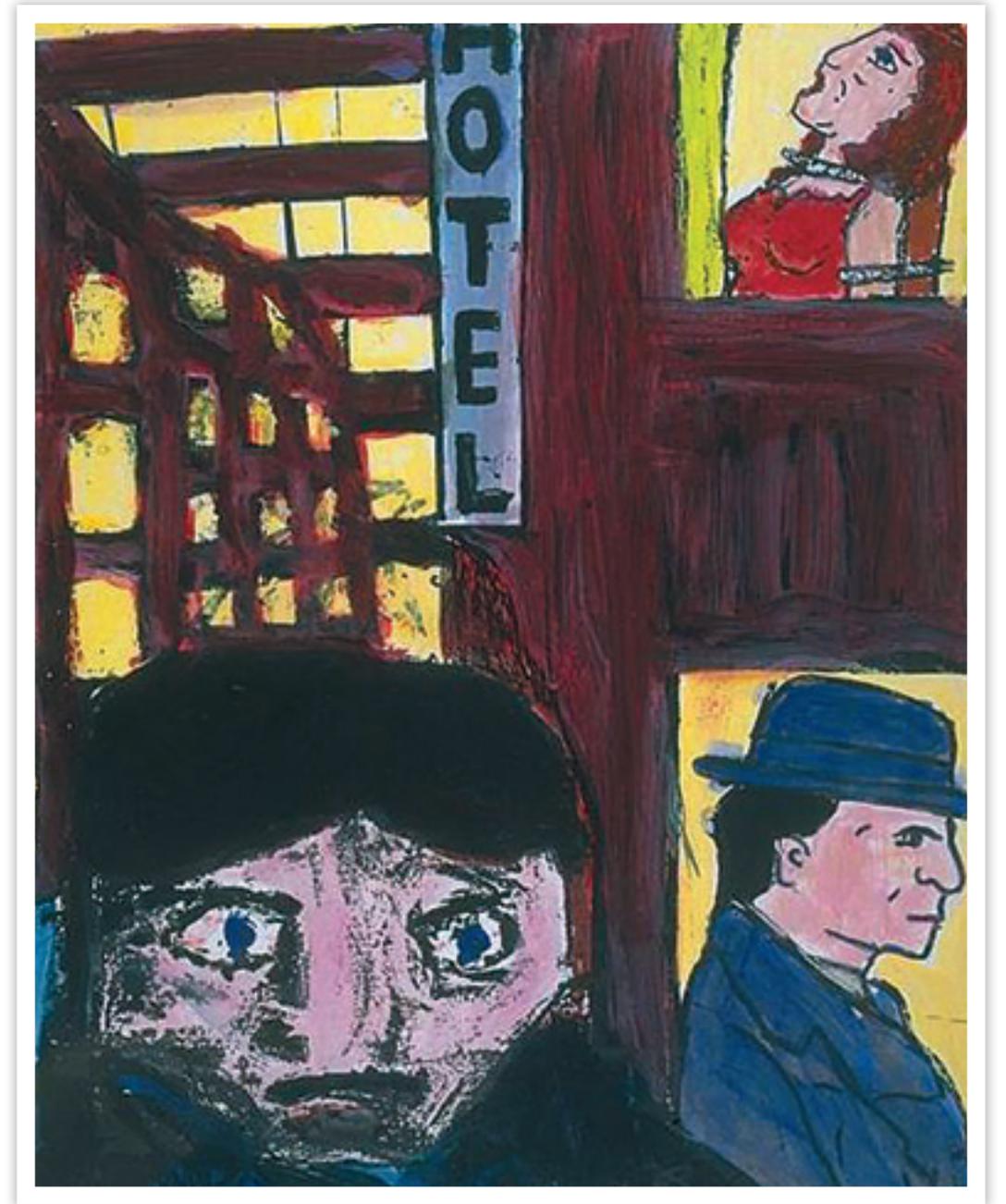
Sitting alone in this café, scribbling on bits of pocket crumpled paper, I notice that people have a tendency to look at me, sneakily – men, women, young and old all poking at little hand held gizmos, I phones, Blackberries, god knows what. What they seem to see is a mystery. Someone that does not quite fit into the reality of their uniformity and what that should be. While they don't want to offend, they must peek at "it" again. I think that I engender this by simply being a something that is, obviously, not becoming anything other than nothing. I don't have that "How To" book look as they do: "Succeed," "Attract," "Fix This," "Solve That." I guess there's nothing to be done but grab a fresh Starbucks napkin and write another poem.

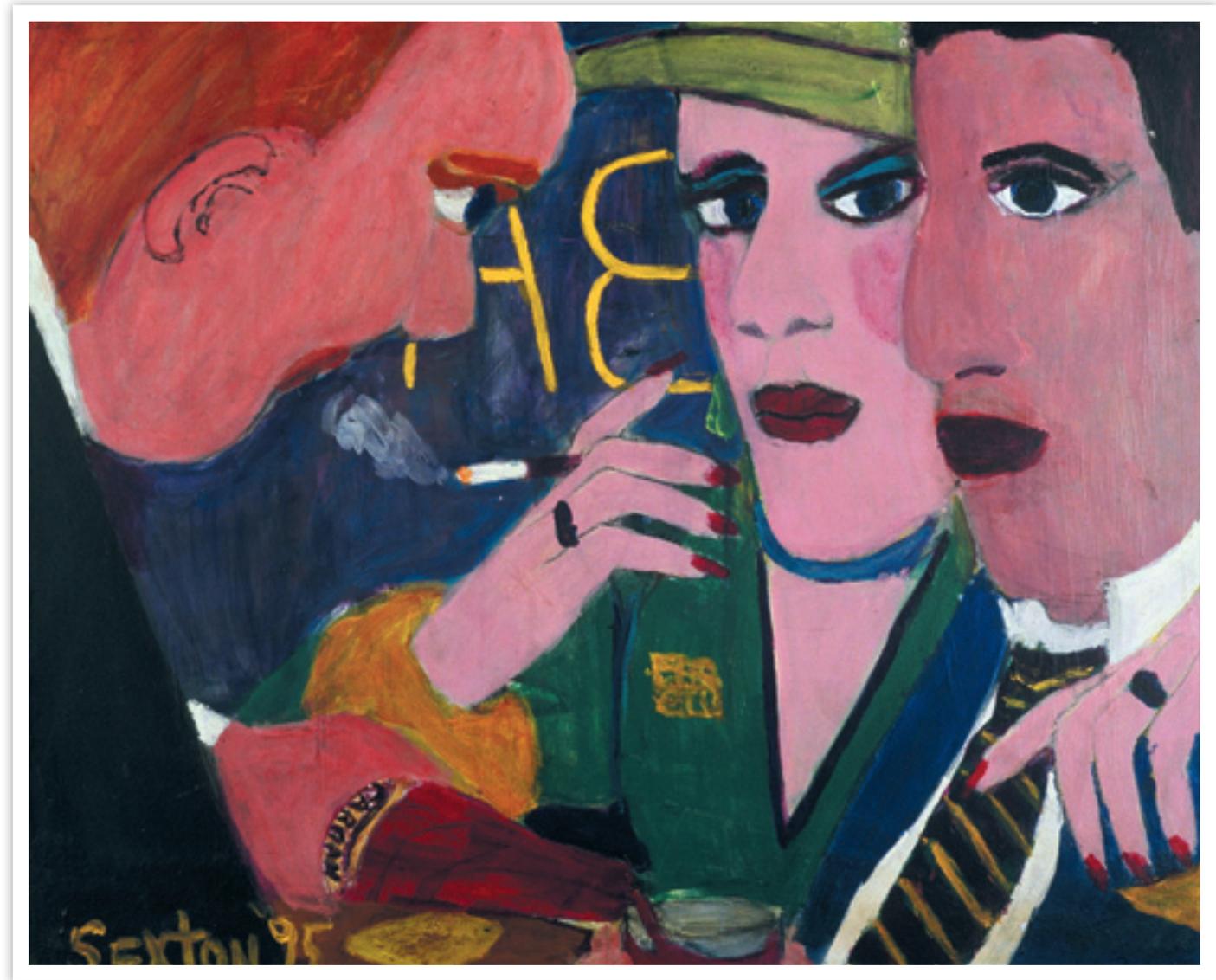


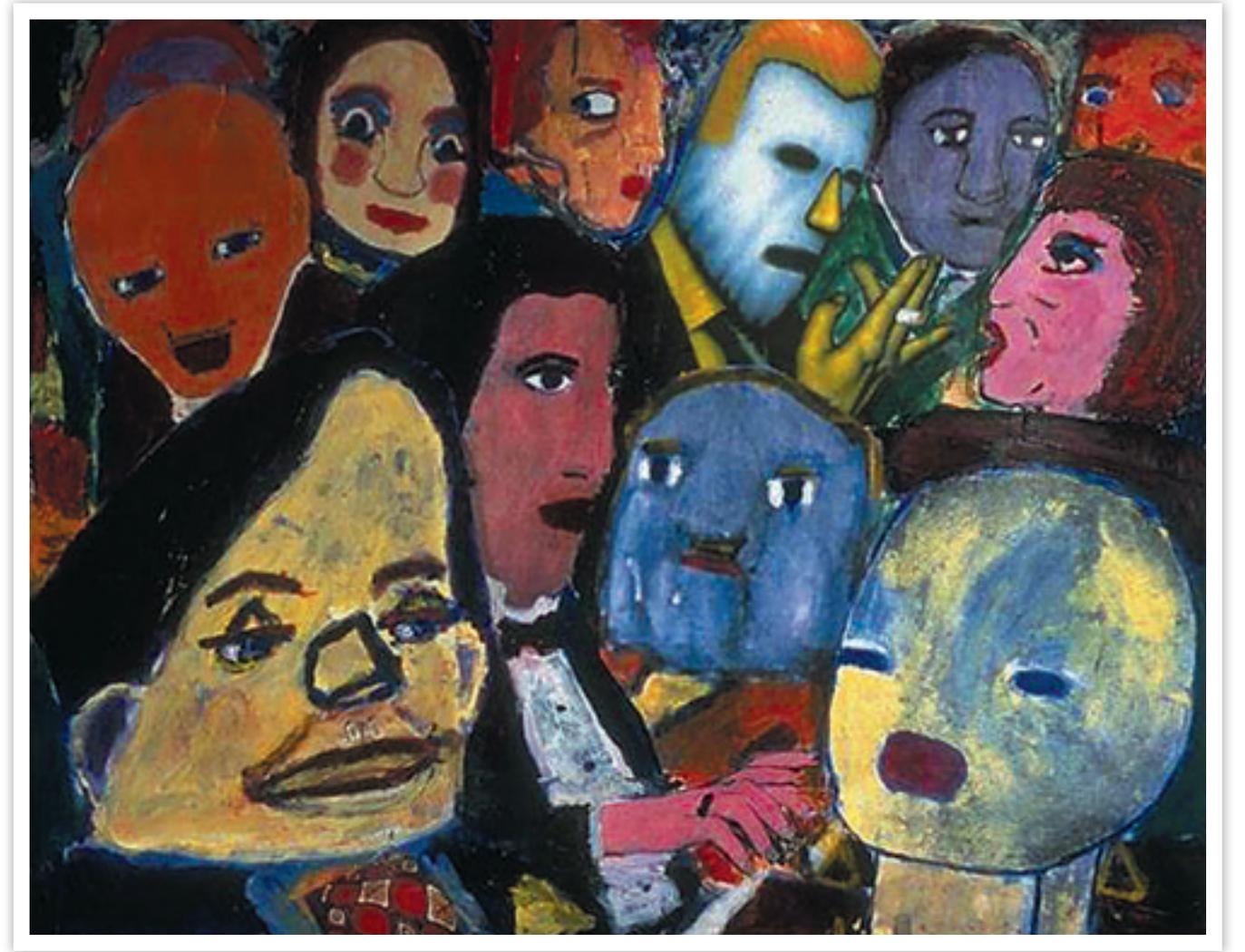
BORN TO LOSE

Like a death rattle of wind chimes playing the desperate cry's of hard times, through dark, despairing notes across the shivering rhythms of their hearts and souls, the lost generation wanders the recession, searching for salvation from life's regression, hoping too little, too late won't come from whatever can change their fate.

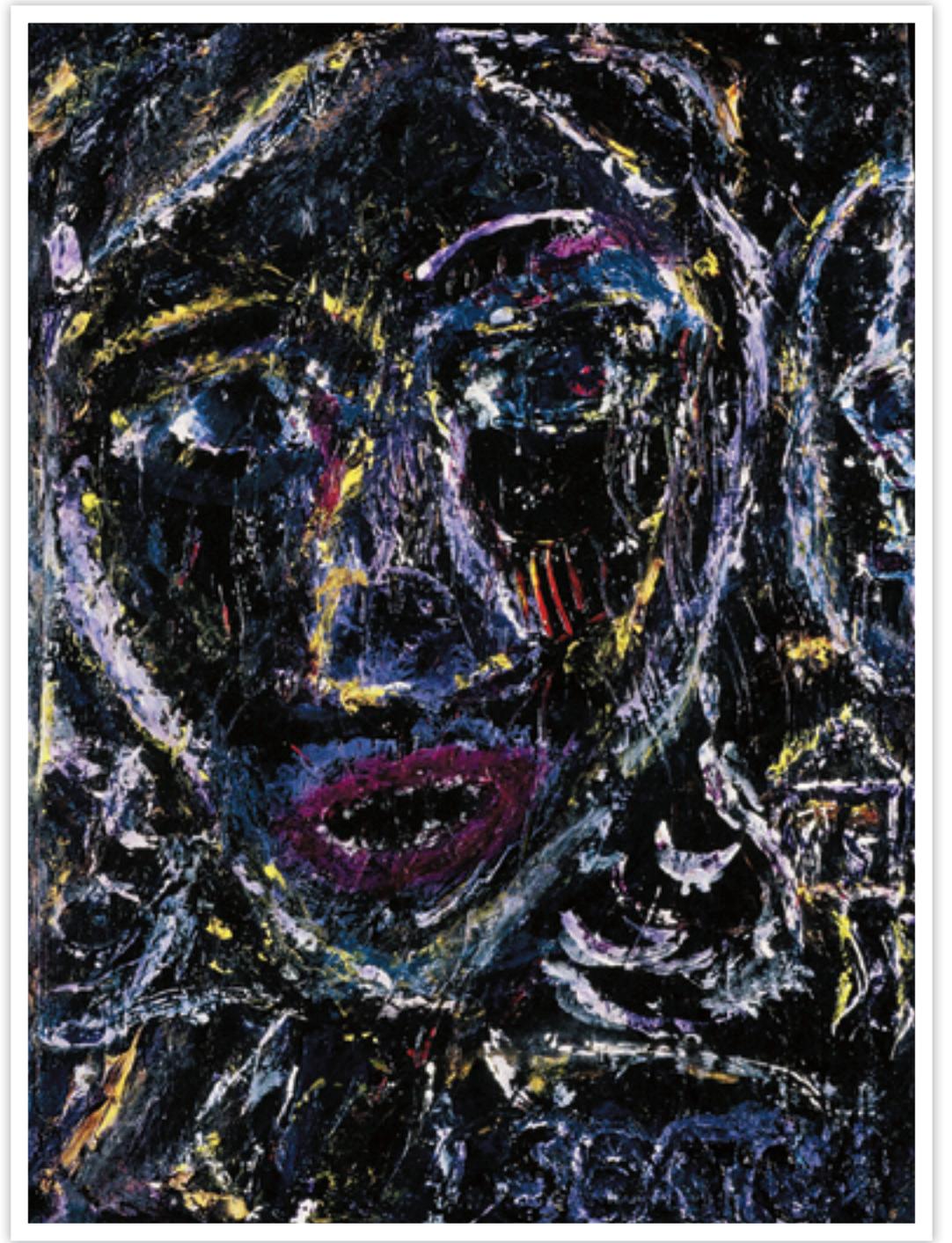
It's the music sensation that's sweeping the nation – the beat of a dream's retreat. You can hear it in Chicago, in the Motor City, in Philadelphia, PA, Kansas City, down in New Orleans, all across the country.











JACQUELINE ROIG

I make found object assemblage – at least that’s to what category I discovered my creative visual renderings belong. (I am a clinical psychologist fairly new to the art world and I still feel uncomfortable about calling myself an “artist” as I don’t know who qualifies as an artist and who does not – that whole existential philosophical question mark.) I make them out of the dreams of life, sometimes unfulfilled, mostly reflecting the conflicts we all experience. My efforts have been regarded as “deep,” “psychological,” occasionally “frightening.”

I remember the first time I met Rex Sexton. He meandered into my exhibit space at the Flat Iron Arts Building annual invitational (he had a studio down the hall) and began speaking to me about a specific piece, titled “weakly ritual”. It immediately became clear that he had already given it quite a thorough exploration, as his commentary to me was specific and rich. He told me the piece would work well in an exhibit for which he was assembling artists, and proceeded to speak volumes about my work. Volumes, that is, in Rex’s inimitable style: short, apt, and dead-accurate witticisms about life, the human condition, and art.

I had no idea who this guy was, but was thrilled with his attention to my work, and his manner of expression. He invited me into his studio space, an airless, sweltering closet of a space that was paradoxically one of the most open and alluring places I’d ever been privileged to enter. It was a visual house of candy, a metaphor twice removed from Hansel and Gretel, as enticing and tempting as any place I’d been yet had no idea I’d missed. I felt like I circumvented the knock at the door with the “Joe sent me” necessary for allowance, or maybe like Alice felt just after she pushed past the obstruction.

The space was an artist’s space: paintings hung, stacked; strips of lights jerry-rigged to afford the best viewing; low-slung chairs in a corner behind the door with a very accessible and very well-used ashtray, filled with at least sixty emphatically-killed butts. I peeked in, entered, and for a long moment, forgot about Rex. I felt delighted and intimidated, excited and cautious, a sense of wanting to move closer but not sure if I should or where to start.

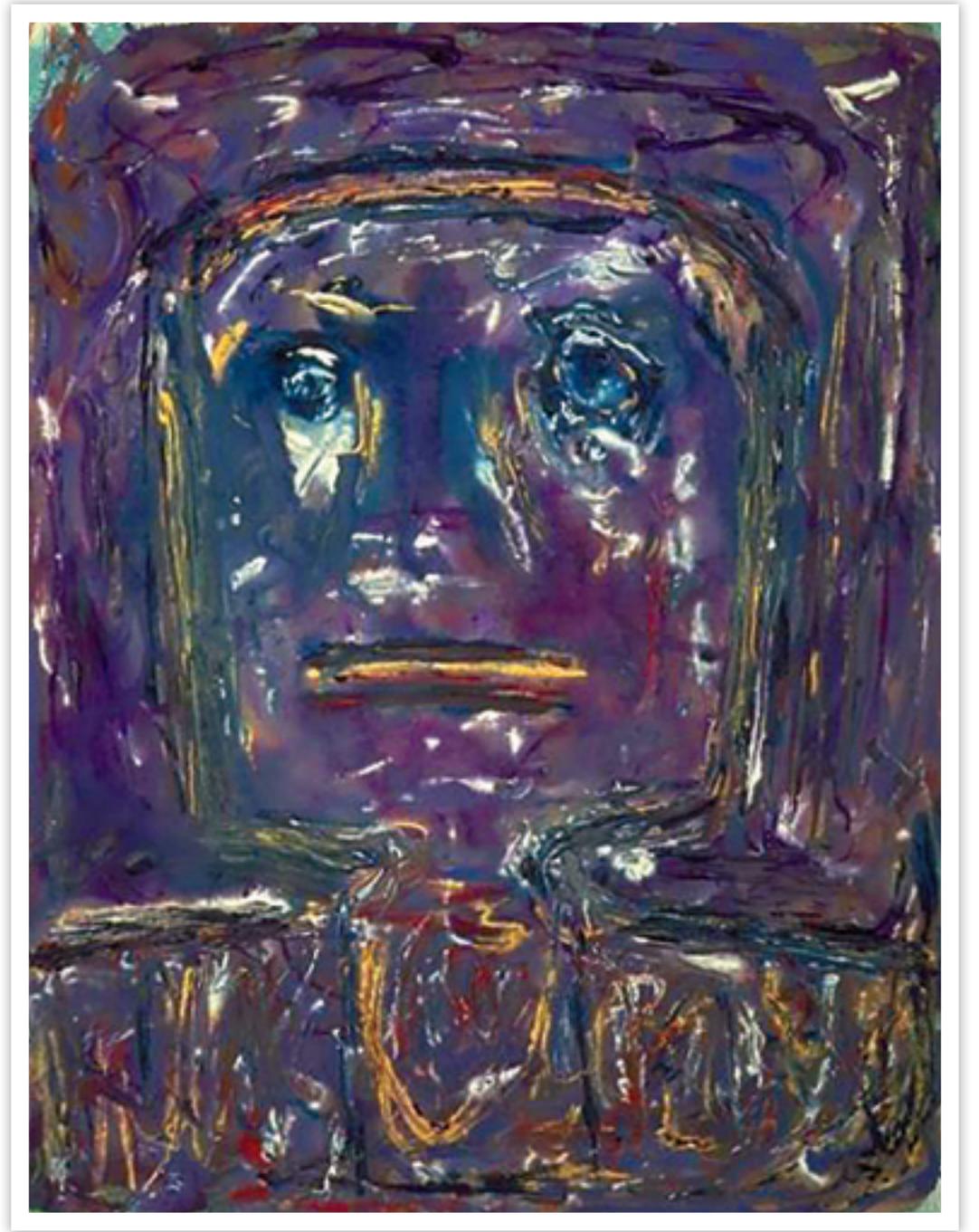
Rex’s paintings struck me with a look and style that carried the early image I had already formed of the artist himself onto the walls. The colors strong, the paint strokes sure, not one apologetic or uncertain mark anywhere. I felt as if I’d walked naked into a place where THEY were all dressed – the images on the canvases were strangely inclusive in that they noticed me come into the room, but they snubbed me too, as if this newbie artiste were beneath their consideration. It was palpable! I felt too young, all of a sudden, as if a recent graduate going to a business cocktail party – will I be taken seriously, do I want to fit in with you, CAN I fit in with you, please accept me as seasoned enough to be able to offer you something back...



Rex has a way of opening the viewer to a world that would otherwise seem out of reach. It feels important, as if the viewer has just stumbled upon a whispered conversation of paramount impact, or one has turned a corner to see something they weren't meant to and knew they had a split second to make a decision to either disappear or join in. There is no hesitation in his work, and there is no need for easing the observer in – it's jump with both feet and there is no net, no hand held, no words of support or encouragement. There is a felt-sense that is interwoven with anyone who comes to know Rex himself. His dry delivery reminds me of a subdued Christopher Walken with the gleam that says he knows people can't help themselves for their reactions to him. Even his most banal comments spark, and any comment to come awaited with anticipation of a much bigger boom than a spark, and the horse gets out of the barn every time.

Rex and I formed an instant friendship, and I came to know him through his art, and his art through him. I read his poems and his stories, and with each go along for the ride into a gritty underbelly of a world in which I ALWAYS feel too young and unseasoned for its glaring assaulting style, curiously peppered with longing, softness and sadness. I look at his paintings – three of which I proudly own, display and re-visit frequently just to take the dare – and I am transported: I want to jump into the canvas and go for a ride. Not too long of a ride because there may not be a way of turning back. And I'm not sure I could make it in Rex's interior world. I may not be brave enough to do more than view from the observation area. But what a view...







THE MUSEUM GUARD

Morning rounds, chasing *phantom* art alarms, *poltergeist* startled smoke detectors, hand radio crackling. “CLEOPATRA CLEAR.” I call Control. “ASIAN ART ANOTHER GHENGIS CON.” *Byzantine Banshees ...Gothic Ghosts ... Spectral Sanctum Phantasmagoria ...*

I slip through light and shadow, down the corridors of dream, past the doorways of delirium, along the labyrinths of time, amidst the spoils of raided tombs, sacked cities, pilfered churches, ravaged kingdoms, robbed graves, plundered castles – the grab bag of Kings and Queens and Robber Barons. (And the howls of slaves, serfs, exploited workers).

“*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan,*” I muse, as I shift down the haunted hallways, through the spot-lit galleries ablaze with visions: Monet, Renoir, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso, Matisse, Dali, Beckman, Turner, Tiepolo, Richter, Rembrandt, “*a stately pleasure dome decree.*”

“CODE RED” my radio crackles. “SOUTH WALL LLK DO YOU COPY FIRST AID?”

Kitchen fire ... someone burned ... I drop a freight to the castle’s crypts, cut through the night-crawler catacombs, boiler rooms, power plants, mazes, tunnels.

Smoke fogs the food service entrance. Black robed demons, dance above a flaming oven. Two techs from operations are foaming down the fire. First aid tends a cook’s burns in the corner. A mob of dark men and women, dressed in ghost white uniforms, huddle in groups around the stoves, sinks, pot and pans.

“Que Pasa?” I drift into the throngs of food service workers. “Fuego muy malo.” I shake my head. “Is anyone burned?”

The Mexicans eye me warily, back away. “*Policia.*” “*La Chota.*” They think.

“Ustedes OK?” I try the shadowy figures again but they fidget, make fists, turn away.

“KITCHEN CLEAR” I radio Control “CALL AN AMBULANCE ... SEND DOWN A SUIT” (if you find one).



“Been there amigos,” I brood as I zig zag back through the belly of the beast. “Been in between nowhere and no way out.” My mind flashing back to the fearful faces, afraid of the thug in a uniform, afraid of losing what little they have – their hand to mouth jobs, claptrap shelters.

“Anyone who has an advantage,” my old man used to say, “will take advantage of anyone who is at a disadvantage to them.”

I guess I’ve drunk to that one in my day.

Gallery 220 ... oil on canvas ... 2 small areas paint crushed from impact ...

Gallery 220 ... oil on board ... large white drips lower right ...

Gallery 216 ... tempera panel ... scratches ...

Gallery 217 ... oil on canvas ... swipe mark from hand ...

The morning after Free Day’s invasion of the barbarian hordes. Ever since my favorite painting, “Night Hawks,” was slashed, I approach each work with dread.

“Hey Security where’s that ear guy?”

“Where’s what?”

“That ear guy.”

“You mean Van Gogh?”

“ART HANDLERS GALLERY 201.” I alert Control. “INSTALLATION IMPRESSIONISM.”

The floor sweepers are out in force. Custodians are cleaning the cases. Physical plant is checking climate control. Docents, conservation techs, carpenters, painters, electricians – the sleeping citadel is awakening from its night sweats slumber in ... Paradise Lost? Dante’s Inferno? – whatever purgatory God condemns it to toss. (That other Chicago story by Upton Sinclair, The Jungle?)

I check my watch, make one more note about what looks like car key scratches on the bottom of a still-life, shake my head and move through the connecting door from the Old Masters section into the Executive Suites.

Publications, Promotions, Memberships, Fundraising, Education, Finance, Curatorial, Registration – I check for waste basket fires, hazardous coffee pots, dead archivists slumped on their library shelves. Yale, Harvard, Princeton diplomas hang on each ivory castle inner sanctum wall, Brown, Vassar, Radcliff ...

“You Have Just Entered Civilization.” Someone from publications wants you to know. “Art Tells Us The Truth About Being Human.” Another office posting quotes. And my favorite, in the Director’s office, straight from the horse’s mouth, an ode to artists for their concern for the poor, tired and humble masses and some rigmarole about how the museum values this.

I sit in the Swastika lobby at the plush information and membership kiosk beneath the giant vase of fresh cut flowers. I know the gilded Nazi swirls which trim the ceiling of the grand marble entrance are really ancient Asian symbols for peace, hope, love. But after Hitler, they are forever swastikas and somehow oddly appropriate. “FOOD SERVICE SETTING UP TRUSTEE’S MEETING.” I radio Control as a caravan of breakfast carts rattle through the lobby, pushed by the Mexican ghosts. “SHOPKEEPERS ENTERING STORE ... CASHIERS, COAT CHECKS, ENTERING VISITOR’S SERVICE.”

The bee hive starts to buzz, as the drones swarm to work. These are mostly temp types, day labor style slugs you never get to know, as they’re shuffled in and out before benefits kick in: health care, sick days, raises, pensions, vacations, personnel access. (Or they just up and leave, even if they manage to get these benefits, because the pay’s no good). I need a smoke. Time is pressing. The scheduler called off and I’m stuck with the jigsaw puzzle of gallery guard postings: Ancient, Old Master, Modern, Contemporary, Expressionist, Impressionist, Asian, American, Renaissance, Medieval, every nook and cranny. “ESCORT GUARDS OPENING MICH ENTRANCE.” I inform Control.

The daily round of Limos is pulling up outside. Curators crowd the lobby as tycoons sweep through the high arched doors. Grand Dames, Financiers, big money donors to be led on private tours through the museum’s lavish holdings: majestic Monet’s, priceless Picassos, passionate Van Gogh’s, nightmare Dali’s, saintly Ruben’s, El Greco martyrs, benevolent Buddha’s, crucified Christ’s, weeping Mary’s, Holocaust horrors.

I look at my watch again. The museum’s “ghetto brigade” will be dragging in soon – the army of poverty-wage contract guards the museum harvests from the city’s slums. Many won’t show. (Low pay, no sick days, no benefits, why would they?) Those that do aren’t very effective. (I guess it’s hard to give your all on an empty stomach.) I try to place them where they’ll function best, scattered amidst the shrinking seasoned in house force, sheltered from the maddening crowds.

“Out of the black mouth of the big king salmon,” I recall a line from a Carver poem, “comes pouring the severed heads of herring.”

I post myself in the museum rafters where I can listen to humanity groan.



“Nothing offers what is encouraged when the inundations of ambiguity shape all aspects of the variant possible. Documented, displayed, discussed, these evocations of disparate assumptions challenge our conception of the correlative conjectural. In ‘Parenthetical Contingencies,’ Focku’s latest piece, the synthesis of synergy and entropy become as iconic as the Mona Lisa, as you can see. However,” the GQ guru lifts a manicured fingertip, “you ain’t seen nothing yet folks! Follow me.”

“Everything cool with Focku?”

Degan, the Modern Art security manager, is suddenly beside me. We watch the gala gathering of museum Trustees follow the curator and the artist Focku through the private showing.

“Cool as the chilled wine and cheese cubes.” I muse. “Kierkegaard cooked up his usual concoction of salami, pastrami, baloney, and fed it to the culturnoti who primly wiped their mouths with money.”

“Now, now, don’t dis our trusty Trustees. They all live hard lots with their mansions and yachts. You keeping the riff raff out?”

“Anyone who looks embalmed is in. All those flush with the blood, sweat, tears of life are out.”

“Good man, you’re a credit to your guard uniform. What’s that one called? ‘Erectile Dysfunction?’”

“Don’t fool with Focku. He’s a genius.”

“I don’t doubt it! So, how’s your shit doing? Showing? Selling? Cutting off your ears?”

“OK, I’ve got two big works in an anti-war exhibit at the Focus Gallery.”

“Splendid! Horror! Pathos! Inhumanity! Insanity! No clutter of Republican collectors! Your name on an FBI list! You should ask Focku if he wants in.”

“I think I know what he’d say.”



I dine with Nobel laureates, drink with mobsters. I came up hard as diamonds, unpolished and uncut. I read books, people, painting, palms. My wife is a scientist. White mice calypso in her laboratory, minerals mambo. I learned how to paint from a Holocaust Jew. His specialty was rainbows. My fiction is dark, violent, mesmerizing. God is dead. Literature is dead. The age of art is over. I’m told. Sister Wendy is my patron saint. I was assigned to be her escort when she was making a film about the museum’s art. She took a picture and a poem of mine back with her to her cloister. I paint fate: dolls who dream, marionettes who emote, toys and puppets with hearts and souls. I paint what I see, tell what I know.

What I know and tell these days, are poems about the poor souls who have to work in this place. Nothing, I’m sure, like what my old mentor had to face. Still, it turns your stomach.



AMERICAN GOTHIC

She woke in the cold coughing,
listened to her children
wheezing in the dark.
The angel of death,
beat its black wings
in her fever dreams.

Rain pounded the tenement roof.

“Lift me Jesus.”

Floree clenched her calloused fists,
shivering on the sweat soaked bed.

“Lift me lift me Jesus.”

Like holy ghosts,
the snow white spirits
slept in the sunlit court,
hushed, celestial, chimeras
carved from clouds of stone.

“Don’t touch please.”

Floree drifted in a daze,
between the paintings and the statues,
amidst the throngs of milling patrons,
across the chapel-like exhibit room,
feverish in her museum uniform.

“No flash cameras ‘mam.”

The marble hall seemed
a mist of make believe,
phantoms shifting in a haze.

The statues looked spectral,
even more haunting than usual:
Abraham Lincoln, the shackled
man-slave, the Abolitionist woman,
the frail, fragile goddess of truth.

“But I gots to go to work baby.”

Floree remembered the morning like
a dream. *“If’en I don’t I don’t get no pay
sweetie. Sides, they makes you get a doctor’s
excuse. We ain’t got no money for that.*

*Don’t be scared, child. I knows you and Libby
real sick. Misus Gracie gonna look in on you.
I loves you sweetie. I be home real soon.”*



Out of the black, star-domed unknown, nothingness rushes in with a scream – a shrieking, circular, no more which mangles the jungle night with flames. Vietnam and napalm ... fear, death, agony, destruction ... and all for nothing! Slanting forward, I slash the canvas with colliding colors, fractured planes, splintered perspectives, blood-red rhythms, writhing soldiers, twisted trees, devils, demons ...

I need some weed. Soaked with sweat and splattered with paint, I study the huge, crazy conflagration of shapes. It looks like nothing so much as a Hieronymus Bosch (on hash) or maybe some asylum psycho’s “art therapy” piece. But I guess that’s war. *Art tells us the truth about being human.* So does a bullet.

The living room carpet is covered with paint splattered newspapers. Whiskey bottles, crushed beer cans, ashtrays, paint jars, rags, soaking brushes, crumpled cigarette packs, are scattered everywhere. While empty pizza boxes clutter the dining room table and clothes are tossed over lampshades and chairs. (It’s amazing how an artist can wreck a place when his wife is out of town.) I crawl through the rubble, feeling for my last twist of marijuana, find it in the pocket of a crumpled work shirt and light it up. I bought a bag as soon as Rachel left for a meeting in Europe, dragged the canvas out from under the bed and went ballistic. Bombs, bullets, jungle rot, agent-orange, 50 thousand dead and it never stops. (Look at what’s been going on for the last six years in Iraq – and now we’re going gung ho in Afghanistan the next Vietnam?) The Tribunals will remain in place, so will domestic surveillance, no prisoner atrocity photos will be released. What happened to change?) I sit on the sofa, smoke the joint, stare at the painting and reminisce. Crazy times those days of the “Flower Children.” Hard to imagine time went so fast. I guess I didn’t mellow with age. I still have my hair, teeth, maintain my army build, weight. I am as strong as an ox. The big piece is for an exhibit at the Vietnam Veterans Museum. Protest marches, civil rights marches, draft card burners, bra burners, sit-ins, love-ins we all “had a dream” way back then. With Bush, Cheney, the neo-cons, erasing what we accomplished, one’s got to wonder what, if anything, we were all about? Is Obama going to bring any of that dream back?

Mello as moon glow, nevertheless, I move out to the terrace and gaze down at the Gold Coast of Chicago, thirty floors below. Cathedrals, concert halls, mansions, museums, all spot-lit in the darkness amidst the city's rivers, parks, lakefront forests ... glittering streets filled with clubs and cafes ... skyscrapers towering all around me in the night ... the silhouettes of sailboats on the lake, pleasure cruisers, yachts ... all spinning ... whirling ... merging with the pot into the nebula ... black holes ... the Milky Way ...



Clickety clack, clickety clack, “*no going back, no going back*” clickety clack, clickety clack ... I can see nothing. Darkness fills the window, as the Midnight Special races along the track, uphill down dale ... My head feels foggy, my body numb – like being in bedlam where everything is upside down. The club car is empty. There was a party going on – booze, babes. Maybe I passed out?

“*Your passport has expired sir!*”

I remember that irritating conductor who came around.

“*Excuse me?*”

“*Your passport has expired sir!*”

“End of the line!”

The train's whistle is suddenly shrieking like a banshee in the night. Station bells are clanging. The clacking steel wheels grind.

“End of the line! End of the line!”



I wake up with a start soaked with sweat. In the dark in bed lying alone and scared, I vaguely remember dreaming that I was dead. I turn on the bed lamp, reach for a cigarette. The big Nam painting, which I finished around two AM and moved from the living room, is propped up across from me at the foot of the bed. Maybe that was it? Dead dreams, murdered causes, lost visions, (and lives). What happened? Or like the man said: “It's déjà vu all over again.”



A lone wolf in Poodleville is about the only way I can describe this museum-guard deal. I took it when my grunt gig at a South Side Chicago factory got shipped overseas. Now, a hardscrabble job which paid pretty well, had decent benefits, treated you OK, is a semi-slave slog for some poor soul in labor hell. (Like we're not headed that way in America pell mell ourselves.)

In the room the curators come and go talking of Michelangelo and designer hairdo's and designer clothes and vintage wines and Lake Front condos. I've been stuck monitoring the back entrance lobby all day, arms folded, face grim, factory muscles bulging through my polyester uniform – directing traffic, keeping the derelicts out, watching for known pickpockets and general ne'er-do-wells. In between my steely eyed sweeps of the bustling crowds, I've been scribbling out a poem about an Iraq war veteran on a spiral security guard notepad. Writing or sketching is the main thing I do on post all day.

“You on tonight, Blake?”

Crawley (Creepy Crawley) the special event manager is suddenly slouching toward me, buzz haircut, buck teeth, hook nose, beady eyes.

“I'm short.” Crawley pokes me in the chest with his clipboard. “Let me put that up front. Volunteers get on my good side. You know how it goes for the rest.”

The Million Dollar Donner wingding – the big annual ass kisser that starts in the morning and goes on past midnight. “The rich they are not like you and I.” Someone once said to someone. I think it was Fitzgerald to Hemingway. (I kind of spotted that right off myself.) Trucks have been pulling up since noon. (Which is the main reason they stuck me on this post – to direct the musicians, jugglers, dancers, caterers, florists, event organizers, contract waiters, waitresses, and extra hired hands of every description, as well as the befuddled museum staff (curators, lecturers, toadies, executives) who never seem to get the ins and outs as to the way these big affairs function.

“I didn't sign up.”

Crawley's beady eyes bore through me like lazar beams. His breath hisses like a radiator (in the dead of winter) past his smoke stained buck teeth. “What are you writing, Blake?” Crawley looks down at my hands. “Something happen in the lobby today, Blake? Are you writing an incident report? Let me see it.”

He sticks out his hand.

“I was just jotting down some notes about the cash-changing job.” I tuck my poem into my blazer pocket and give Crawley a lazy shrug. “I’ve got to train Johnson on the detail tomorrow – safe combinations, pick ups, drop offs. The usual stuff.”

“You do *that stuff* on your own time!” Crawley goes ballistic on me. “You don’t do *that shit* on the floor! You’re supposed to be monitoring this lobby, not scribbling in a *fuckin*g book! *That stuff* constitutes a write up! Three of those and you’re out! Ever hear of OT, Blake! You come in *early* for shit like that! Got a *problem* with putting a *little extra time* in for the museum?”

“Actually I was wondering if I could get on the roster for tonight? I was hoping you weren’t filled up.”

“You’re on.” Crawley chortles as he walks away.

“What did Creepy Crawley want?”

Romeo Ramero is suddenly beside me, looking pissed off.

“He signed me up for tonight.”

“Me too.” Ramero’s eye flare. “God damn it! I met this hot chick in photography. I’m supposed to meet her after work.”

“I wanted to get home and clean up my pad.” I brood, picturing the mess I left. “I wrecked it doing an art work while my wife was out of town. She comes back tomorrow.”

“Tell you what.” Ramero’s eyes narrow. “Here’s what we do. At eight o’clock I call Control from a pay phone. I tell them I’m your brother. There’s a family emergency and you got to be there. Crawley has to let you go. He’s got no choice about that. We both know he’s too lazy to follow up on the paperwork. Everything will be forgotten before you know it.”

“What about you?”

“Next time, amigo.”

“It’s a deal.”



“WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME”

Right back at him and whatever it was went right through him, body and soul. The feeling was a sensation of falling. With the falling the dull pain, as always, came back into his head and it was an effort just to breathe. Lonigan walked slowly, paused often, his father’s winter dress coat flapping around his legs, his fists pushed deep in its pockets. He felt like a ghost in a dream, as the snow swirled around him along the drifting streets, a shadow on the loose with no one to claim it. The days seemed a maze of make-believe since his discharge. The shadows of his past seemed dislocated from his present. The present seemed a shadow of whatever state-side was supposed to be. *Shadows, snow swirls, ghosts of dreams . . .* At the Celtic bar, Lonigan slipped in from the cold. It was still early in the day and the bar was all but empty – just a few other jobless Joes sipping pints in the semi-dark, everyone avoiding each other’s eyes. “Any luck, lad?” Tommy slid a pint in front of him as Lonigan sat at his corner stool. “Not this round, Thomas.” Lonigan pulled the rumpled job section from his suit coat’s pocket and laid it across the bar. “Then *this* rounds on me.” Tommy tapped the mug. Circles round no goes, words like loosing lottery

tickets, any AD a possible, every life negotiable...

"I am a soldier of misfortune and"

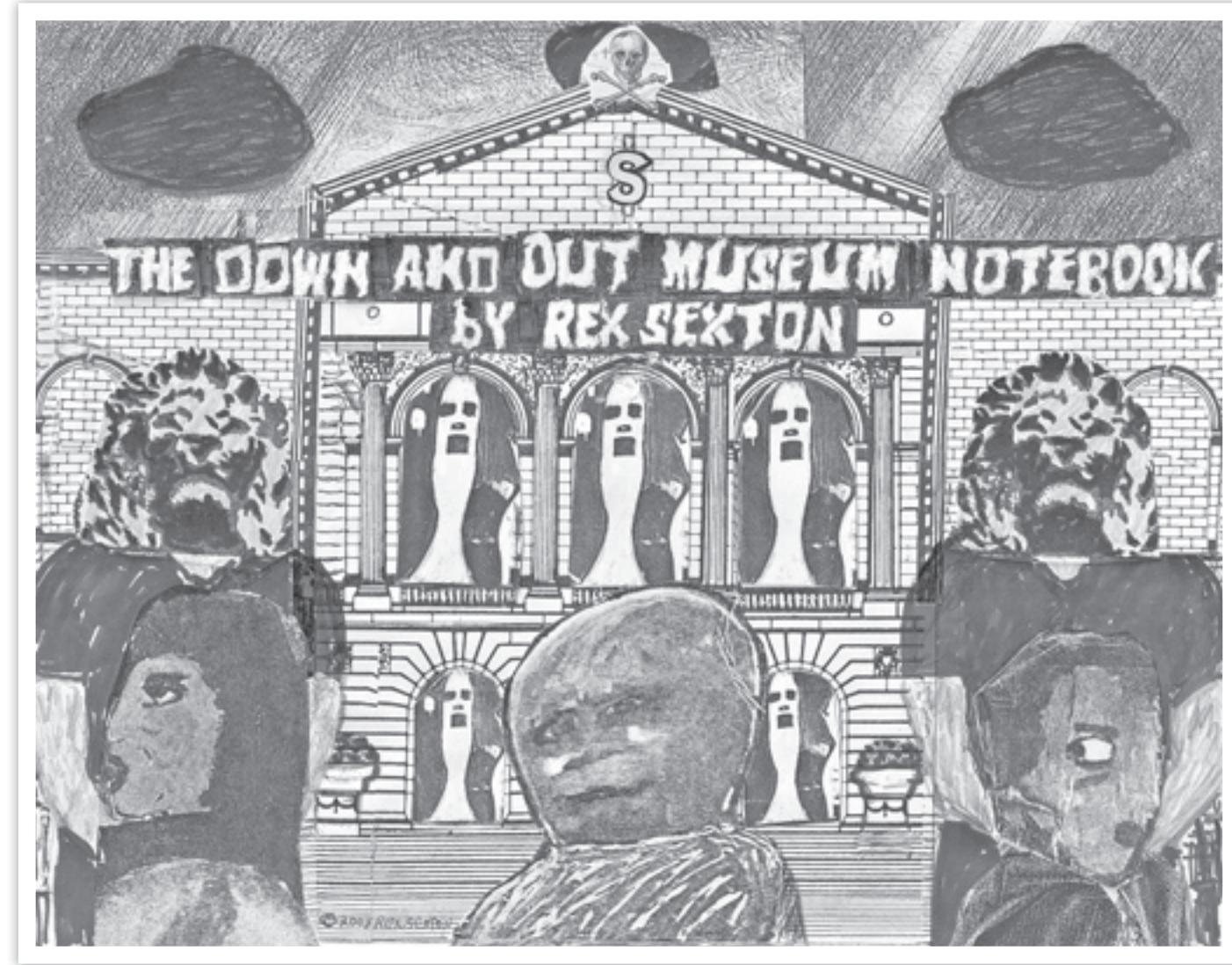
Lonigan scribbled on the margin of the newspaper,
as he browsed through the help wanted listings.

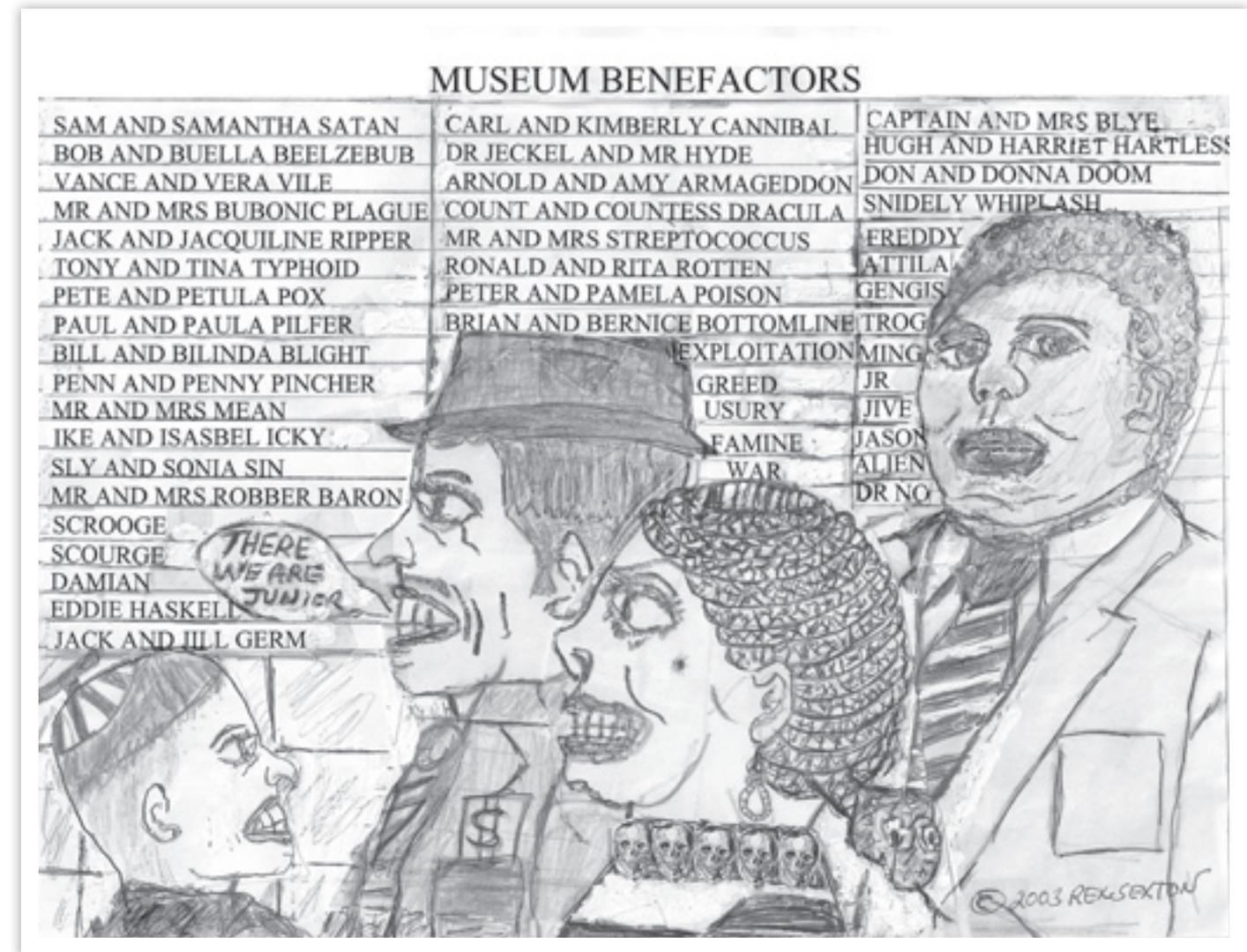
"I fought that holy war on the desert sand."

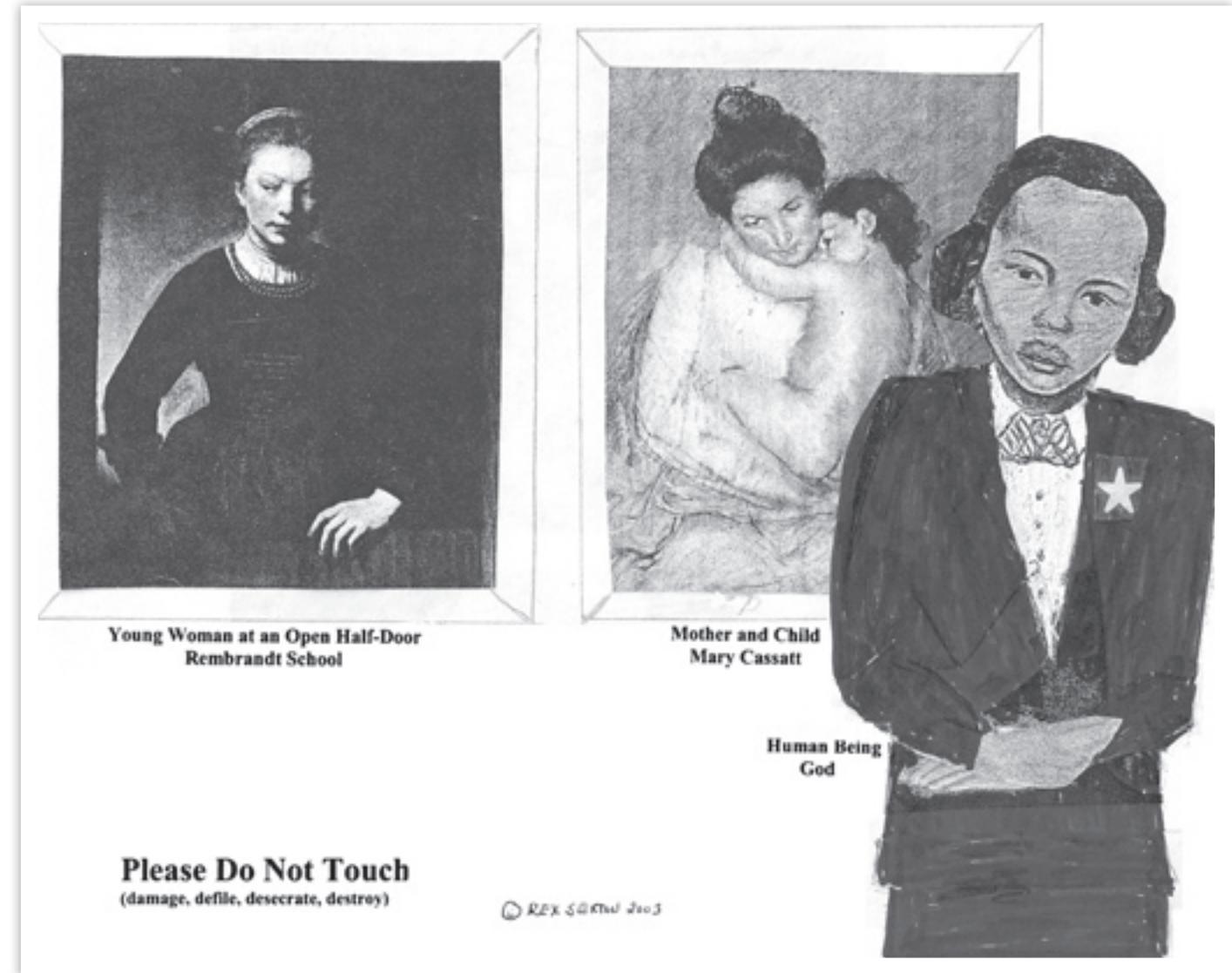
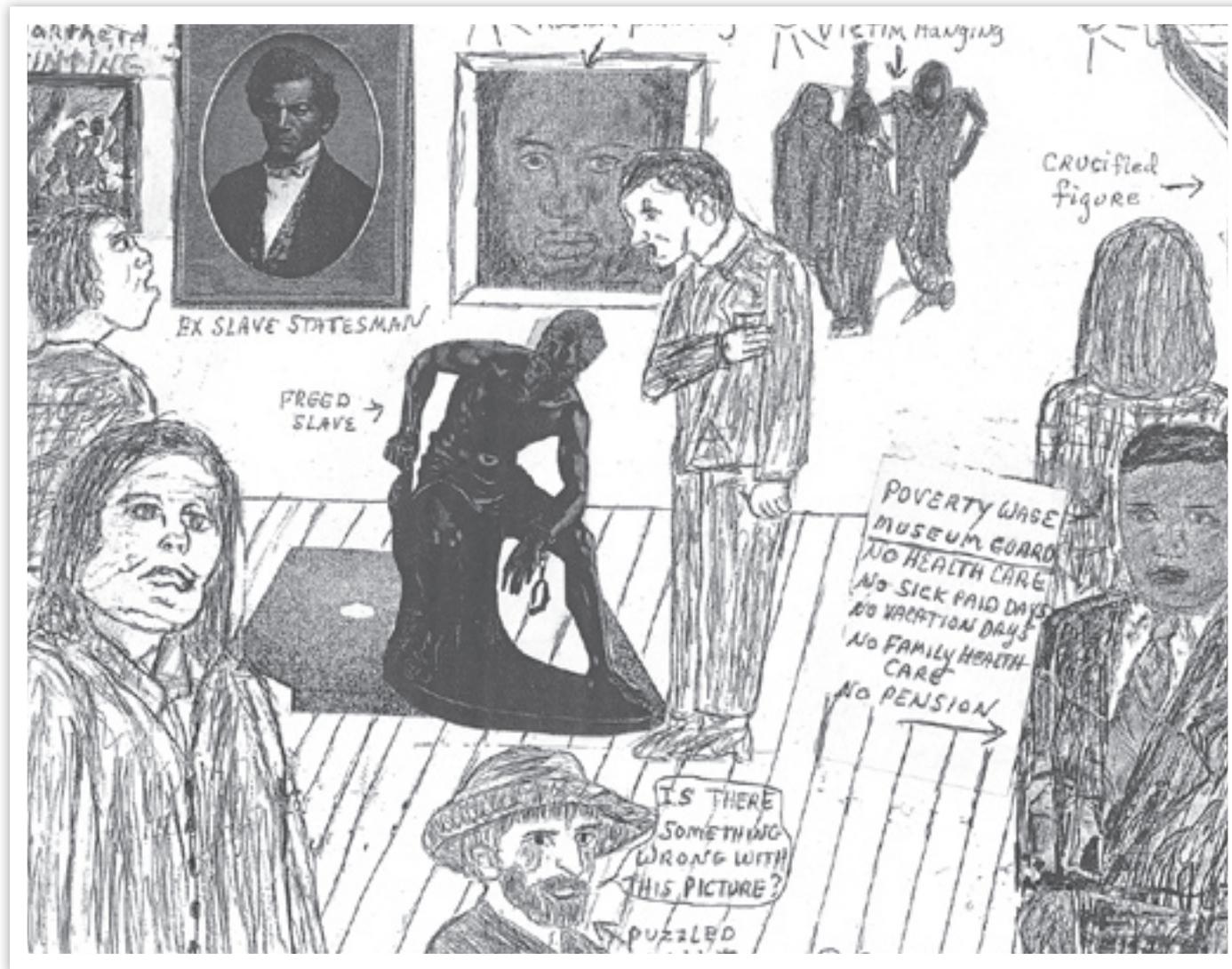
He sipped his pint and searched his fate.

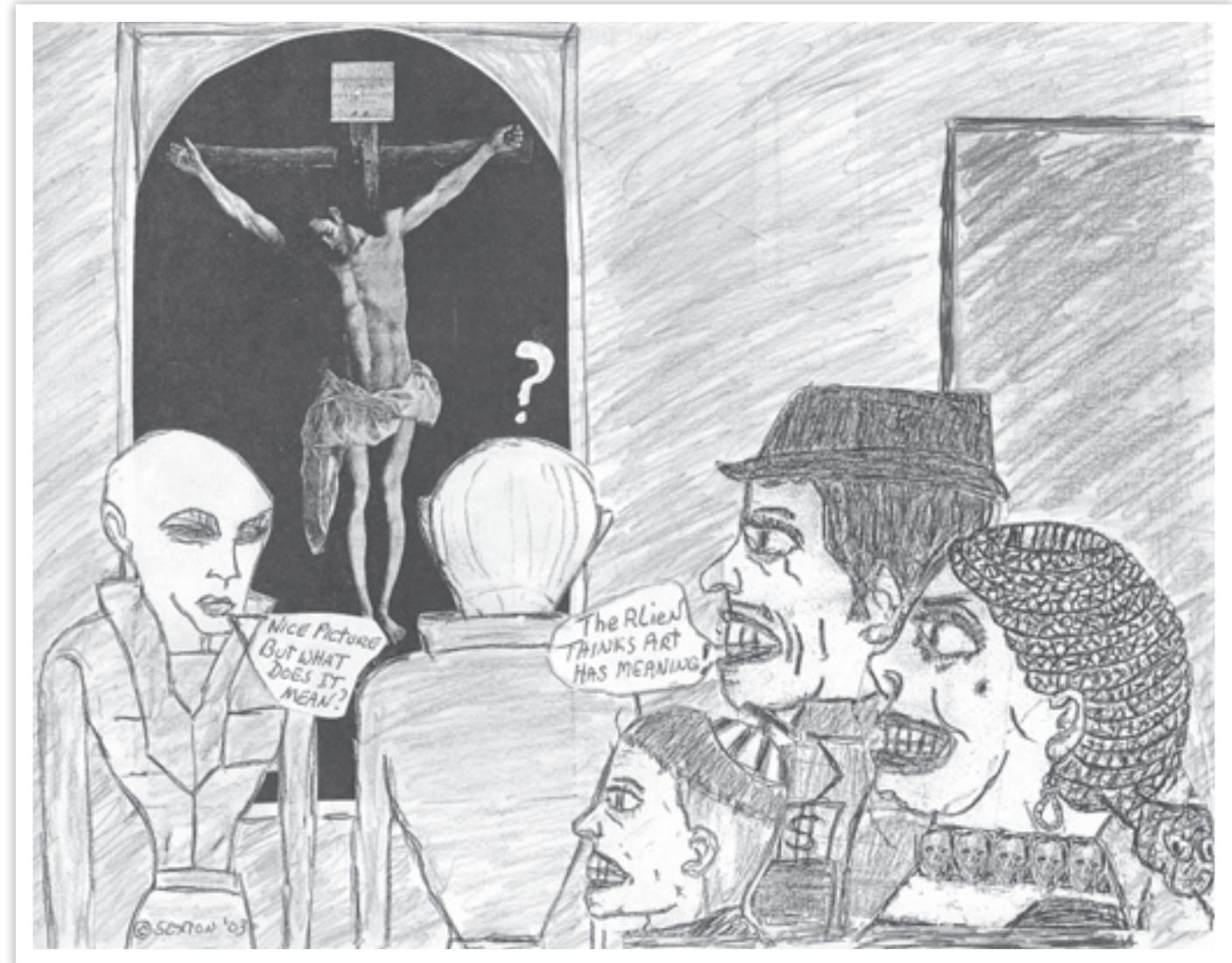
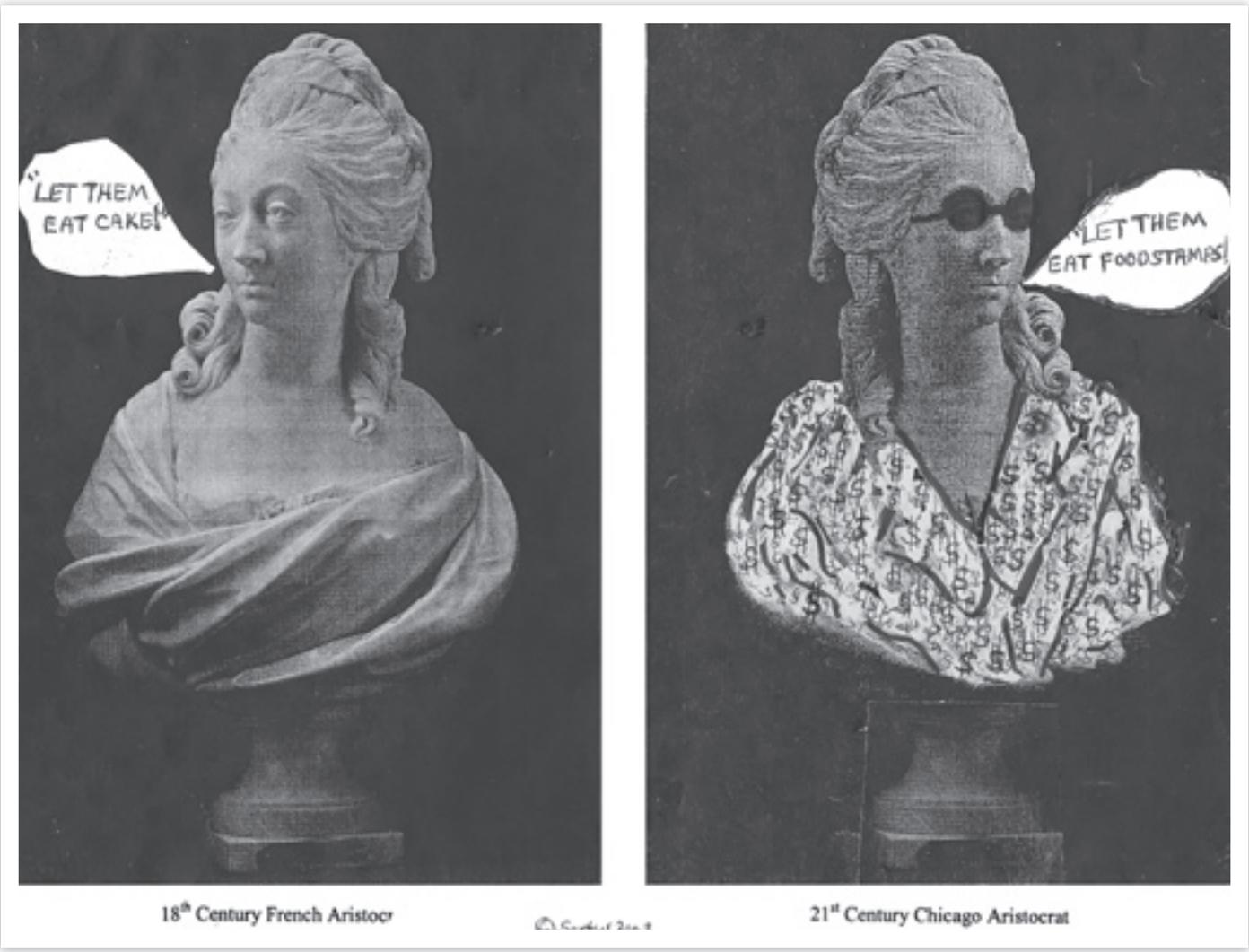
Fate, I ruminant. What you elect? What you reject? Seems to always be something you don't expect. Unless you're rich. Otherwise you kind of get tossed around, go with the flow. I look around the blue-collar bar, nurse my drink, contemplate my poem. Having cleaned up the apartment, I'm out for a night-cap, giving the day a recap. Maybe it's better to black out than be? I brood. Better the bottom of the bottle than reality. Why paint, why write? War, politicians, poverty. Half the guys in here have been laid off with the recession. More will be. Wall Street run amuck, corporate greed. Lavish parties, exploited labor, exploited artists, Creepy Crawly.

"Cubicle people live in corporate cells." I toast life's wishing wells. "Artists live in fairy tales. We all die in lullabies. Pleasant dreams and goodnight."











GLOBAL MOURNING

That moment in the night when the echoes and apparitions of the tenement's evicted-from-life former residents, begin to haunt the tumbledown premises, amidst the clanging of old pipes, the creaking walls and groaning staircases, the hiss of radiators, with their moans and spectral appearances, is my cue to grab my coat and get my hat and hole up in one of the neighborhood's booze and blues rattraps, until I can numb myself from their cries and sleep while the bedbugs bite.

I know they all need closure from their victimization by fate and that they will never rest in peace until they get it off their chests and attain that catharsis. But I've heard their stories before, seen them on TV, read about them in history: slum landlords, usury, discrimination, exploitation, tyrants, death camps, ethnic cleansing, aristocrats, bureaucrats, slavery, iron fists, holocausts – every misery one can imagine involving man's inhumanity to man. I see the sequels of their tragic destinies all around me in the misery and poverty I move through every day. Besides I have my own sorry story to relate, which I'm sure I'll do when my hard-luck lot is through and I clatter around in my chains. You only live once. There's no second chance. When you never got your due wailing through eternity is all that's left for you.

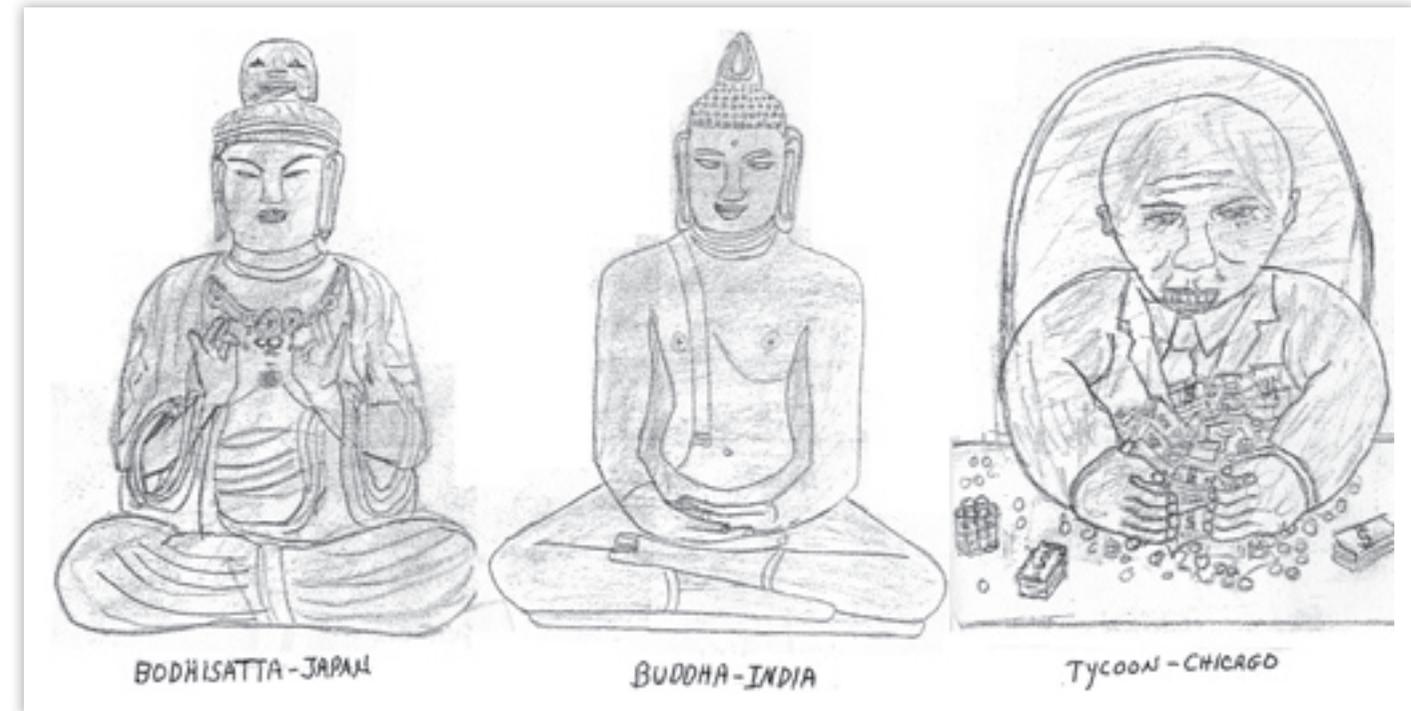
I developed a theory nursing my nightly drinks in the ghetto gin mills, surrounded by lost souls almost as dead as the ones I fled. Tenements topple, ghettos crumble, civilizations fall to ruins – all of them replaced by new habitats that will also be erased. What

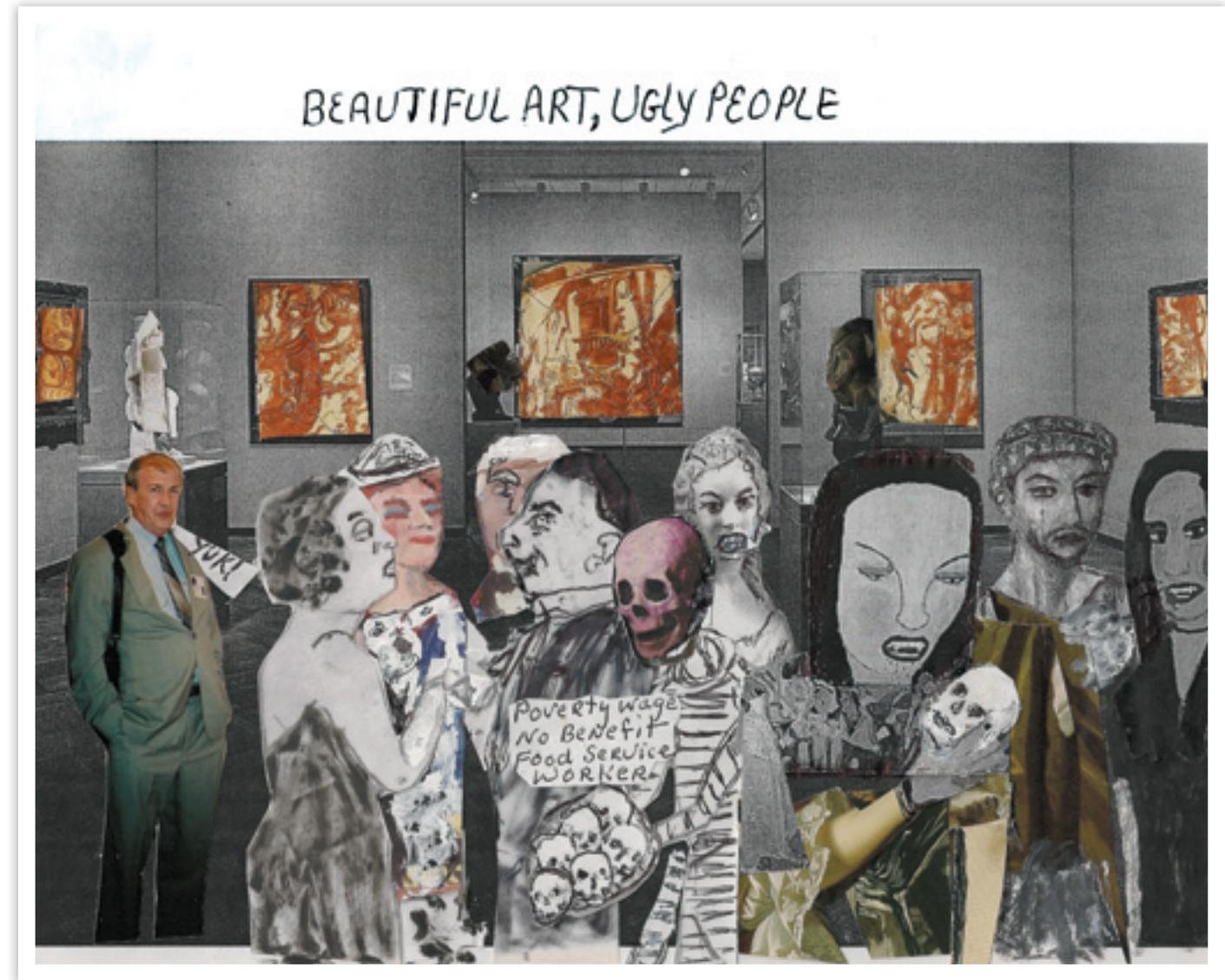
do the ghosts haunt then? I think they roam the wind,
 form a civilization of howling phantoms, cause
 hurricanes, tidal waves, change the climate, melt the
 ice caps. I believe everything they say about carbon
 emissions, toxic waste, air and water pollution,
 all greed and gluttony and abuse propelling us toward
 the end of the world. But I think the haunts contribute
 as well with their tales of living hell.

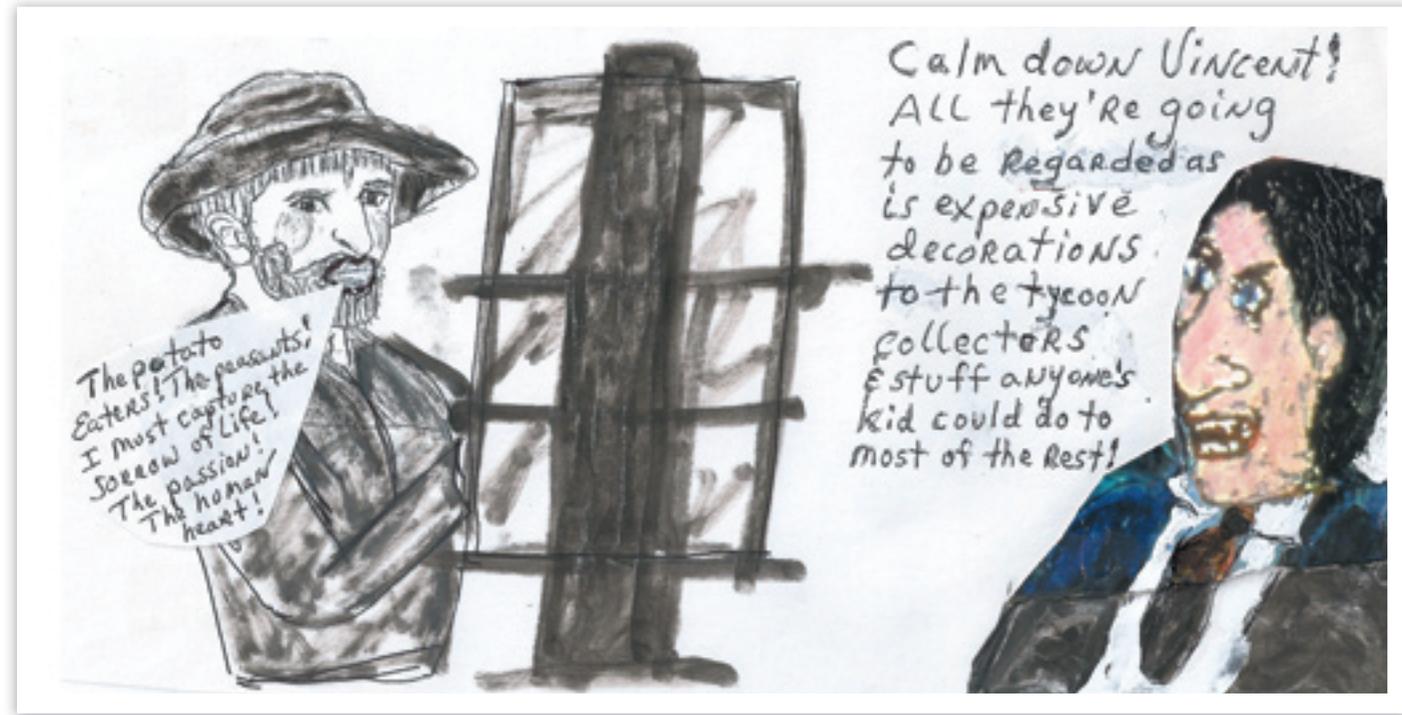


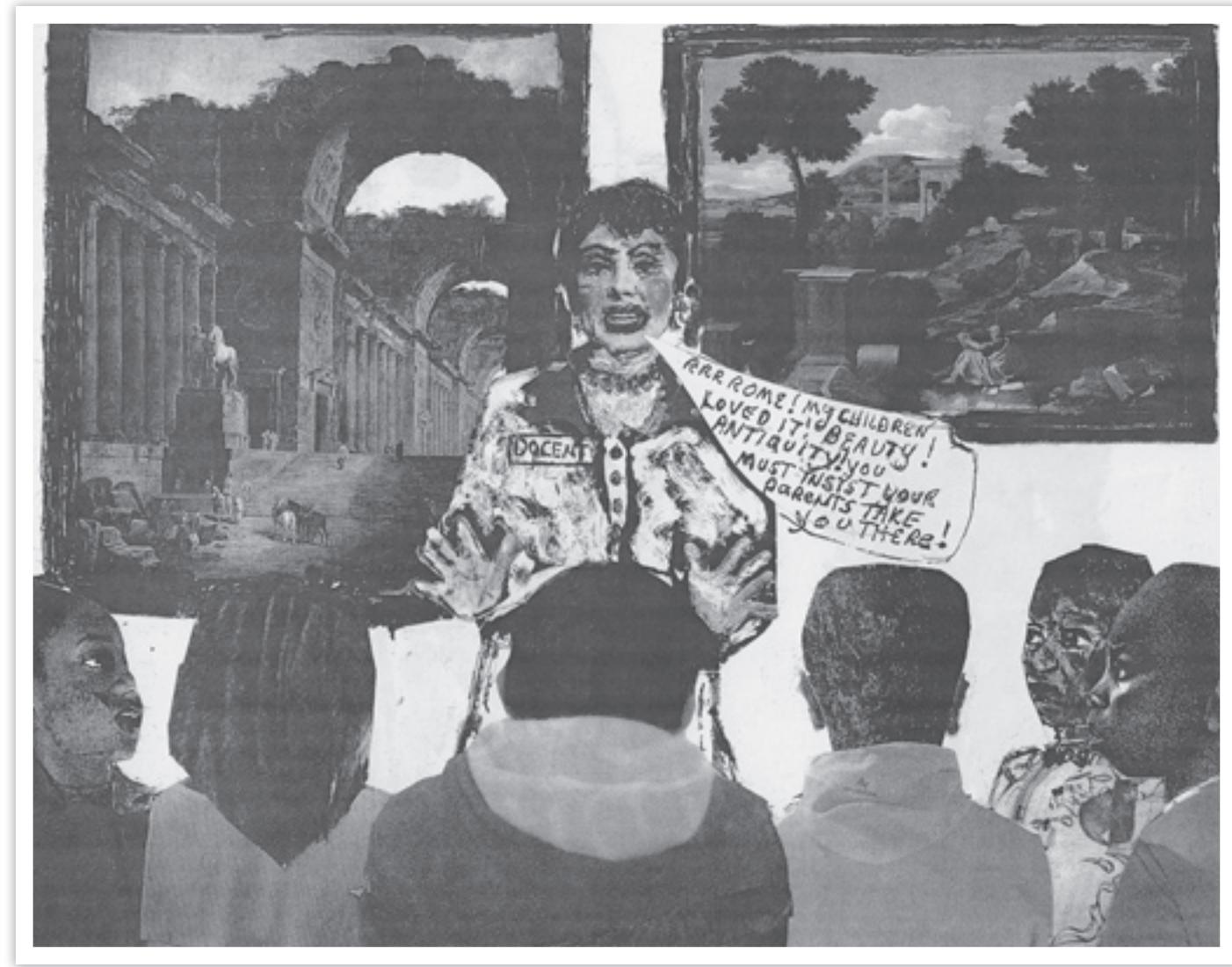
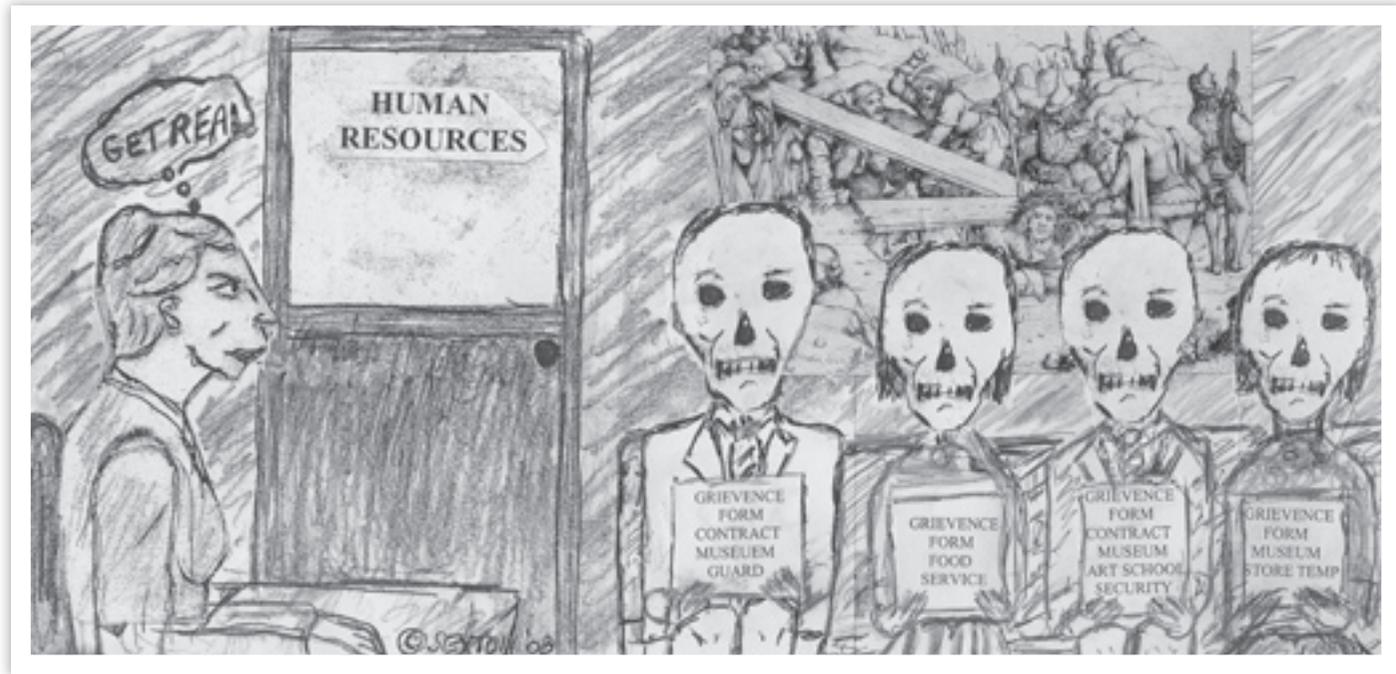
JUNKYARD DREAMS

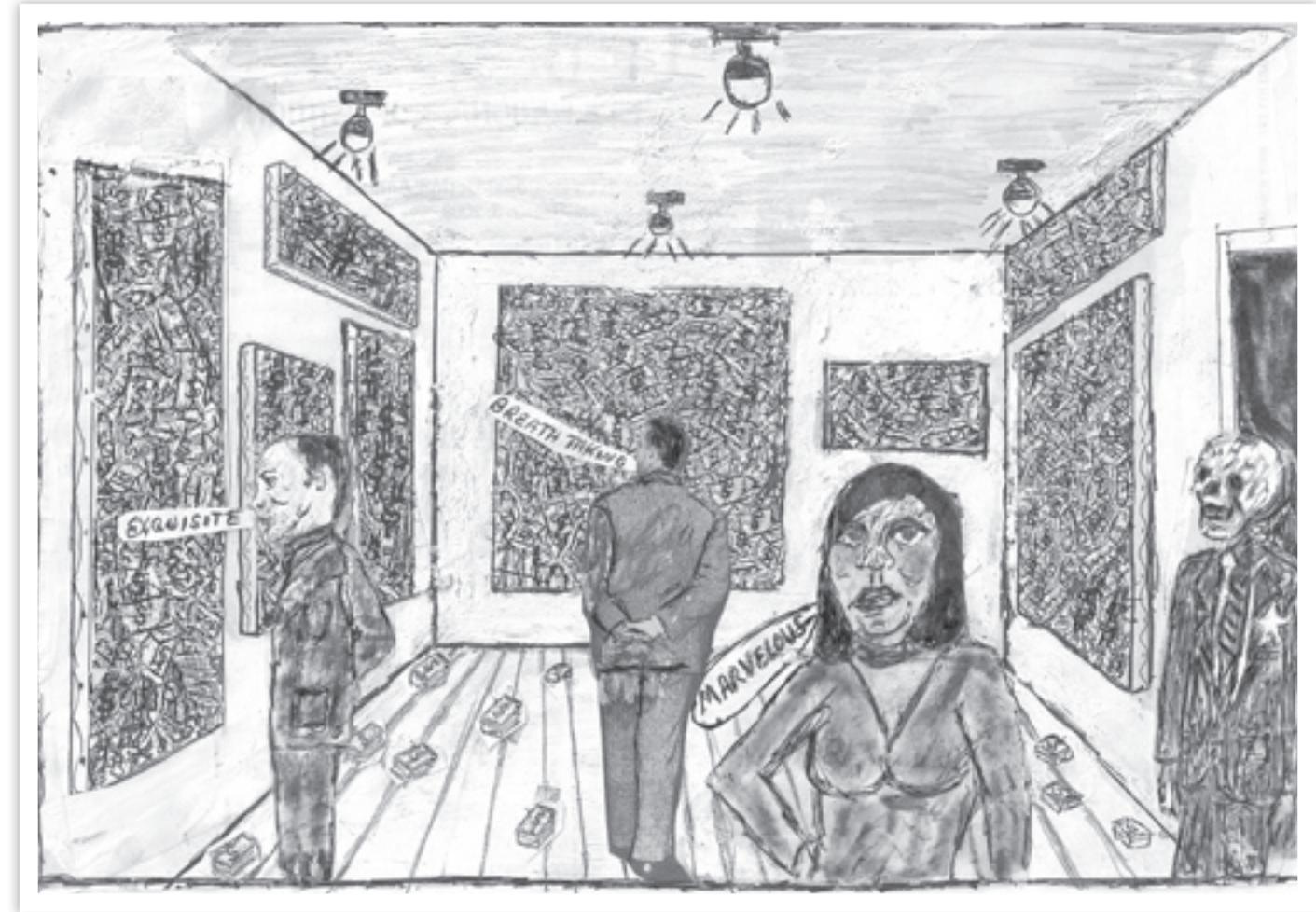
all piled in a heap
 and rusting amidst
 the acid rains
 and the tangled weeds
 of poverty,
 where butterflies
 and sunny skies
 and star-lit nights
 seldom come
 to anyone.



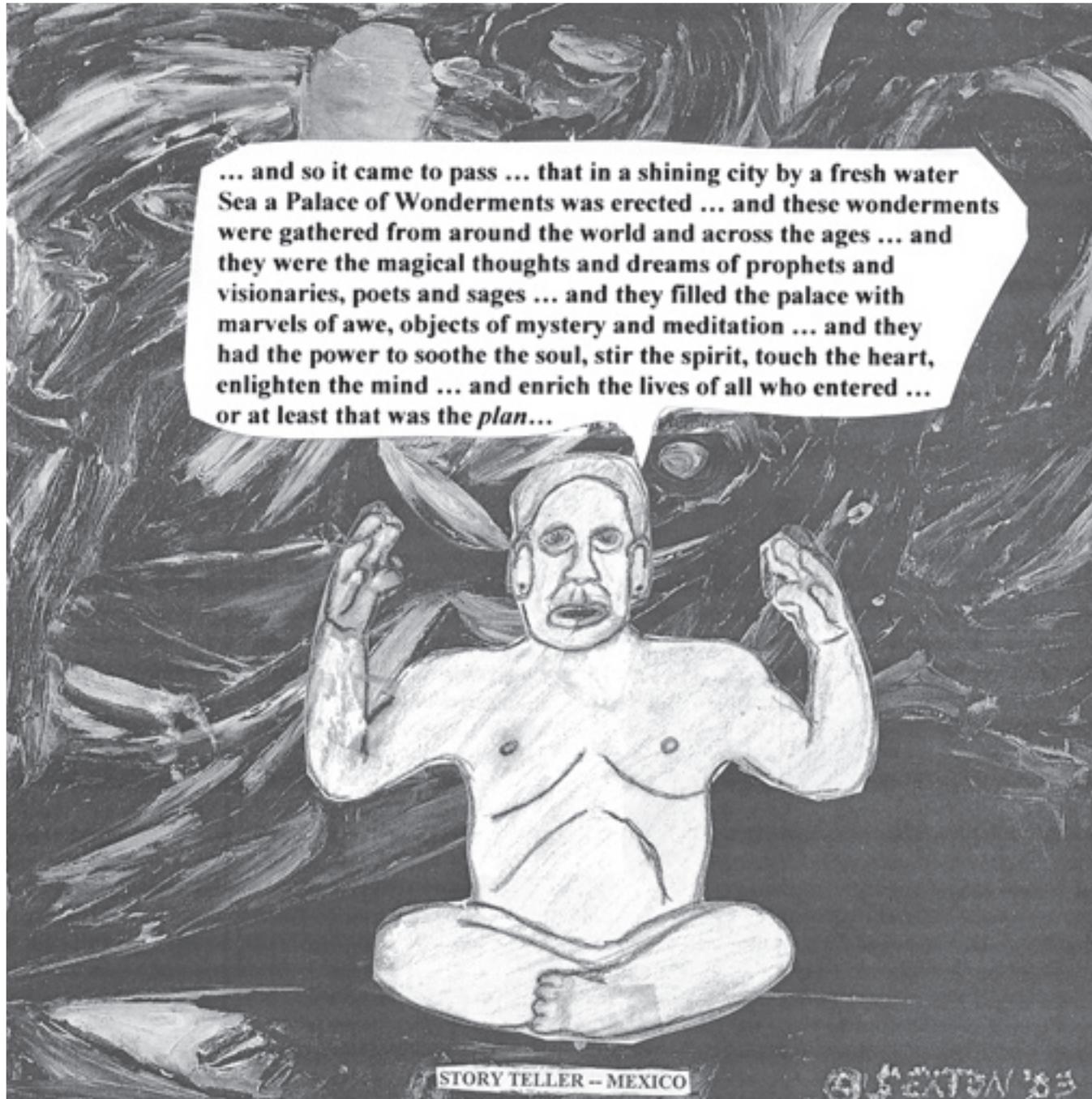












SOME PEOPLE

Death grins confront Goodie as she enters the freezing lobby, shivering in her paper-thin, museum-security uniform, while sensors sound alarms around the marble ghosts of Greek and Roman gods.

“Goodie to Control.”

Goodie chatters into her hand radio.

“Go for Control Goodie.”

“Why is Satan smiling in my face all over the place? You best get some broom boy over here to knock these devils down, and that squawk you bout’ to be pickin’ up ain’t no holdup so don’t send no patrol guard around! It’s just the Hawk some nightshift fool let in messin’ with the alarms again.”

Danged fools! Goodie grumbles as she looks around the screaming room. The glass wall of windowed doors is a glaze of ice, showing silhouettes of stiletto-death from icicles dangling across the entrance ledge. *That night shift ain’t worth spit!* Goodie all but spits herself. *Must of left them doors wide open again when they delivered the flowers for that Million Dollar Donor wing-ding.*

Goodie digs into the lobby cabinets, huffing and puffing and cursing to herself as she looks at the clock and pulls out piles of flyers, art cards, schedules, museum maps, pencils, pads of paper, for the school groups so they can take notes on the art lectures she could never understand, hurrying to arrange them in uniform stacks along the long, narrow information desk, pain shooting down her stiffened back.

“Goodie to Control. Would you kindly call the docents lounge and remind the ladies school groups comin’ soon?”

“Ten-four Goodie. Will do.”

Danged docents! Goodie ruminates. *Taking they own sweet time every day sippin’ coffee while I runs around and gets stuck helpin’ them busloads of kids like I ain’t got my own job!*

The sensor wails suddenly stop, and with the silence Goodie hears someone banging on a foggy plate-glass door. *Good god!* Goodie shuffles from the desk to the podium and grabs her ring of keys. *Museum don't open for another hour! Says so right on the sign, ceptin' for school groups, can't some people read!*

"I'm coming!" Goodie shouts, as she shuffles across the room. "Hold on!" But the frosted phantom keeps banging and hollering and beating on the hazed, back door.

"Praise the Lord!" An angry woman, bundled in furs, bustles past Goodie and glares at her. "You finally let me in! It seems some people are a little pokey around here!"

"Maybe some people got arthritis!" Goodie flares.

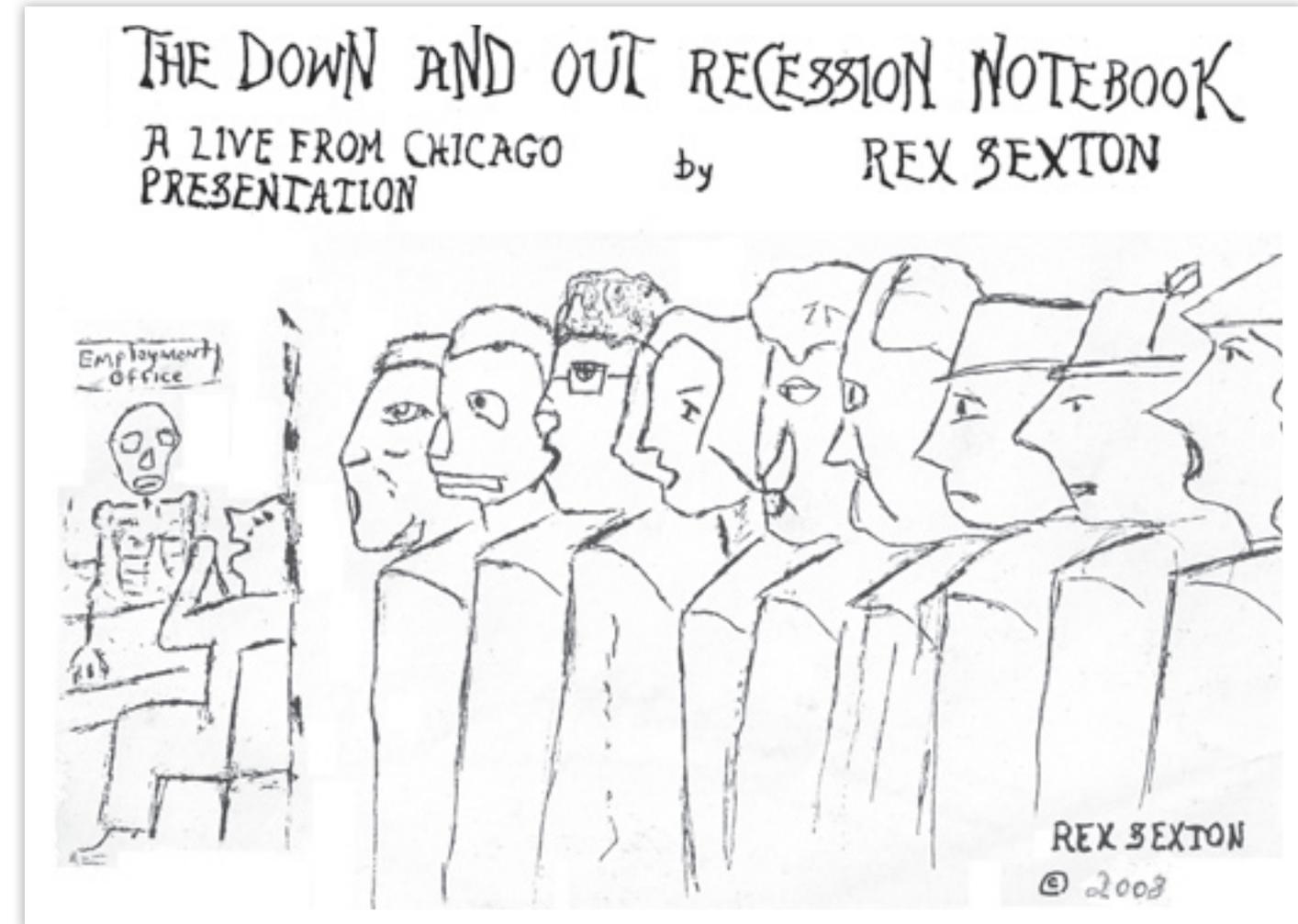
"Then maybe some people should retire!"

"Maybe some people can't!"

"Then maybe some people should be made to! I'm here for the donors' breakfast, which some people should have at least heard about, even if some people can't read. Don't turn your back on me!"

"Some people got to work, sweetie. That breakfast ain't for an hour. They be settin' up the coffee soon downstairs. Sweet rolls too. Which *some* people could use."

"Sweetie?' *SWEETIE!* Some people are obnoxious! Some people are rude! Some people don't belong in a museum!"



ON MY WATCH

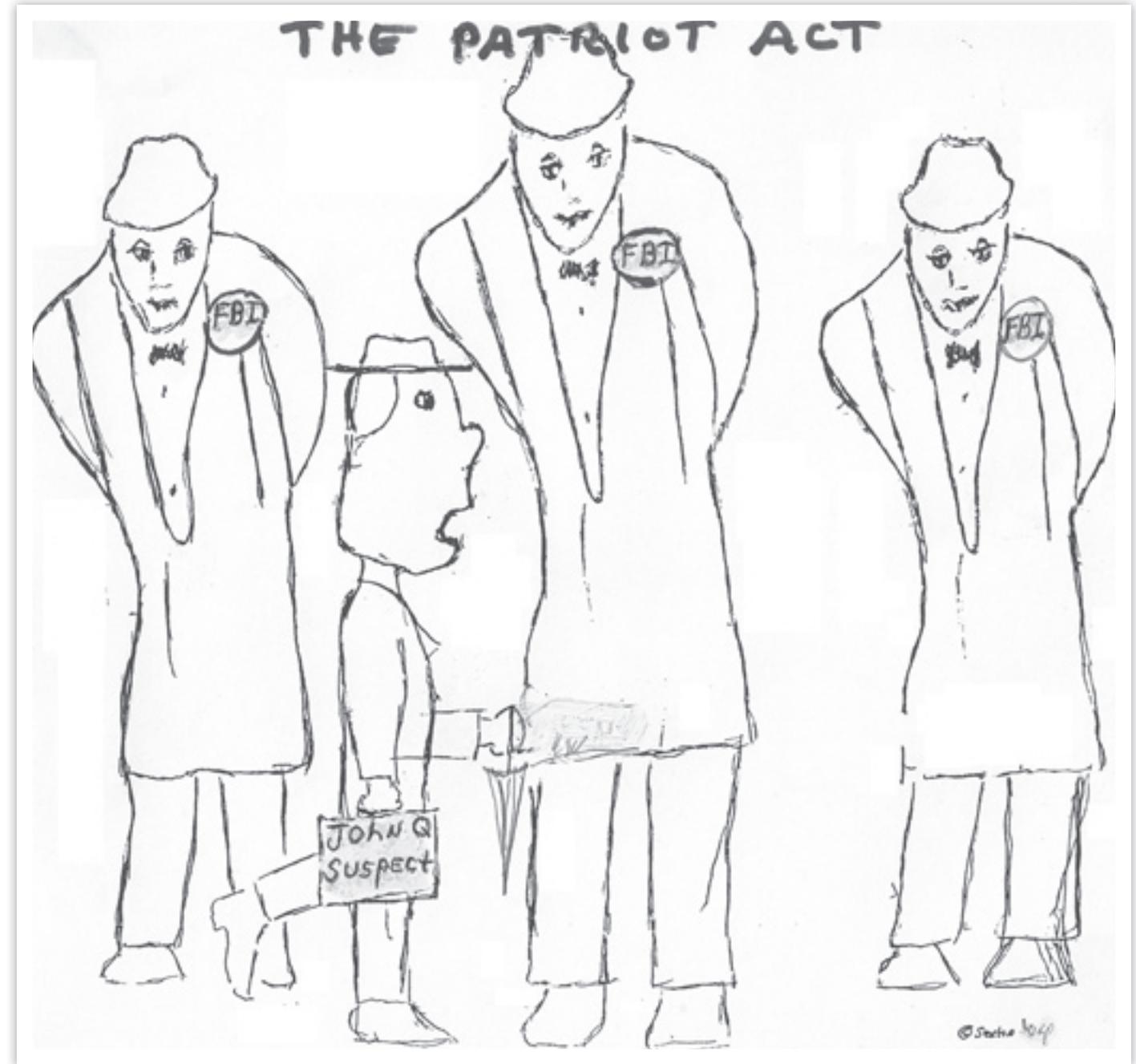
All the clocks ran out of time,
 Not a street has a sign,
 No one here knows his name
 It's insane, it's insane

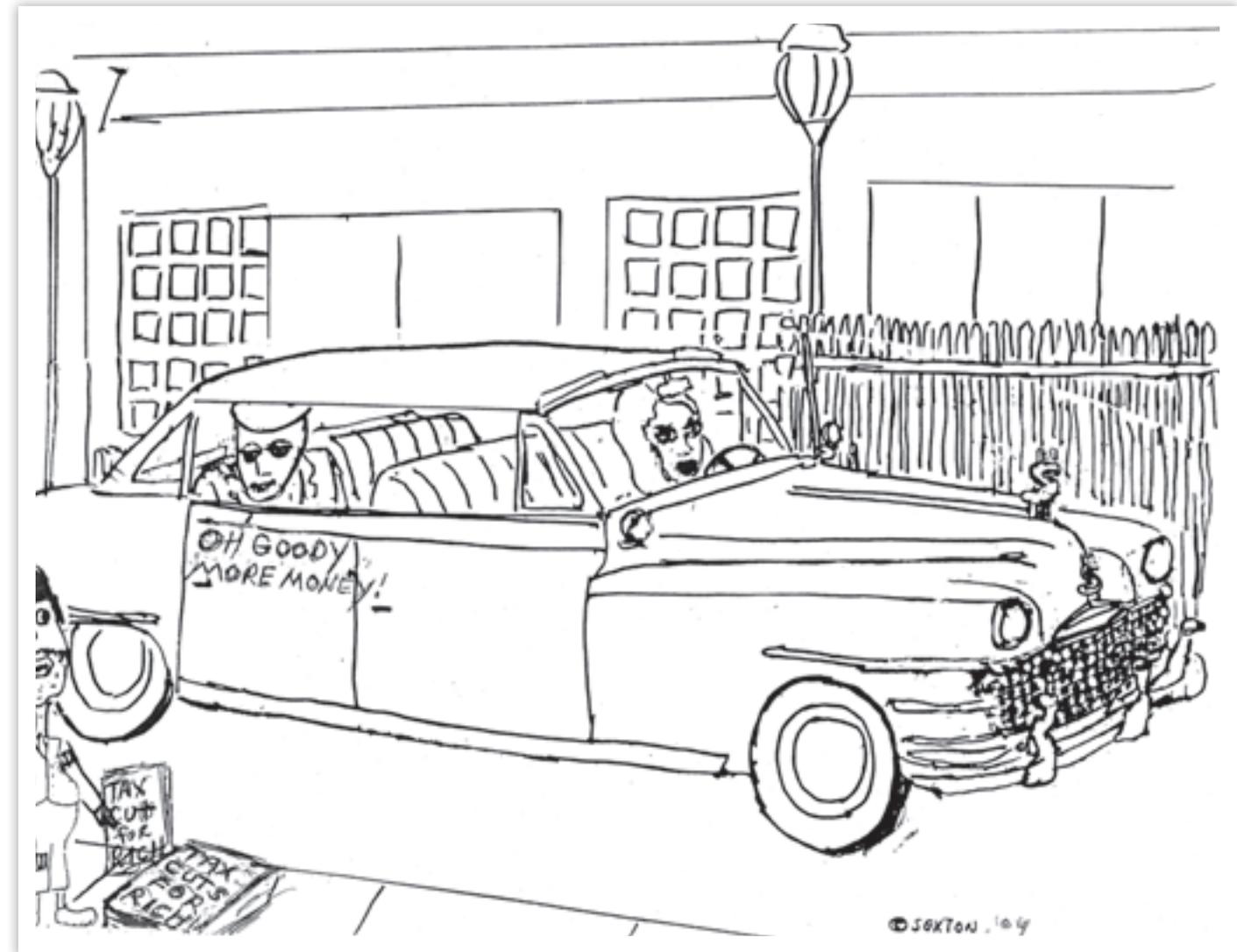


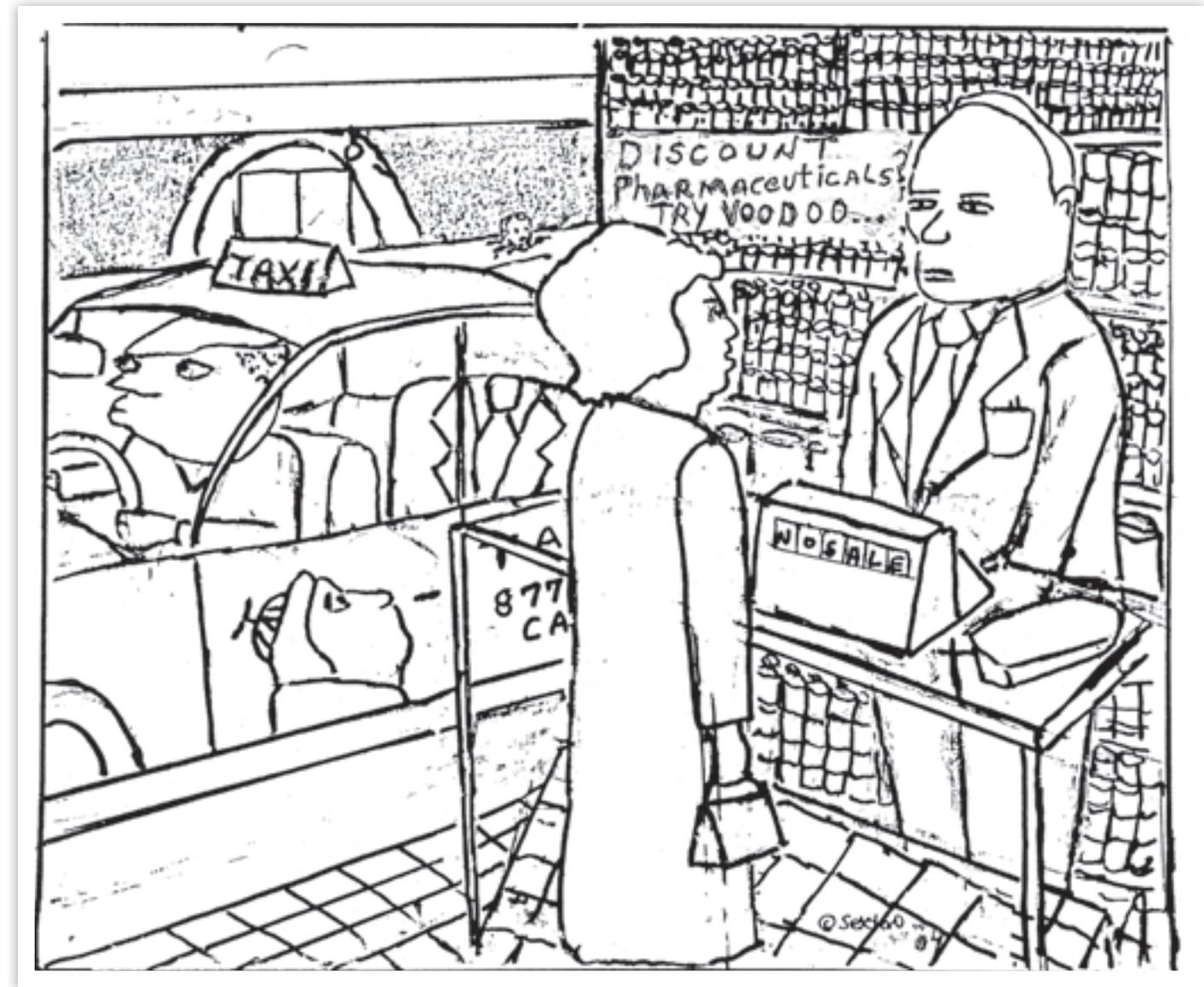
The sun and the moon
 and the stars don't shine
 There's no song that has a rhyme
 There's no light, there's no day
 It's insane, it's insane

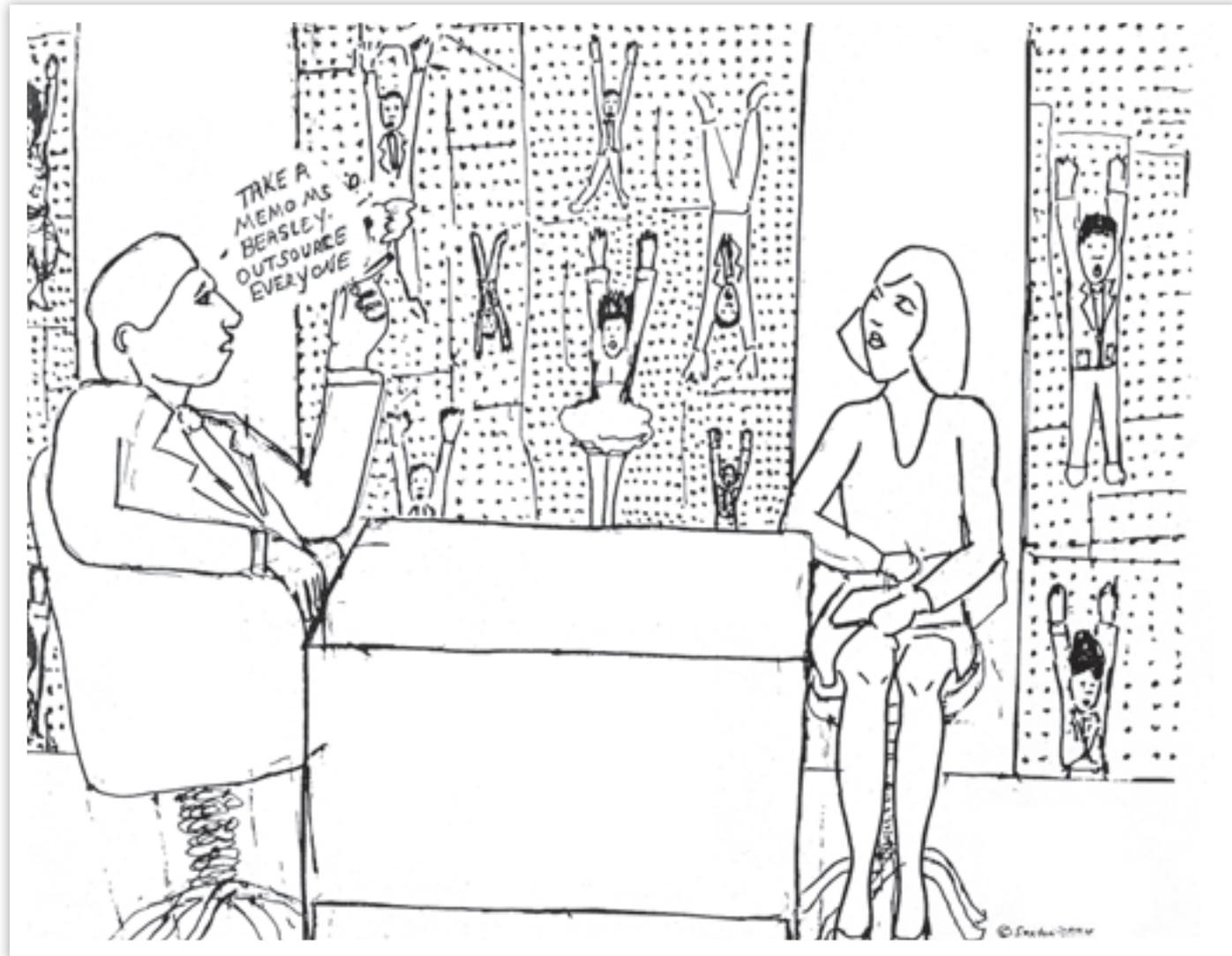


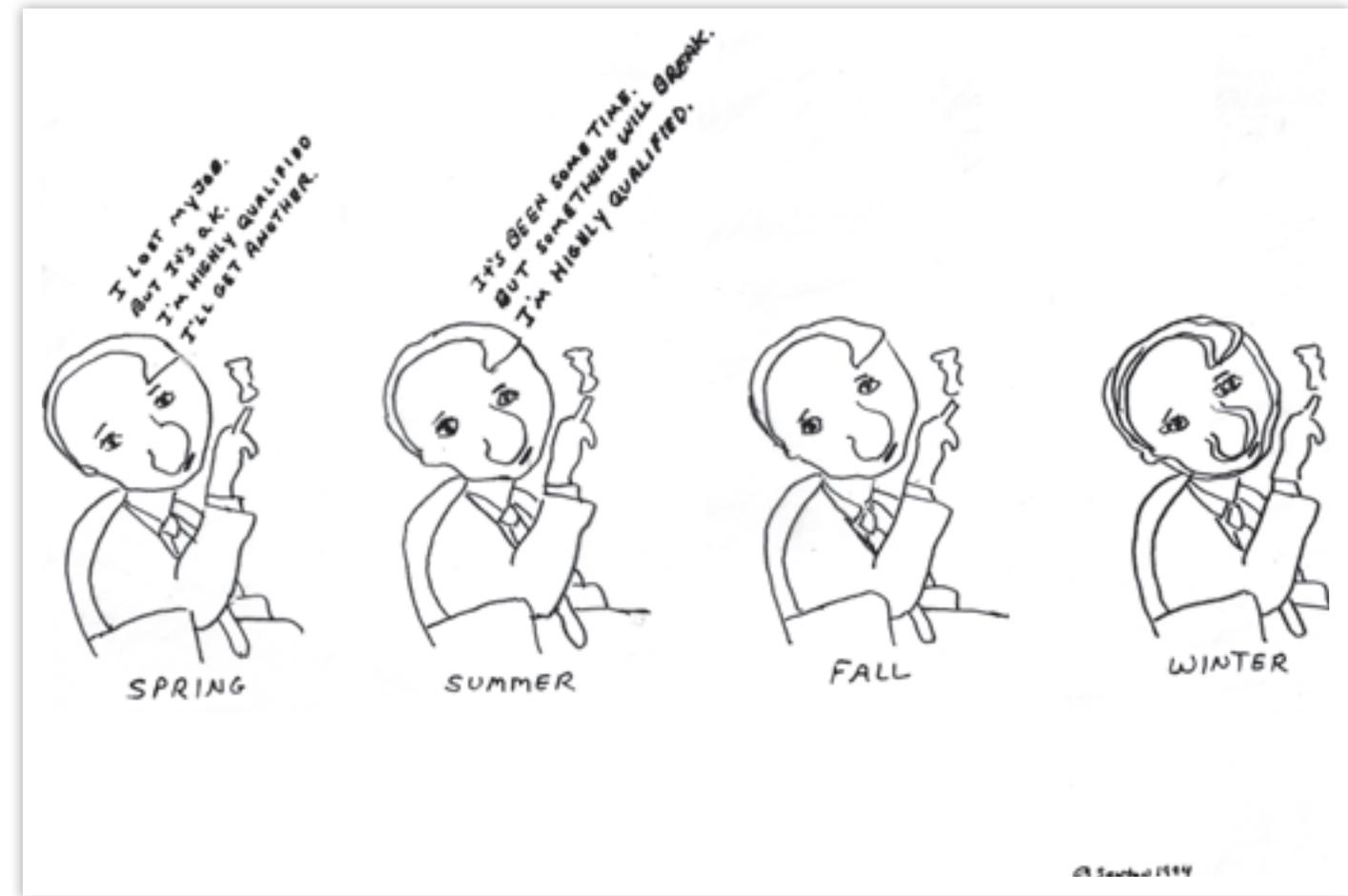
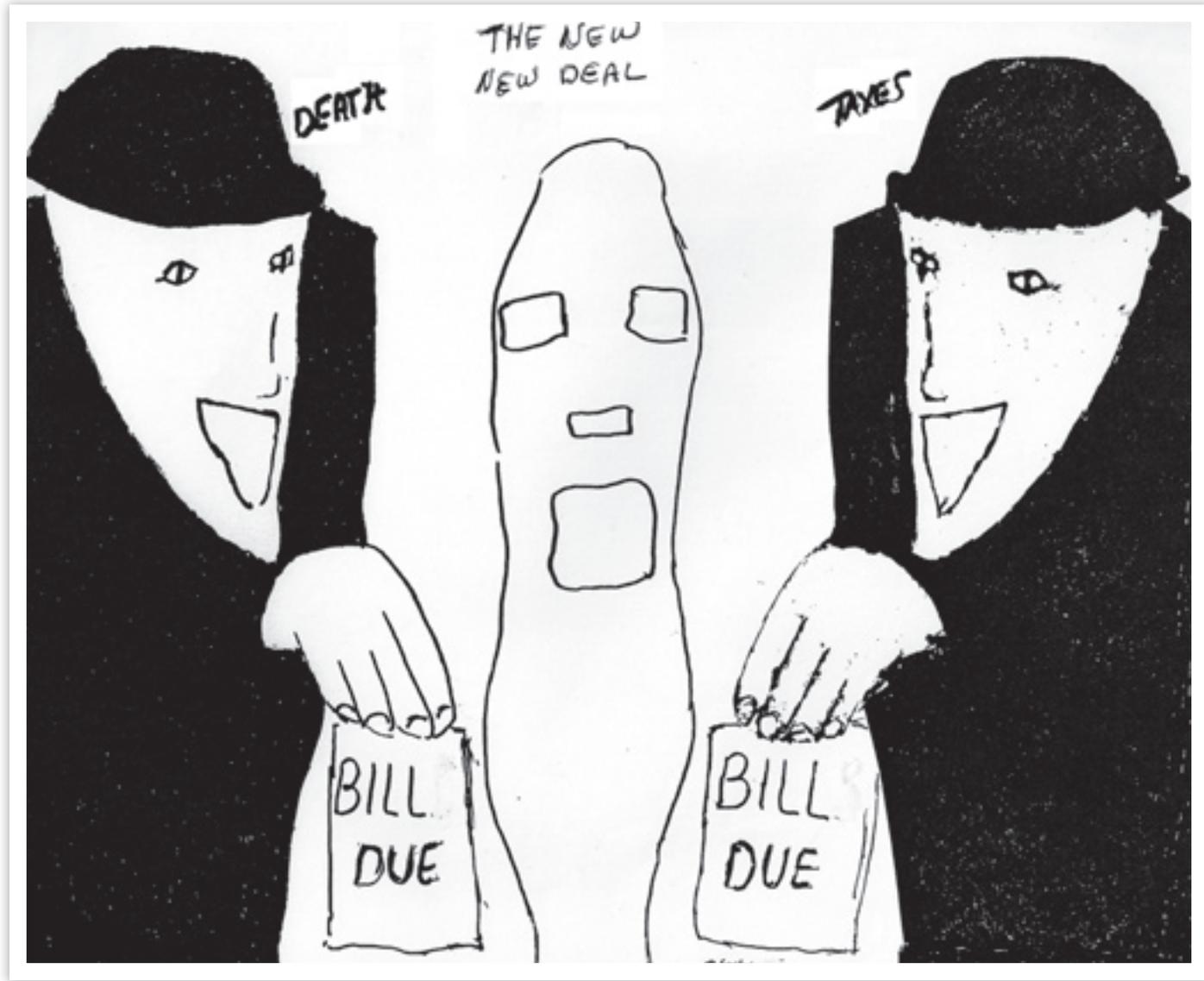
THE GREAT AMERICAN ROLLER COASTER RIDE

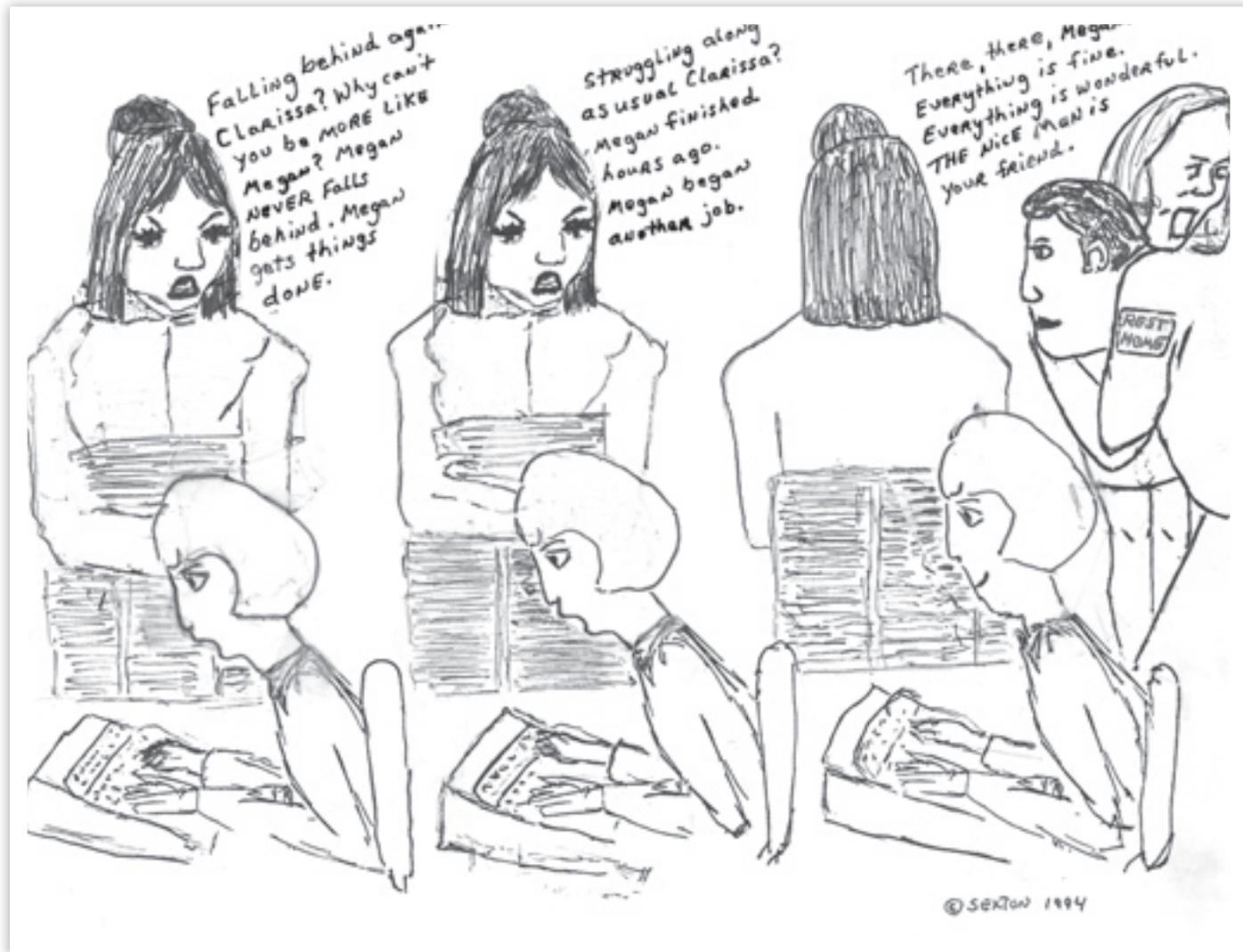




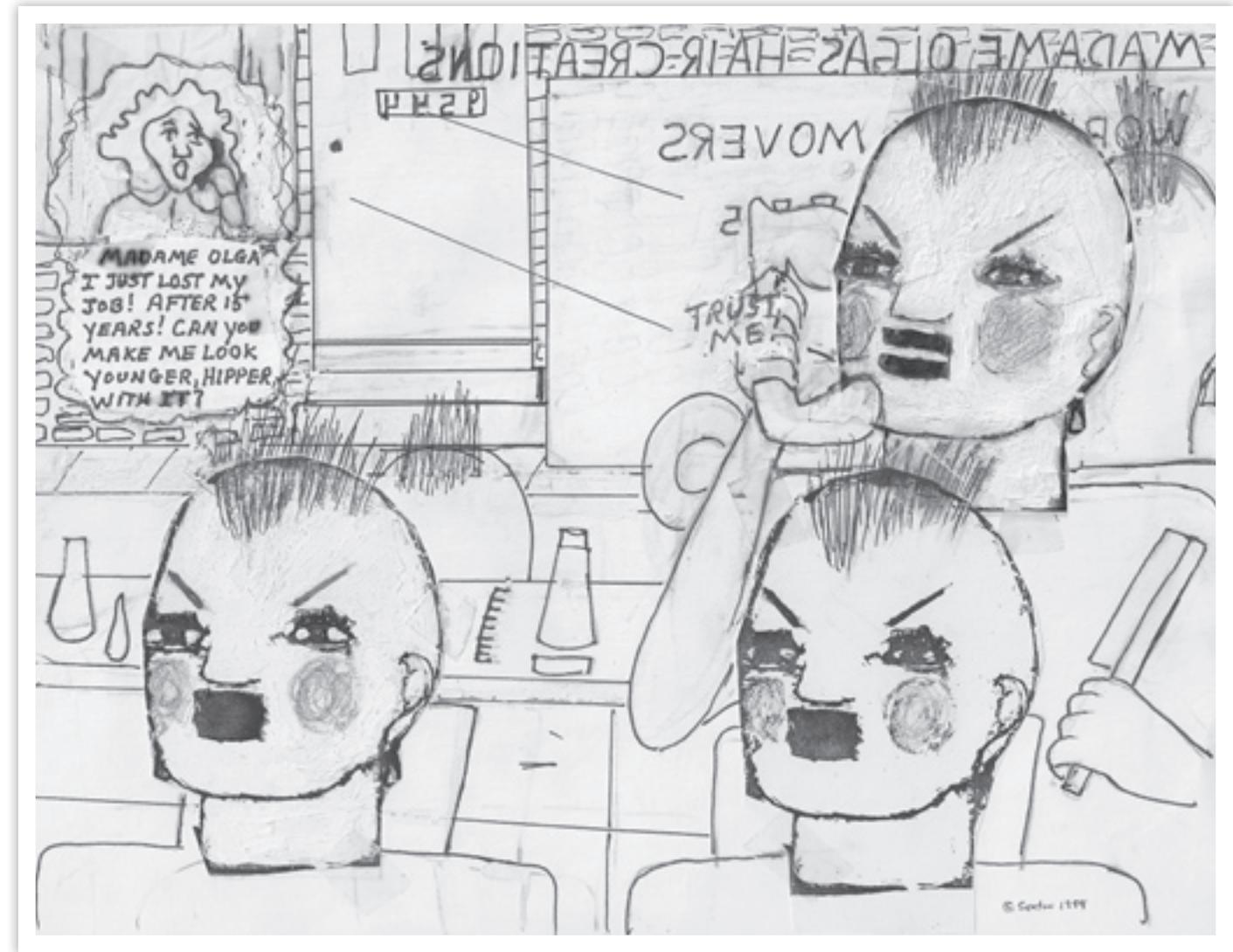


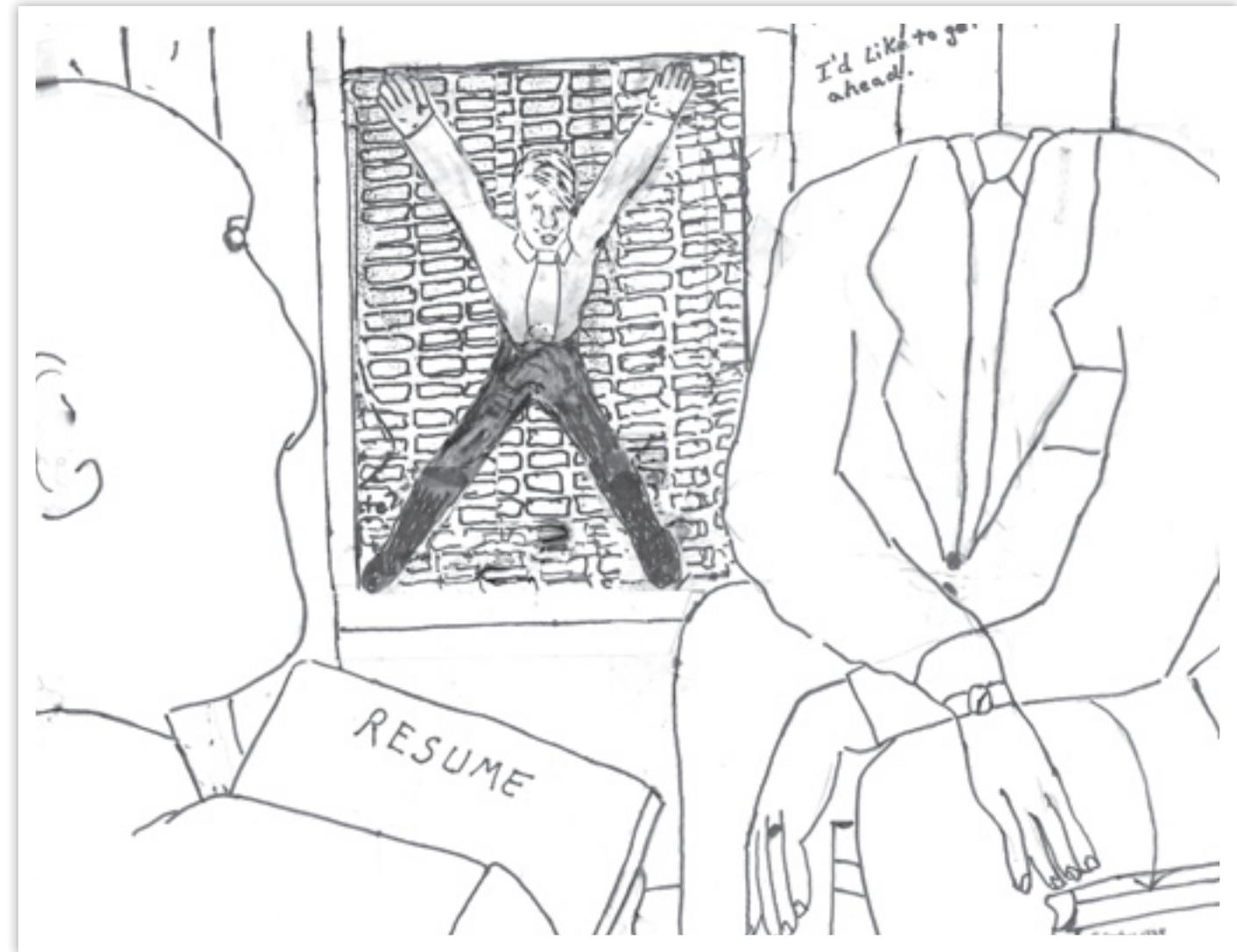
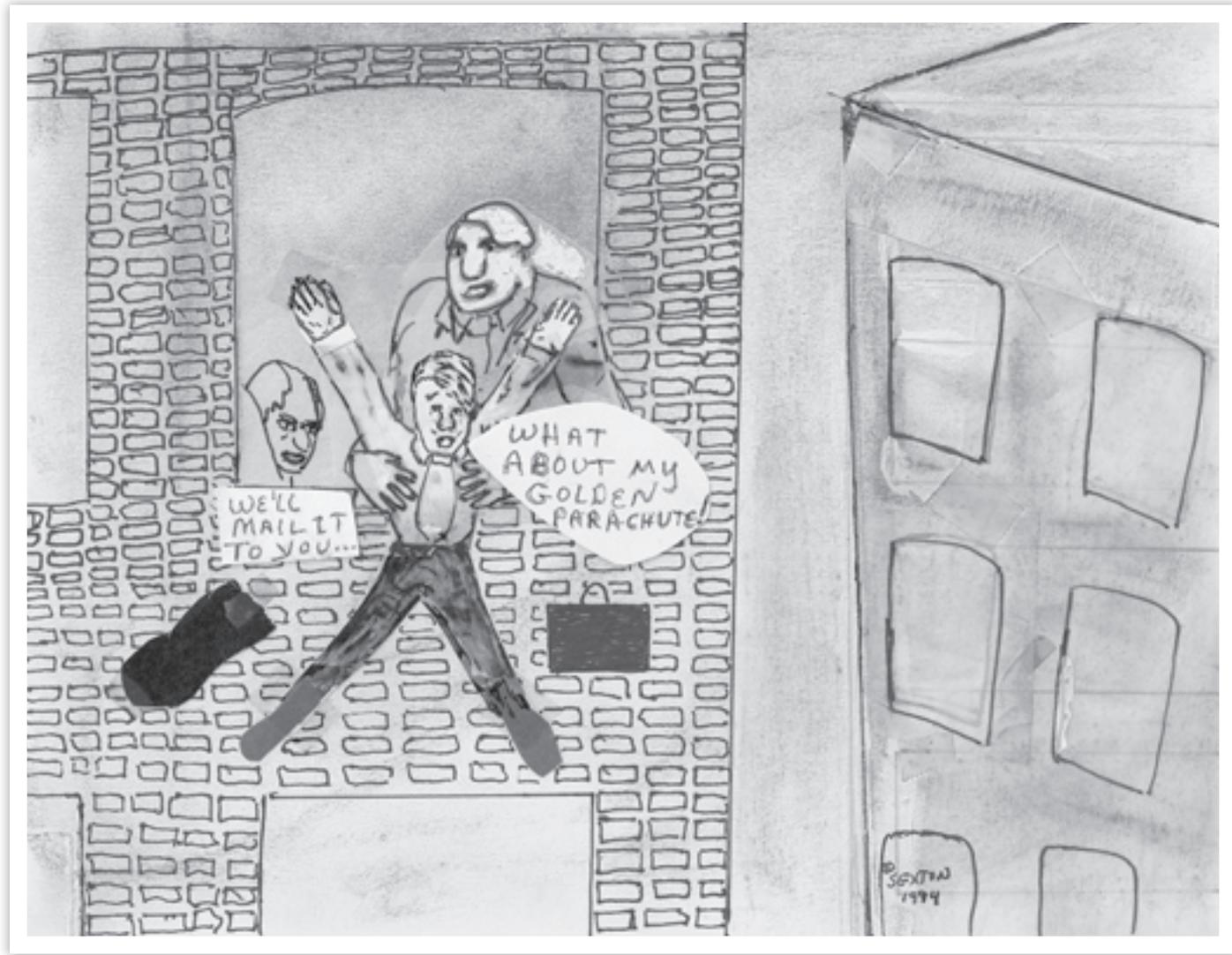


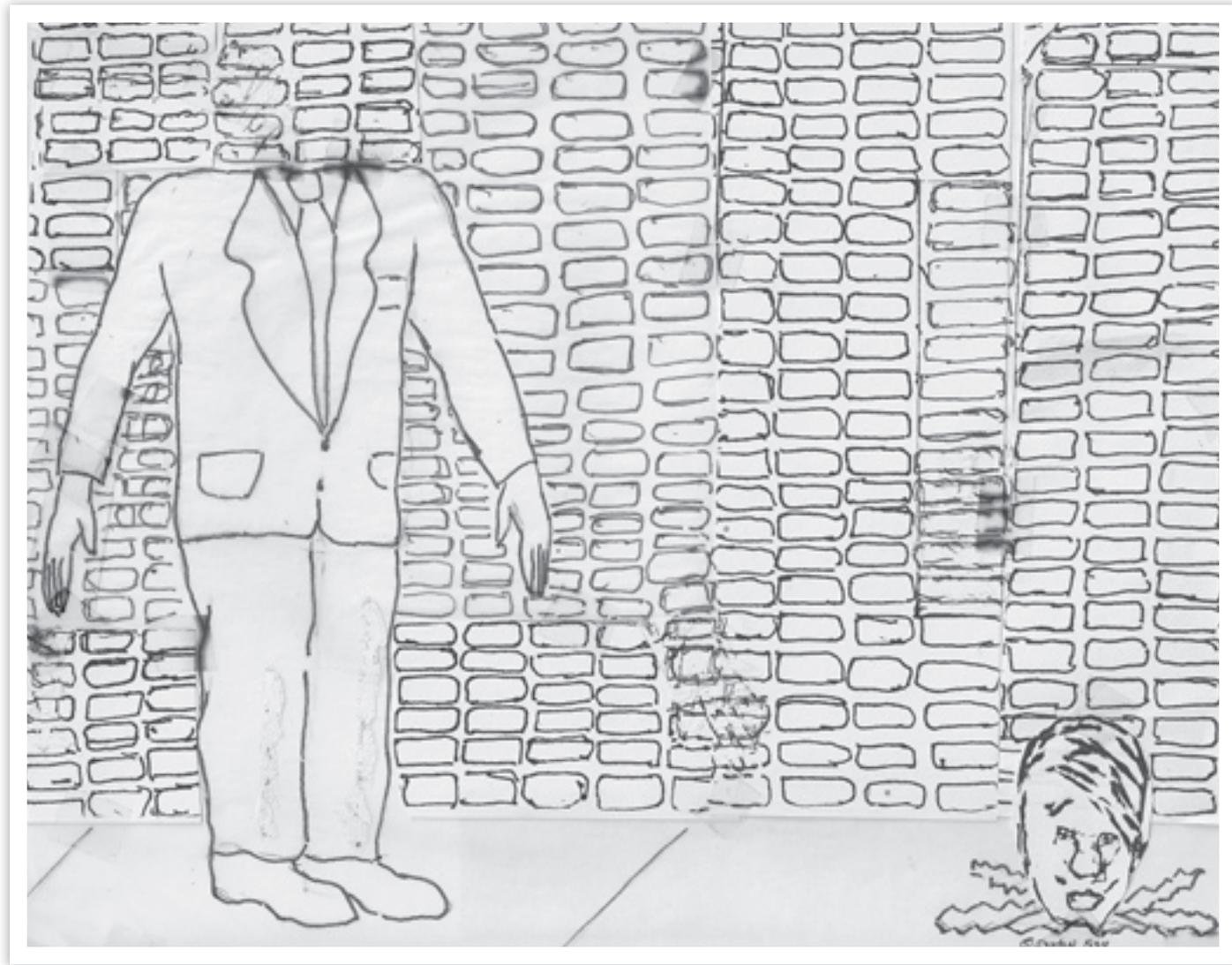


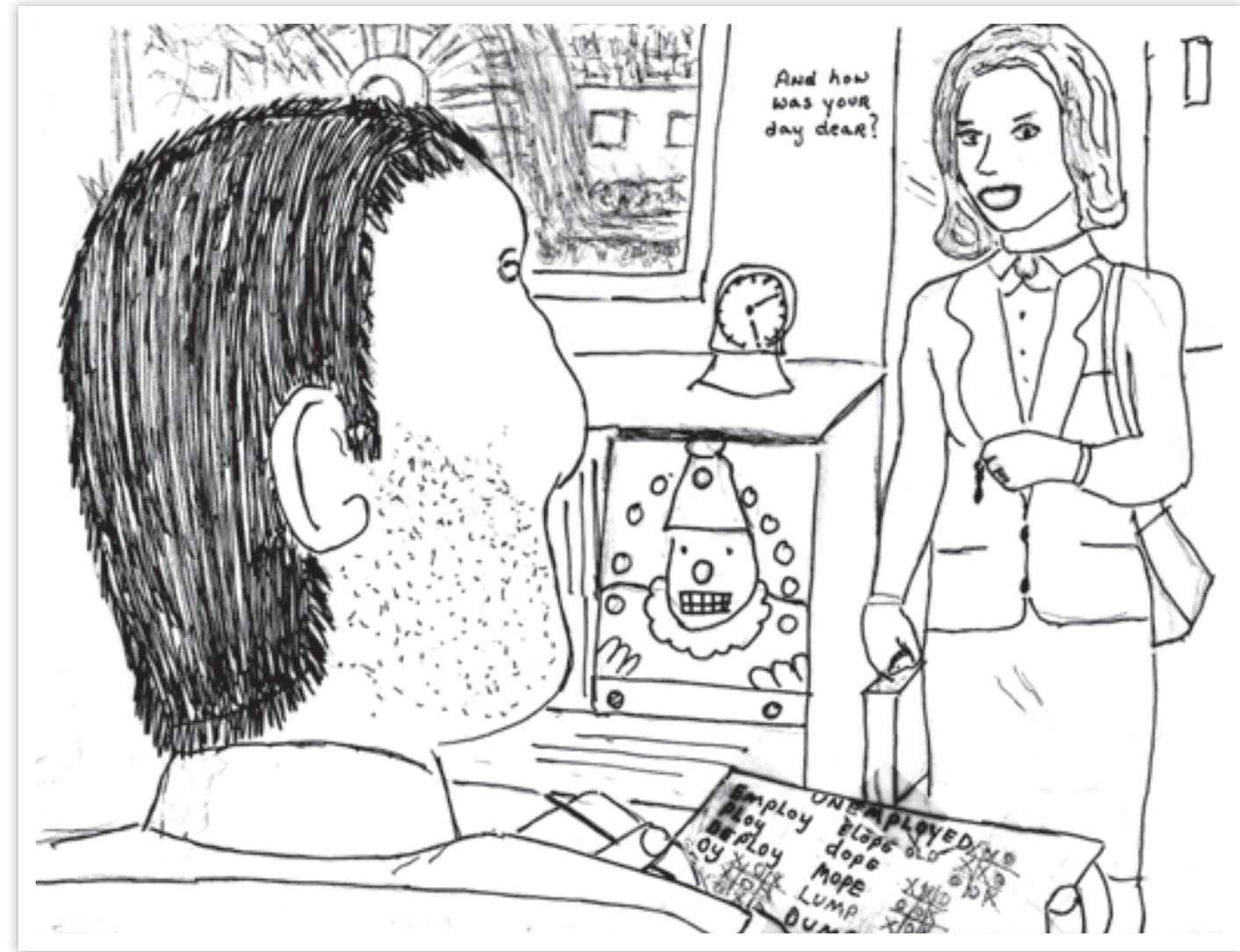


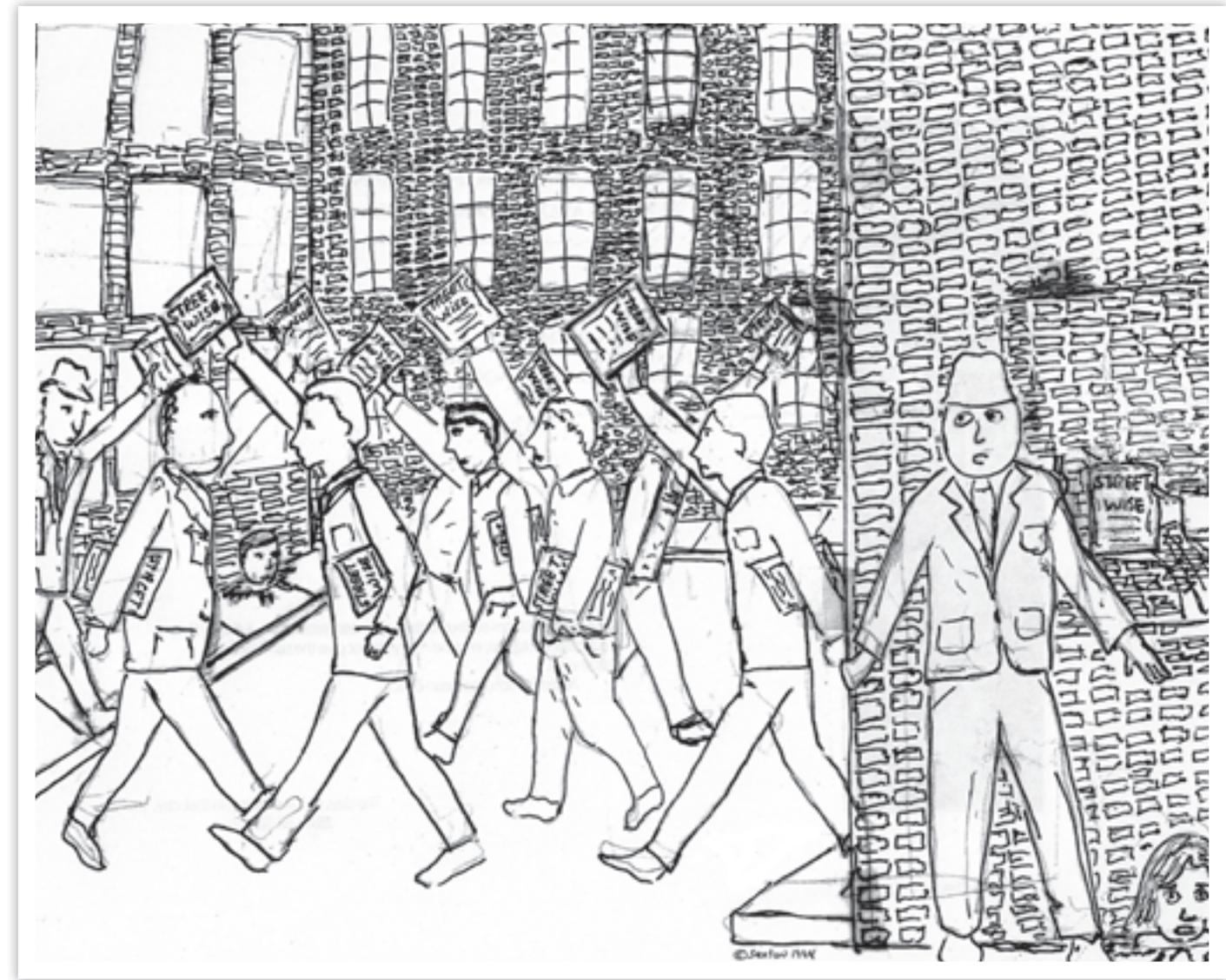


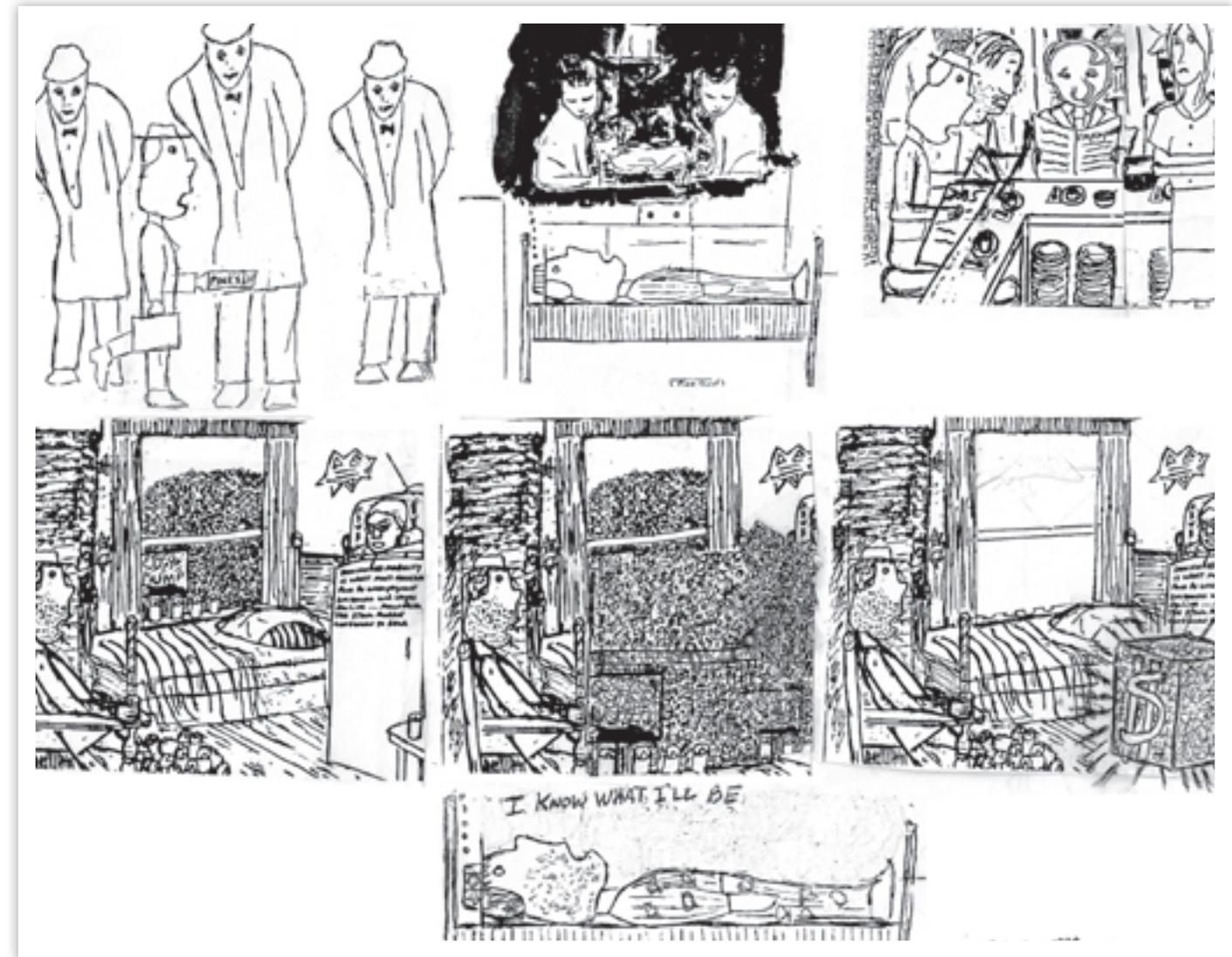
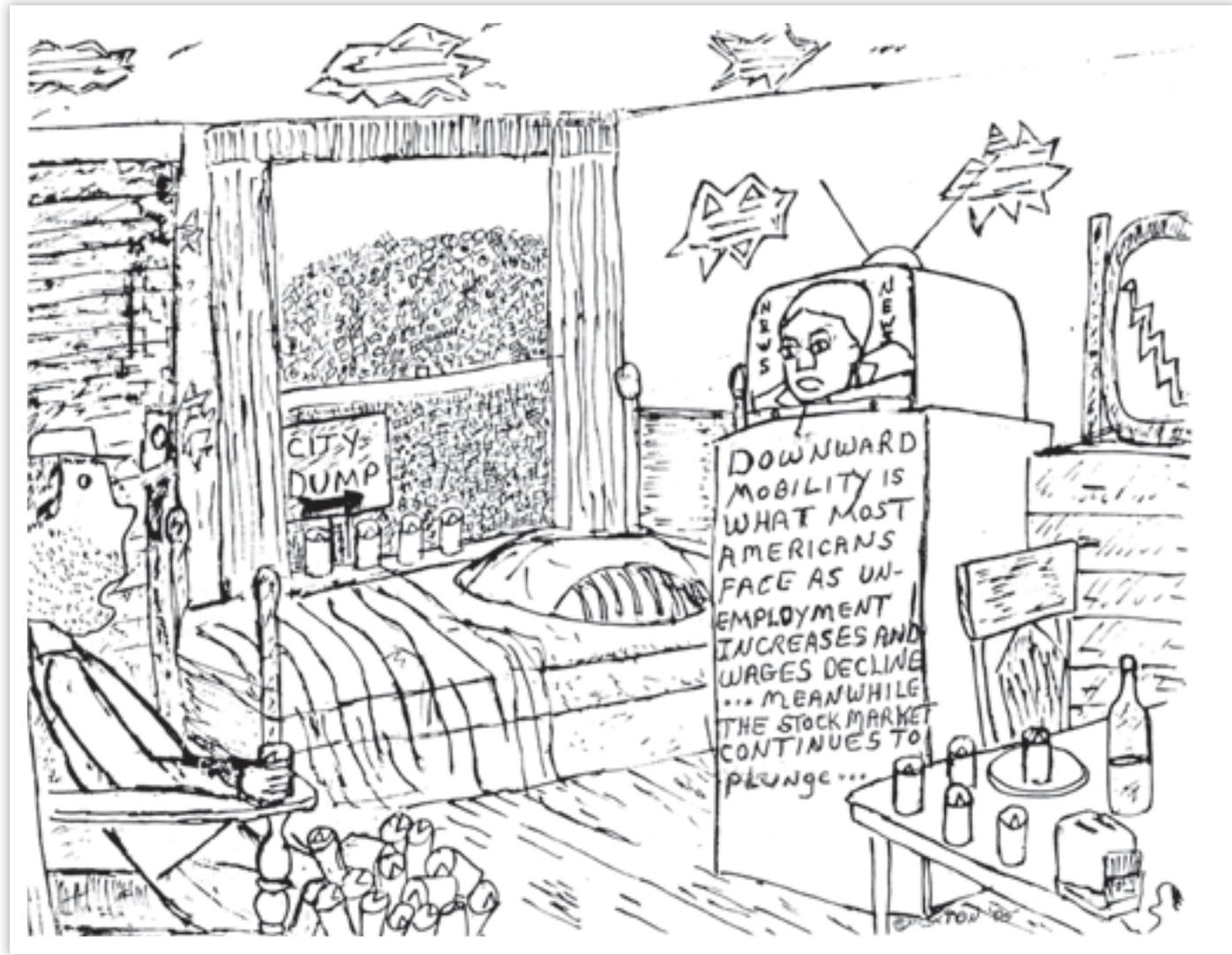














CHEERS

Dark, rocky days in dead zones (like a dream but not)
where nowhere is everywhere and nothing is anything
and unknown hours fade to black.

“Did you ever hear yourself talking to yourself in
a language you don’t understand?”

The alley man stares at me starkly gripping a Sterno can.
I shadow through the snowfall, past doors which have no
numbers, down streets which have no names, through
shapes which have no faces, under clocks run out of time,
while wind-whipped shrouds swirl around like the ghosts
of dead men’s dreams.

“Death toll mounts!” A newsy shouts. “More troops killed!”
I buy a paper, use it for a hat. White veils wrap around
me like wreaths, as I bundle down the ghosted streets,
past the small grubby pubs and around toppling ghetto
tenements, along the rows of shops filled with such stuff
that only the poor would want.

I am a veteran of Vietnam, I muse as I march through the
deepening drifts, *name of dog tag minus one.*

At a dead end dive I duck in from the cold.

DEATH TOLL REACHES 4,000.

I scan the headlines as I slump onto a stool.

“Draft,” I tell the barman and drop a fistful of
day labor dollars on the counter.

STOCKS PLUMMET, BANKS FOLD, JOBS LOST

A fairyland of falling snow, whorls in the barroom window.

Crystal castles and other fanciful marvels replace the tumbledown
ghetto, while white, winged spirits dance off the drifts, fly
with the flurries, twirl and pirouette.

4,000 souls, gone where nobody knows.



TEN COUNT

Fist hit days knocking us off our feet
 and no way out, not tomorrow, maybe
 never, rain pounding down sad enough
 to make you weep, all day, every day.
 “Punch out and pull your pay, everyone,
 we’re closing down.”
 With the weighted steps of weariness,
 we walk the stormy streets, looking for
 anyone, anything hiring, bills to pay,
 mouths to feed, hearing the music of
 life’s mystery play in shadowed souls
 and haunted heartbeats as we search
 the city, restlessly.



“FLY WITH THE WINGS I GAVE YOU”

Each day moving hopelessly into the next,
 one dull day followed by another, with
 little to mark them apart and no reason to
 bother: punch the clock, bring home the
 paycheck. Hardly enough to take care
 of business? Thank god that you got it.
 When I was a child, I rode a painted pony
 on a carrousel surrounded by my family
 who waved at me exuberantly as I whirled
 happily toward my glorious destiny.



THE WIZ

Grip, slip,
 dangling in the blackness
 over the precipice of existence,
 hanging on for dear life,
 day and night, by a thread ...
**STOCKMARKET CRASHES,
 BANKS FOLD, UNEMPLOYMENT
 SOARS, HOUSES FORECLOSE.**
 I stagger though the labyrinths,
 looking for another chance
 in the win, place, show
 of the corporate cosmos.
 “The cause of your misfortune is apparent.”
 Says an official of the government.
 “You bought into the American Dream
 and overspent.”
 Blind alleys, broken clocks,
 dead end streets, road blocks,
 cul de sacks, no way’s out ...
 I struggled up the corporate ladder,
 bought a house, car, boat.
 So what?
 I wasn’t greedy. I helped the needy.
 I wasn’t extravagant. I couldn’t afford
 any rich and famous life of aggrandizement.
 Grip.
 Slip.
 Plop.
 How could I know
 that the “Slight Of Hand Investment Corporation”
 hired the Wizard Of Oz as it’s CEO?



SACRED RITES

Moon Shadow was spiritual in the ancient Sioux way.
 She spoke to the wind, the moon and the stars.
 She married Night Walker on the top of Bear Butte.
 It was a ceremony the Sacred Mountain had waited centuries to see.
 That night, wild game crackled on spits.
 There were drums, dancers, holy chants.
 Night Walker was a descendent of Medicine Men.
 High chiefs traveled to Pine Ridge from faraway lands.
 That was the legend.
 Red Leaf drove in a daze.
 His head was pounding.
 His body pulsed with pain.
 Was the Sacred Mountain getting closer?
 He squinted through the desert blaze.
 If he could make it to the mountain, his soul would return.
 The jeep rocked on its wheel rims, bent out of shape.
 Broken glass covered the dashboard, floor boards, seats.
 His uniform was in shreds. His dogs tags choked his neck.
 He could walk faster, Red Leaf brooded, as he steered the creeping jeep, if he were able to walk. He could swim the white rivers, leap the quick streams, race through the forests, if he still had his legs.
 Rainbow trout flew through the air.
 Silver water cascaded down golden cliffs, crashing, careening along tree lines river banks.
 Rainbow trout leaping...
 A rainbow arched across the sky.
 The jeep rattled down the desert road, Red Leaf slumped inside, until it hit another roadside bomb.





ROBERT WAYNER

Quite simply, the artwork of Rex Sexton matters. In a world where crystal clear, laser sharp photographic images of skyscrapers, street signs, and beer bottles are considered high art and thoroughly modern, Sexton's paintings offer an antithesis where nuance and metaphor still allude to the great questions inherent of a thinking mind.

I receive and peruse the submissions of hundreds of artists during the course of my working year. Some are cutting edge, some are technically flawless, and some are a bit of both. However, I have yet to come across more striving pieces than those of Rex Sexton. Within the space of his paintings, between the surrealistic modalities of the faceless, bright orange prison guards, lime green socialites, and pale violet graveyards, are the reflective thoughts of a man who has spent over half a century trying to work out the great questions of life. Within his colors and forms lie the injustice of political systems, the sadness of human isolation, and the mystery of compassion.

As the popularity of the genre in which Sexton paints, Surrealistic Expressionism, comes and goes and comes back again, the importance of his paintings will remain as viable and necessary to the modern art world as the intangible act of questioning is to human intellect. Any knowledgeable curator will tell you that the great artists simply have a certain spark to their work that sets them apart from the rest. Artistic jargon fails to describe this extra touch which at times is so subtle that it is virtually unnoticeable. On occasion, when viewing a Sexton piece, I have had the experience that sometimes occurs when reading a legendary passage from Tolstoy or Dostoevsky when for a brief moment a great truth becomes crystal clear and I exclaim to myself, "Aha! Yes, that is so true, so savagely perceptive!"

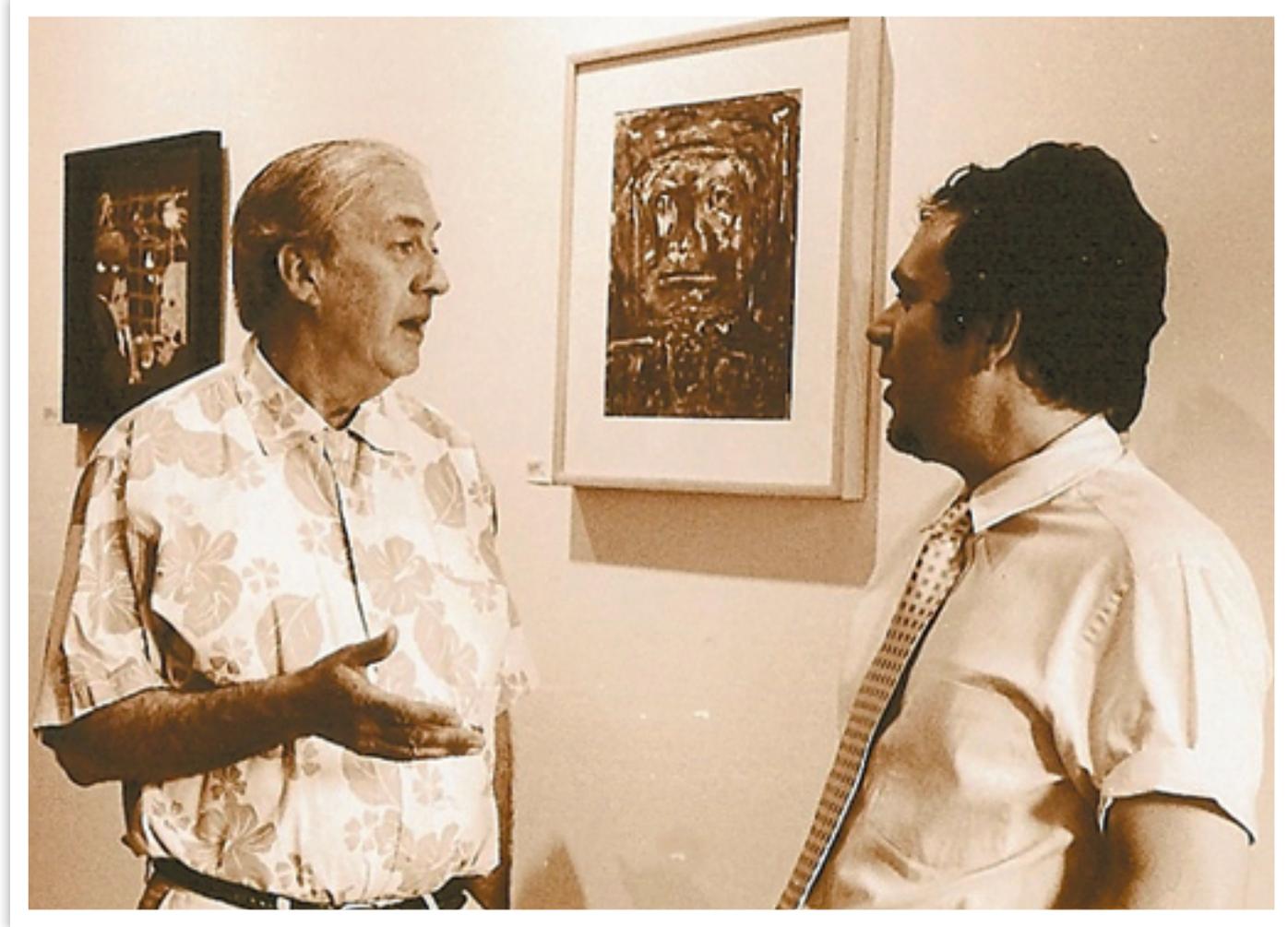
I represent Rex Sexton at my gallery because his artwork, possibly more now than ever before, stands gallantly as a reflection of the strange realities of the human condition that will continue to haunt the modern Western mindset long after he or I walk this planet. In the coming centuries when art galleries have become the domain of the 150 Megapixel ultra-zoom techno camera complete with optional 1,024 Terabyte storage and telephone, all which fits in between your smooth and manicured index and middle finger, the artwork of Rex Sexton will stand as a reminder to our children's children of what artwork looked like when a thoughtful, solitary artist questioned reality.

Robert Wayner

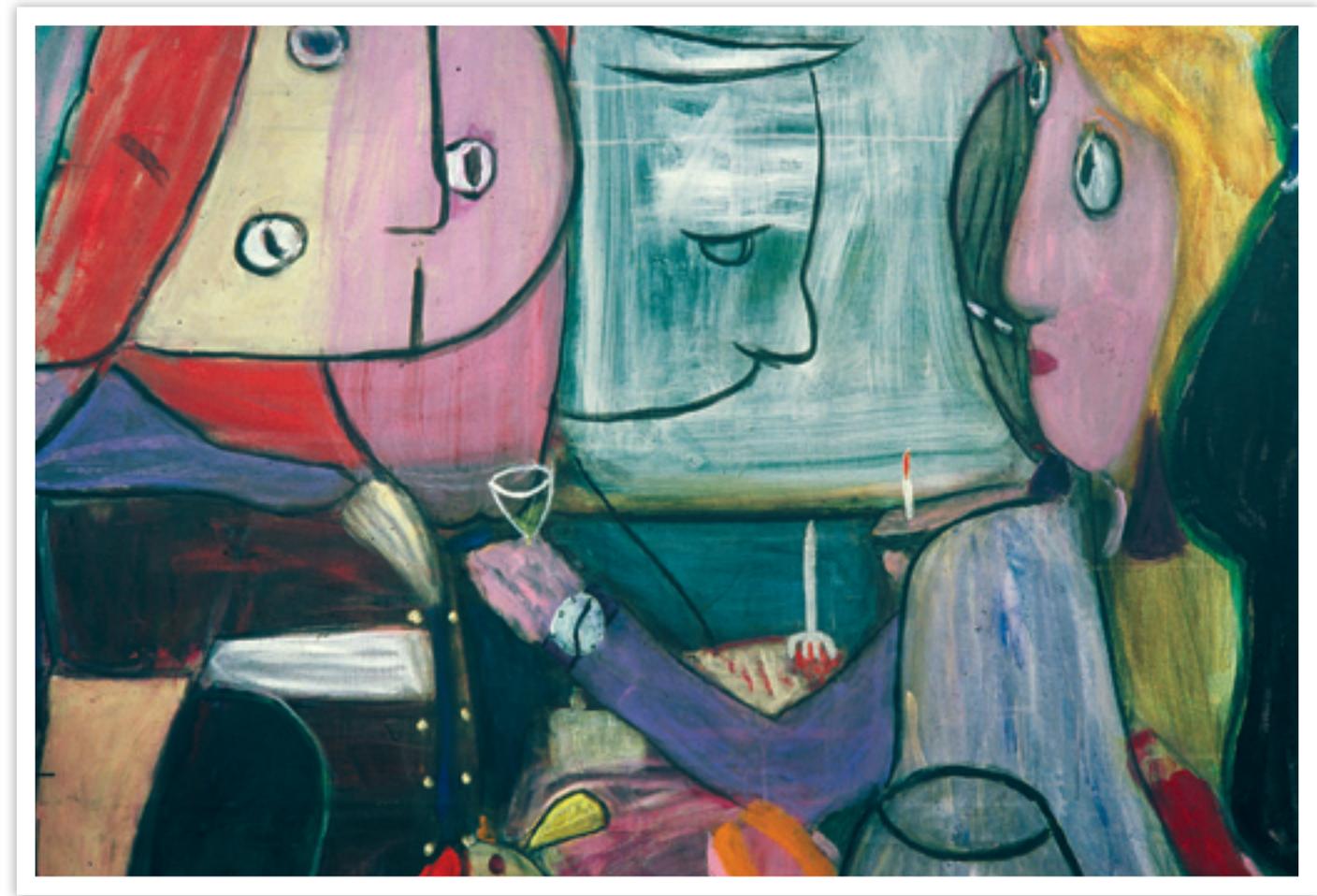
Black Walnut/Robert Wayner Gallery, Chicago

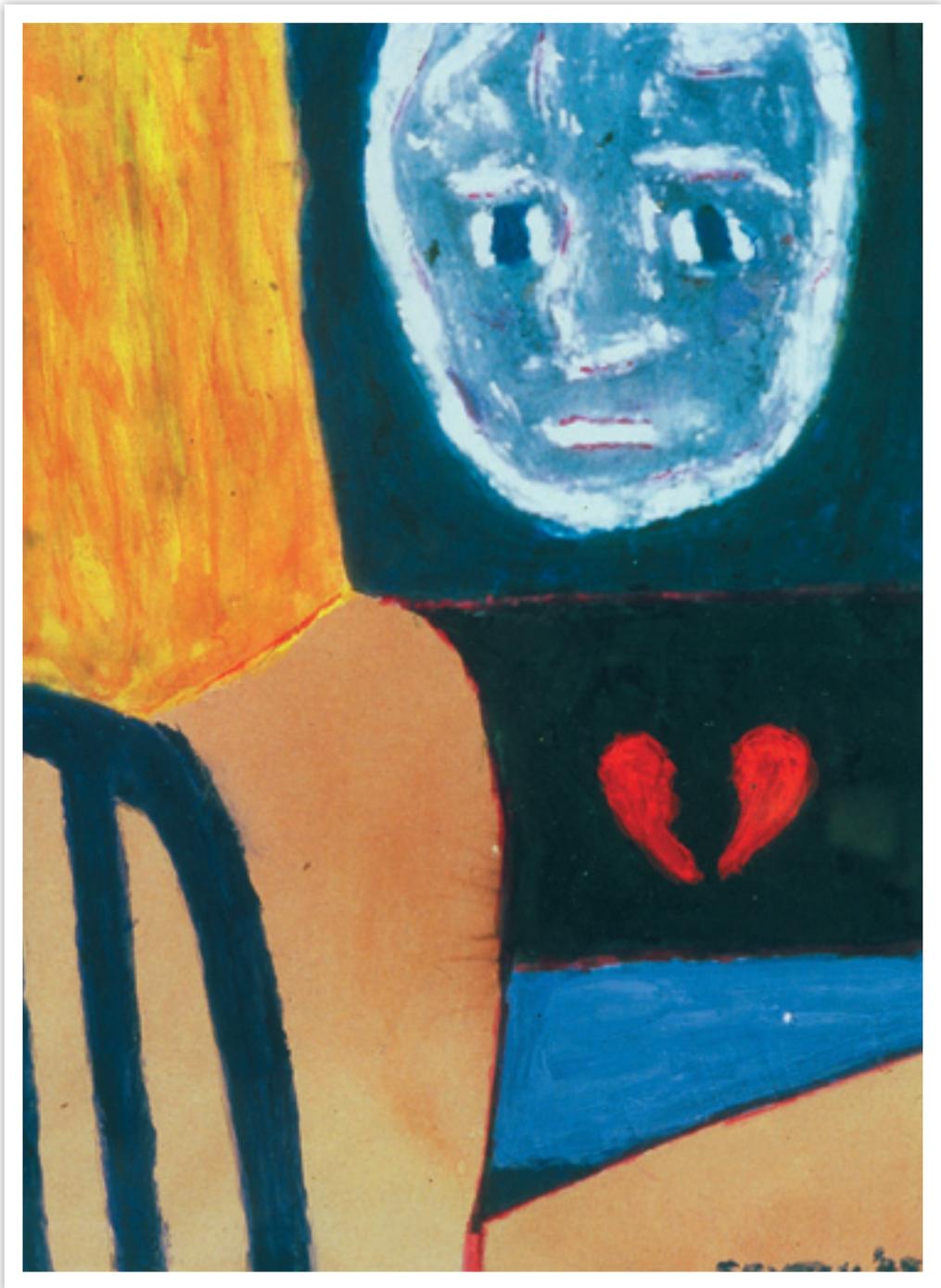
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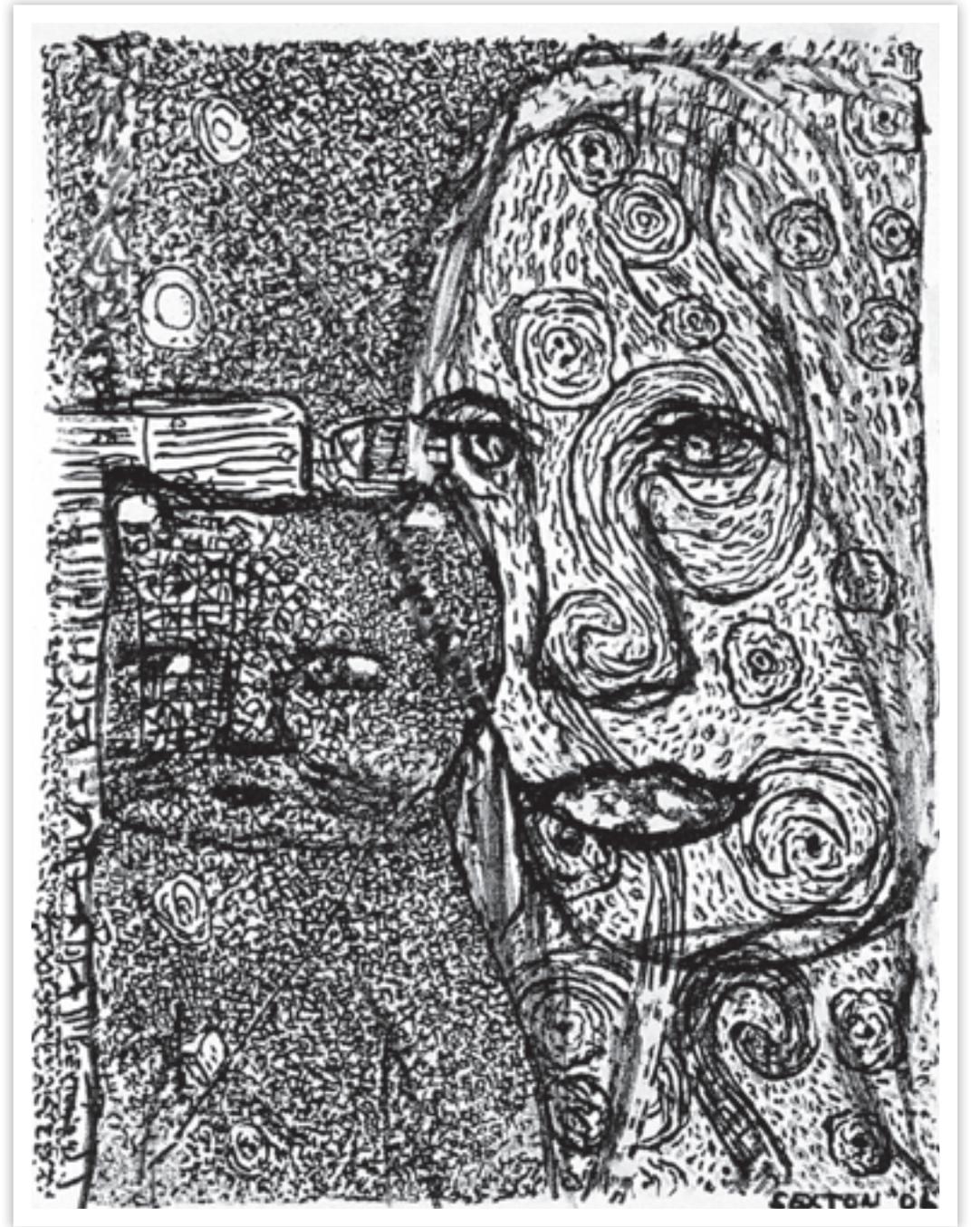


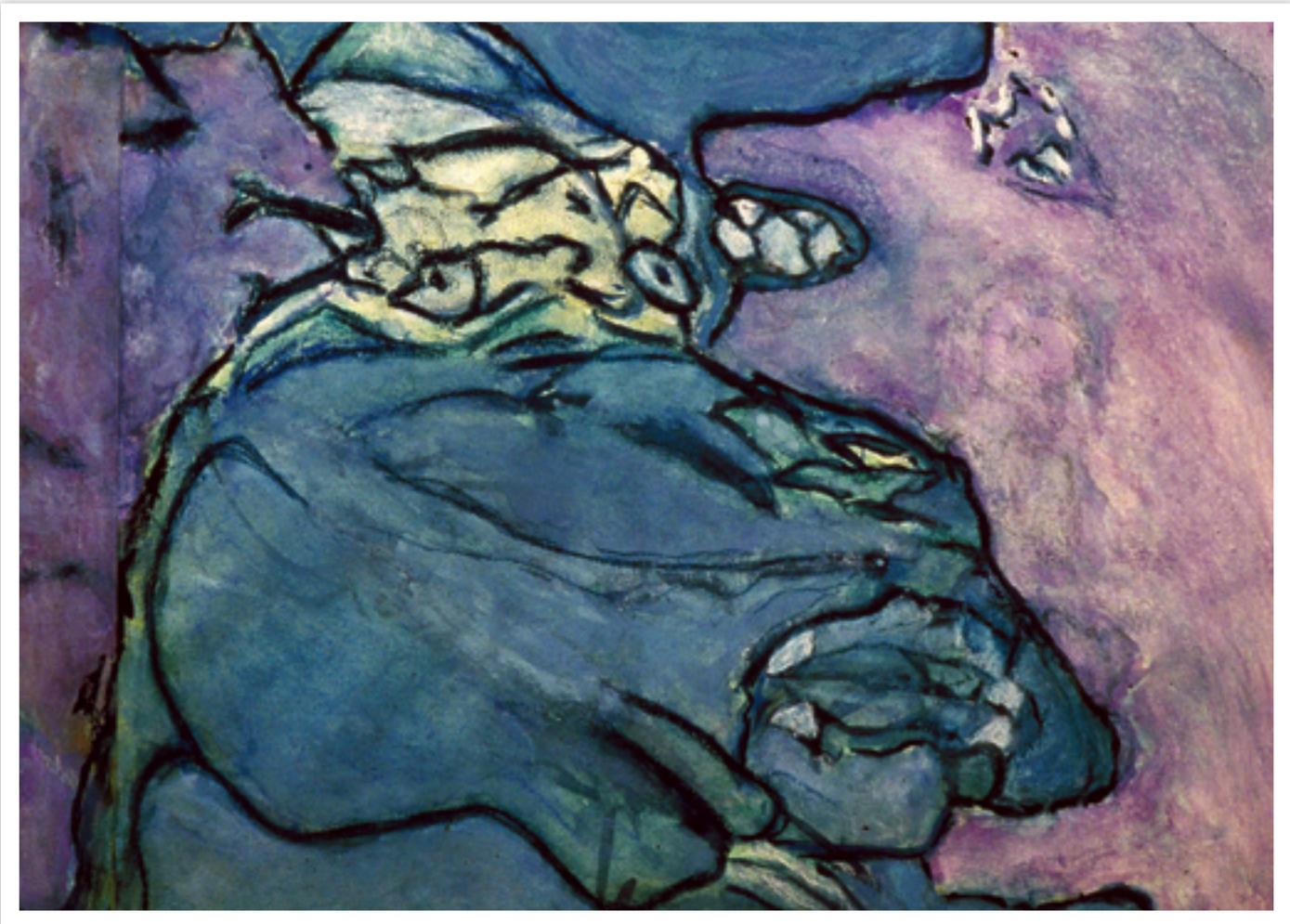


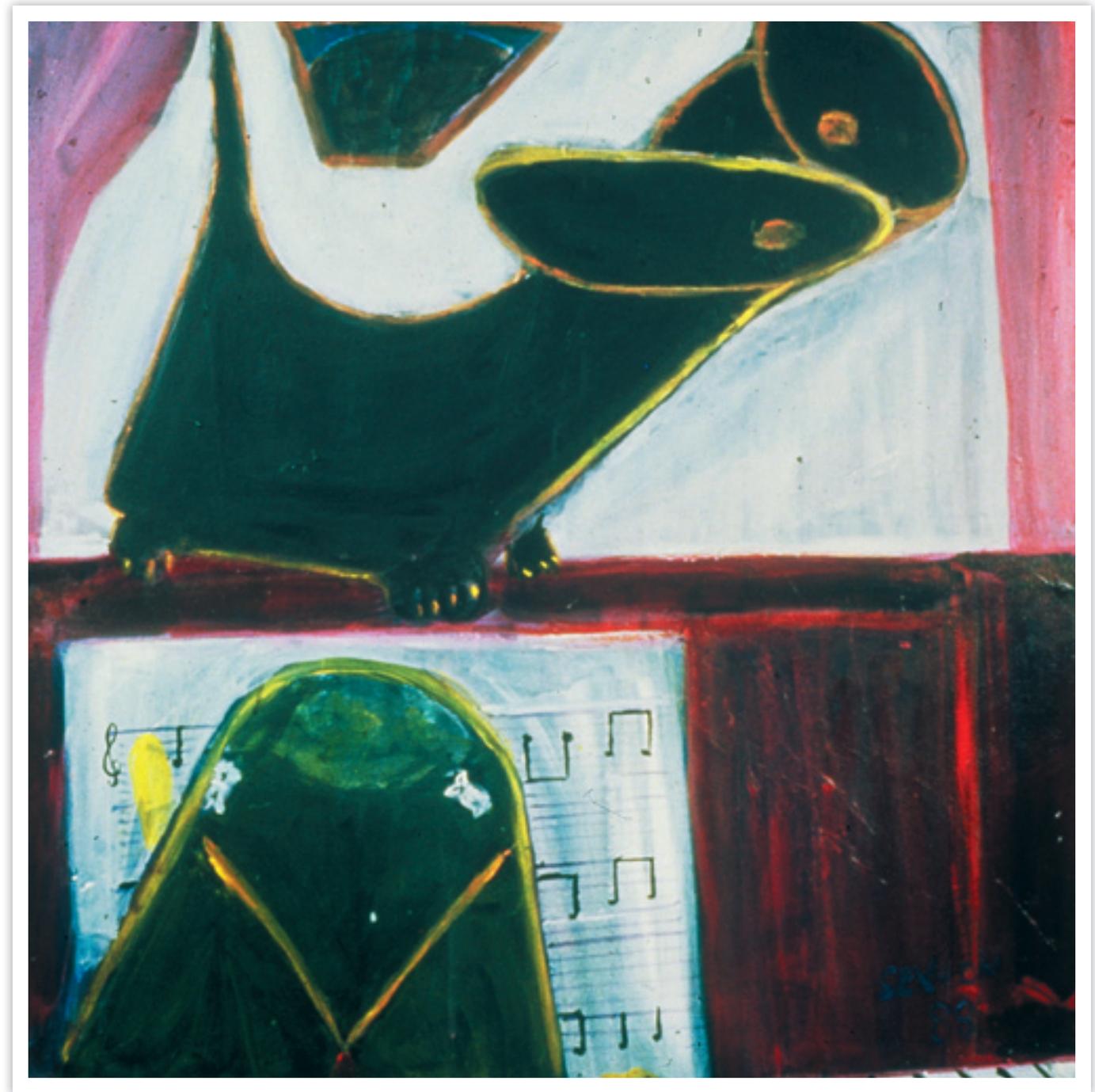
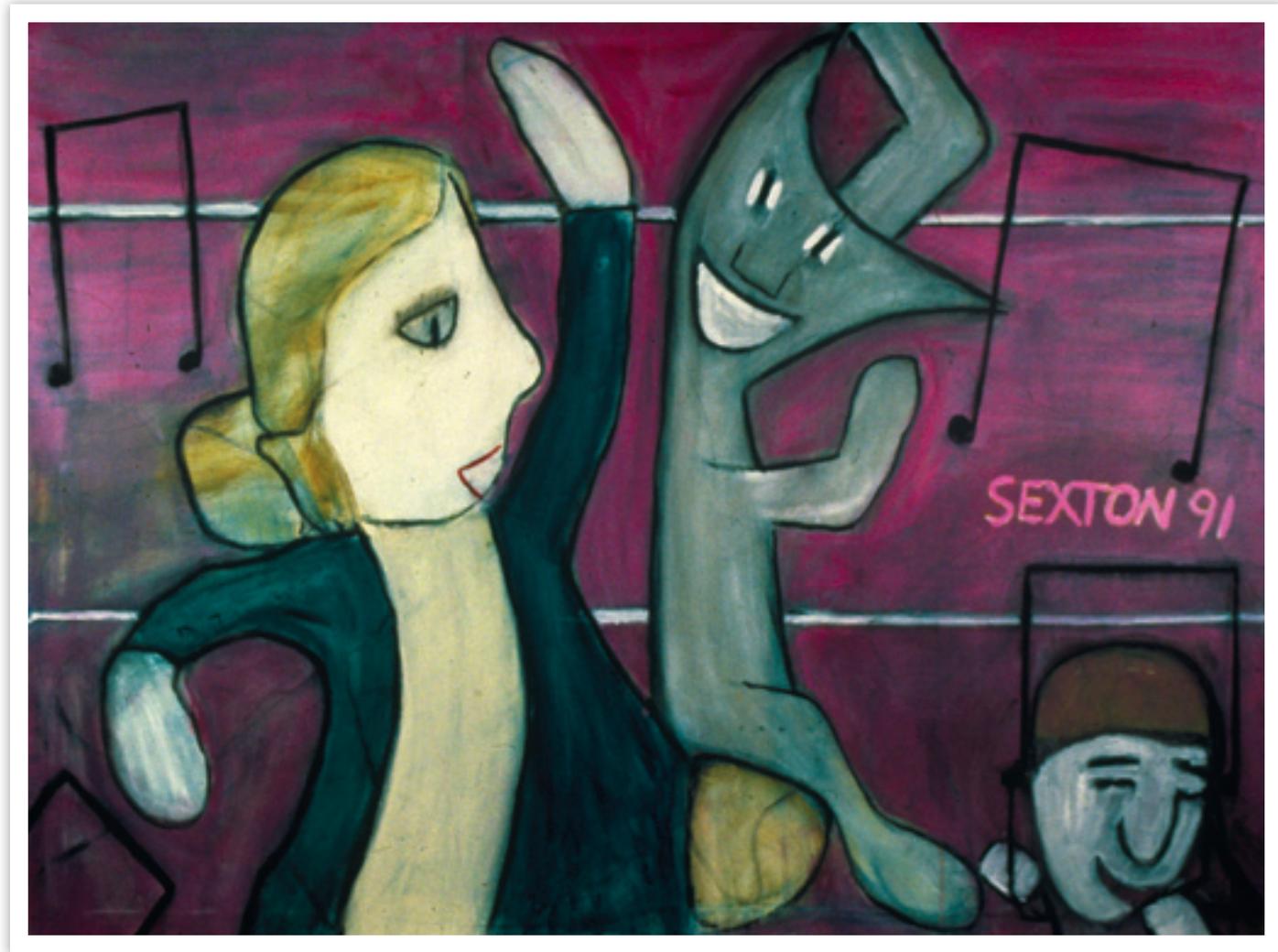






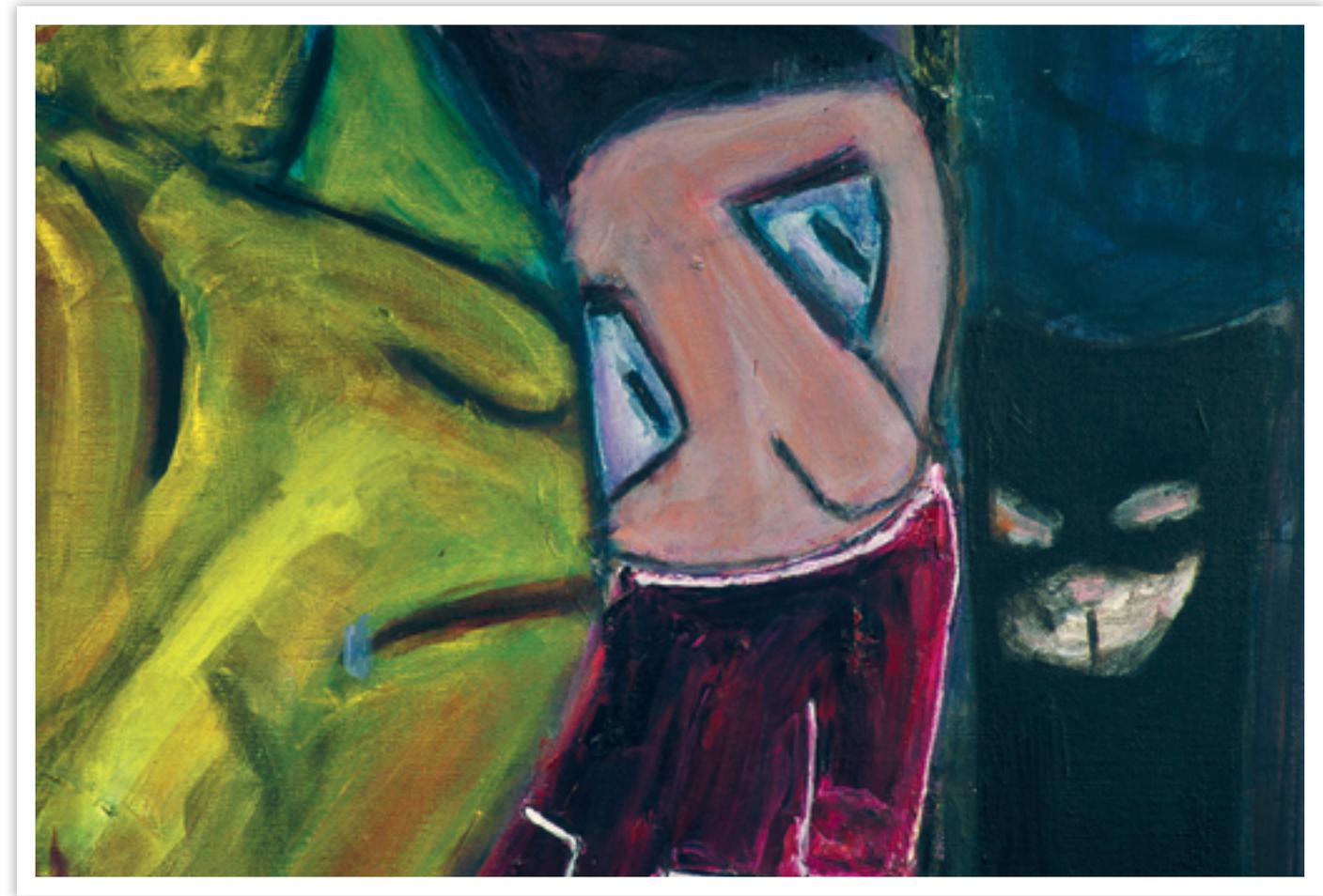




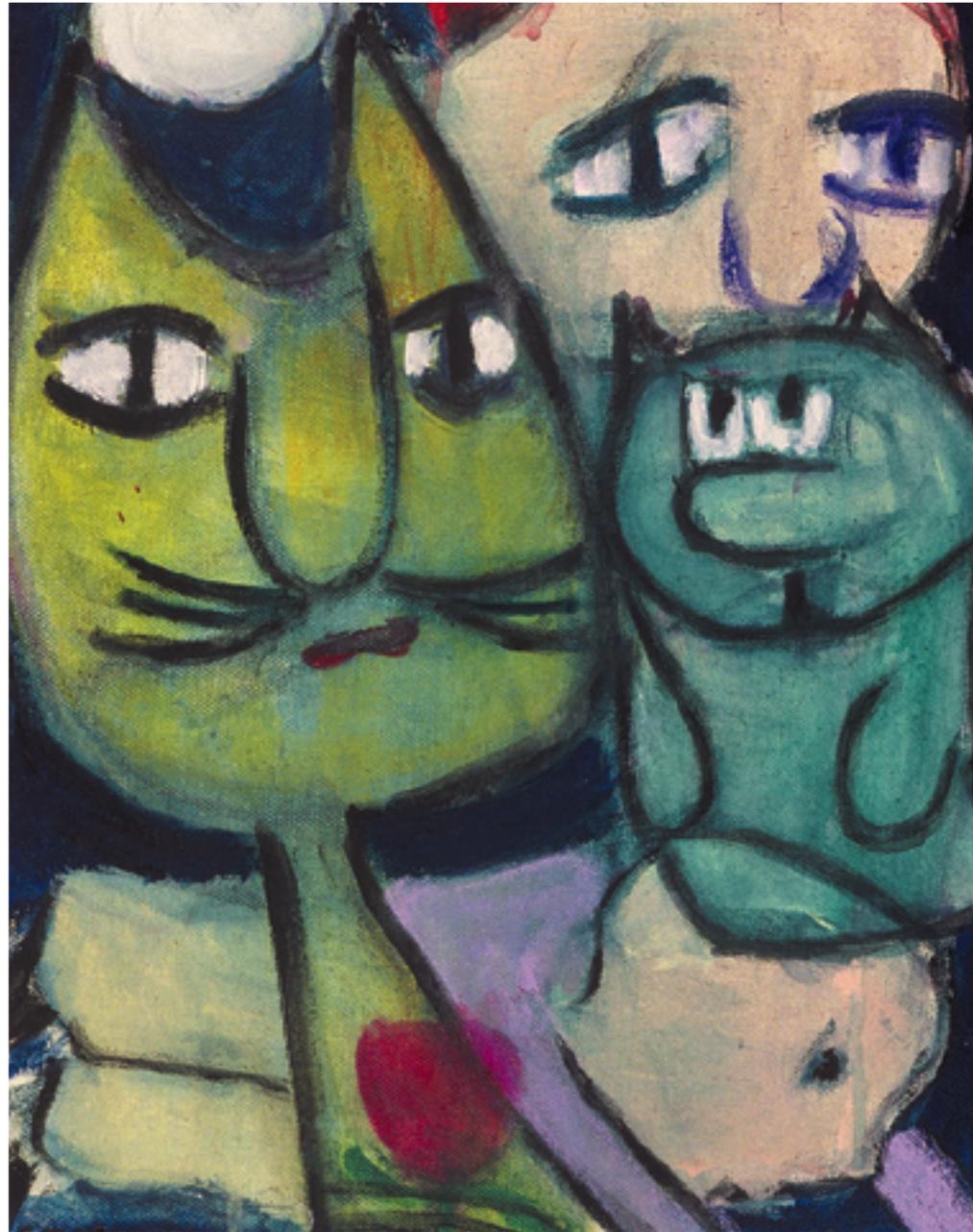












Portrait of the Gallery: Black Walnut Gallery by Jeffery McNary | Newcity Art, Chicago, IL

Aug 17 Portrait of the Gallery: Black Walnut Gallery

“Can nature and technology co-exist?” asked Robert Wayner in his staccato-speak. “It’s critical that we continue to explore how wild nature and technology can exist together.” With this as his magnetic north, the geologist turned musician, turned painter and sculptor, now gallery owner, has pinned his hopes on his Black Walnut Gallery where he showcases Chicago artists and his own wood sculptures. Relocated from Wicker Park to the West Loop-Fulton Market area, Wayner’s current offering is a group show titled “Closure.”

Growing up in Southern Illinois farm country in a Mennonite household, Wayner’s imagination drew him to woodworking, which “filled me with amazement,” he recalls. “The Mennonites have been in the forefront of the green movement for a while,” Wayner shares, “as well as being big in third-world relief and agrarian stewardship.” Although he admits, “I don’t think that brought me to where I’m at,” those early groundings are reflected in the flow of the two-story gallery, with its domestic, natural feel and its bundled fascas hanging by twine at points in the long throw of the place. Earlier this year Wayner presented a group show of Mennonite artists.

Wayner’s sculpture, “Nature Cradling Technology,” embodies Black Walnut Gallery’s core values. Aluminum balls perch atop sculpted wood, signifying a balance among progress and tradition, in both art and in life. Alongside naturally felled wood sculptures are some of Wayner’s colorful paintings, many dedicated to Tolstoy, whose “Confession,” says Wayner, “encapsulates the notion that we never choose who we are.”

“Closure” is an exhibition dotted with like thinkers. Painter Rex Sexton’s haunting “Kaddish” presents a deep blue shadowed, ghostly figure under a full, yellow moon overlooking tombstones bearing semi-faces. “I learned how to paint from a Holocaust Jew,” says Sexton. Growing up in Chicago’s Back of the Yards neighborhood, Sexton “saw hardship with no let up.” He paints “expressions of humanity with the hope that I capture its dreams in the midst of adversity.” Romanticism emerges in his stunning “Edith” oil painting. This semi-cubist portrait of Edith Piaf seduces with thick, deep layers of tans and blacks, doe eyes and arched eyebrows. It’s more Seine than stockyard.

Wayner coolly accepts the challenges of running a gallery. “I’m an artist, I had to do this,” says Wayner. “I search for truth. I didn’t have a choice,” he says with barely a shrug of the shoulders.

Jeffery McNary’s work can be found in *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone*, and other outlets He is currently crafting a screenplay, “Ro”, and composing a volume of poetry, “Simple Epistles.”



ABOUT ROCHELLE COHEN

Rochelle S. Cohen was born in Brooklyn, NY. She received a B. A. from Rutgers University and an M. A. and Ph. D. in Physiology from the University of Connecticut. She was a Postdoctoral Fellow at The Rockefeller University, NY and also studied at the Rudolf Magnus Institute for Pharmacology, Utrecht, The Netherlands. She is Professor Emerita at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she was the recipient of the 2008 College of Medicine at Chicago Distinguished Faculty Award. She is a neuroscientist, with publications on synaptic structure and biochemistry and hormonal effects on the brain and behavior. She serves on national grant review panels and is presently teaching part-time at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Rochelle married Rex Sexton in 1982. They moved to the River North Art District in Chicago and became active in the Chicago art world. They have an extensive art collection of paintings and sculpture from prominent Chicago artists. Rochelle is presently working on a poetry book about marine life.





ABOUT JACQUELINE ROIG

Jacqueline Roig is an acclaimed artist, writer, and clinical psychologist living and working in Chicago. Her art projects the confusion of conscience and desire, using deceptively benign objects. These pieces “reflect the conceptualization of our profound longings while we try to stay within the blurred boundaries of human relating and behavior.”

The works expose the internal workings of the mind and relegate them to the public. “They are meant to be disturbing and evocative as the viewer may recognize the struggle to contain.”

Her many exhibits include “Inside Out,” “Around The Coyote” (Flat Iron Fine Arts Building), “Twelve Chicago Artists” (OCD Foundation, Hyatt Regency Hotel), “Love Hurts” (Parts Unknown Gallery), “SmART show,” and the Black Walnut/Robert Wayner Gallery. She has been written up in Newcity Art and was the Featured Artist on WNUR-FM Radio Program “Seat of your Pants” – Northwestern University Radio Station.





ABOUT ROBERT WAYNER

Robert Wayner is a Mid-western artist and gallerist who opened Black Walnut Gallery in the autumn of 2005 in the Wicker Park neighborhood of Chicago. Known for his naturally felled modern wood sculptures, furniture designs, and modern minimalist paintings, his work has been highlighted in such well know publications as *The Chicago Tribune*, *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Style Magazine*, *Chicago Magazine*, *The Chicago Reader*, *Chicago Art Review*, *Newcity* and *The Chicago Journal*.

In the summer of 2008, he moved the gallery to the prestigious Fulton Market Gallery District in Chicago's West Loop and added his name to the gallery, Black Walnut/Robert Wayner Gallery. His dedication to artwork with a conscience has motivated him to curate numerous notable exhibits including *Tolerance of Belief* (held during the summer of 2007 and again in the spring of 2008 at the Mendelson Gallery), which included the artwork of 12 Jewish and Muslim artists from around the world, *We, the Mennonites* (held during the Spring of 2009) which highlighted the artwork of 10 notable peace-minded Mennonite art professors from throughout the USA and Canada, and *The Little Brown Dog Affair: 100 Years Later* (to be held in the Autumn of 2010) which will highlight the occurrence in 1910 that first brought the issue of animal vivisection into the public spotlight.

Prior to opening the Black Walnut/Robert Wayner Gallery, Robert drove a taxi cab in Chicago for four years and taught guitar while earning a Bachelor of Art in Geology. He currently resides with his dog, Abby, in a small house located in a wood thicket outside the small town of Tiskilwa, Illinois.

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITS

- 2007 "Tolerance Of Belief," juried group exhibit, Black Walnut Gallery, Chicago IL.
 2002 "Animal Images," juried group exhibit, Anti-Cruelty Society, Chicago, IL.
 2000 "Vision 2000," juried group exhibit, Zarem/Golde ORT Institute, Chicago IL.

NATIONAL EXHIBITS

- 2007 Mars Gallery, 1139 W. Fulton Market, Chicago IL, "Shock Art," juried group exhibit.
 2007 Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont IL, "Shock Art," juried group exhibit.
 2006 York Hall, CYC gallery, juried group exhibit, York Town Virginia.
 2006 "Animal Images," juried group exhibit, Anti-Cruelty Society, Chicago, IL, also '05, '04, '03
 2003 "Award Winner's Show," 510 Gallery, Decatur, IL., Natl. award winner's.
 2002 Union St. Gallery, "Reactions: Living In The New America," juried group exhibit, Chicago, IL.
 2002 Jett Sett Gallery, 911 juried group exhibit, 3350 N. Paulina, Chicago, IL.
 2001 "Winter Thaw," 510 Gallery, Decatur IL, juried group exhibit.
 2000 "Winter Thaw," 510 Gallery, Decatur IL, juried group exhibit.

SELECTED GALLERY EXHIBITS

- 2009 Robert Wayner/ Black Walnut Gallery, solo exhibit, Chicago, IL
 2008 Mendelson Gallery, Temple Sholom, "Tolerance of Belief" selected group exhibit, Chgo. IL
 2008 Gallery 2, Art Institute of Chicago sponsored staff exhibit, also '03, '01.
 2006 Black Walnut Gallery, 2135 W. Division St. Chicago, IL, featured artist.
 2006 "Absolute Vision," Chgo. Art Dealers Assoc., selected exhibit, Gruen Gallery, also '03,02,01.
 2005 Open Door Gallery, 1630 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL, group exhibits.
 2005 Peter Jones Gallery, 1806 W. Cuyler, Chicago, IL, "Shock Art," juried exhibit
 2005 Mars Gallery, 1139 W. Fulton Market, Chicago, IL, *Revolution* Pop, Op, Happenings, etc., juried.
 2005 Vietnam Veteran's Museum, CAC selected group exhibit, Chicago IL.
 2005 Flat Iron Arts Bldg. Studio 220, solo exhibits, *Around The Coyote, Fall, Winter, Spring*, Chgo...
 2005 Aurora Historical Society, Aurora IL, juried group exhibit.
 2004 "Chicago Artist's Open," 847 W. Jackson, Chicago, IL, juried group exhibit, also '03, '02.
 2004 National Arts Foundation Gallery, juried exhibit, Skokie, IL.
 2004 Oak Park Library, selected group exhibit, Oak Park IL.
 2004 Hyatt Regency Hotel, 12 Chicago Artists, OCD Foundation, Chicago, IL.
 2003 Gruen Gallery, 226 W. Superior St. Chicago, IL, 3 Artist exhibit.

- 2003 *New Art Venue*, Flat Iron Arts Bldg. ATC space, juried group exhibit, Chicago, IL.
 2002 Earth Works Gallery, 500 N. Michigan Ave. Chicago, IL, group exhibits.
 2002 Jett Sett Gallery, 3350 N. Paulina, Chicago, IL, "Erotica 11," juried group exhibit.
 2001 Mars Gallery, 1139 W. Fulton Market, "*Raining Cats And Dogs*," Chicago, IL, juried exhibit.
 2000 Robert Gildo Gallery, Harbert, Michigan, "Outsider Artist" festival
 1999 Chicago Fine Arts Exchange, juried group exhibit, Chicago, IL.
 1998 Gruen Gallery, solo exhibit, including books of drawings and illustrated novel.
 1998 Art Director and exhibiting artist, Third Coast on Delaware, Chicago, IL.
 1997 AT&T selected group exhibit, Chicago, IL. also '96
 1995 Outdoor Installation, (14 acrylic panels) 29 E. Delaware St., Chicago, IL. (1995-08)
 1995 One Person Exhibit, Borders Bookstore, Marlton, New Jersey (art, illustrated books).
 1994 One person exhibit, Gruen Gallery, art and illustrated books.
 1991 One person exhibit, Gilman/Gruen Gallery, 226 W. Superior St., Chicago, IL.
 1989 Gilman/Gruen Gallery, 2 artist exhibit, Chicago, IL.
 1986 One person exhibit, Gilman/Gruen Gallery, 226 W. Superior St., Chicago, IL.

AWARDS

- 2007 BEST NEW WRITING, Eric Hoffer Natl. Short Story Competition, Critic's Choice Award
 2005 R.J. Reynolds Award Grant, 14 panel outdoor installation, 29 E. Delaware St., Chgo. IL
 2003 Juror's Choice Award, National Competition, 510 Galley, Decatur, IL.

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 KIRKUS REVIEW, Critique of *Desert Flower*, June 2009
 KIRKUS REVIEW, Critique of *THE TIME HOTEL*, March 2009
 METRO MIX MEDIA, Chicago Tribune, telecast of Mars Gallery exhibit, Oct 19, 2007
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 CHICAGO JOURNAL, Color reproduction of painting from "Tolerance Of Belief," June 2007
 BEYOND BOUNDRIES Chicago Artist's Month Catalogue, featured artists 2006
 CAN TV, Artwork, CAC exhibit, Cable Television, Oct. 2004
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 CHICAGO SUN TIMES, drawing, critique, Art House exhibit, *Death and Taxes*, March 12, 2004
 CAN TV, Artwork, CAC exhibit, Cable television, Oct. 2003
 LERNER BOOSTER NEWS, Chicago, IL, painting from Flat Iron exhibit, Nov. 21, 2002
 INSIDE CHICAGO, pen and ink drawing from "Live From Chicago" exhibit, June, 2002

ABC, CBS, NBC, WGN, FOX news, artwork, "Animal Images, Anti-Cruelty Society, Chgo. IL '02
 WLS RADIO, 920 AM, Jay Marvin host, topics 911 Jett Sett exhibit, novel "*Desert Flower*"
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 SOUTH COUNTY GAZETTE, Harbert Michigan, Sept 11, 2000, Artwork, photo, John Gooch
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 NORTH LOOP NEWS, Article, artwork, May, 1995
 ART ENCOUNTER, Biographical sketch, Chicago IL, April, 1995
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 CHICAGO READER, Artwork in Galleries and Museum section, August 5, 1994
 SPOTLIGHT CHICAGO Artwork and critique, Art Scene, August 2, 1994
 NEAR NORTH NEWS, Artwork and critique, Art Section, Chicago IL, July 30, 1994
 ART IN AMERICA, Annual Guide to American Artists, 1990-1995
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- Study For Firing Squad*, 1986. Gouache on paper, 30”X20.” Collection of Ruth and Milton Komar, Rydal, PA.
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