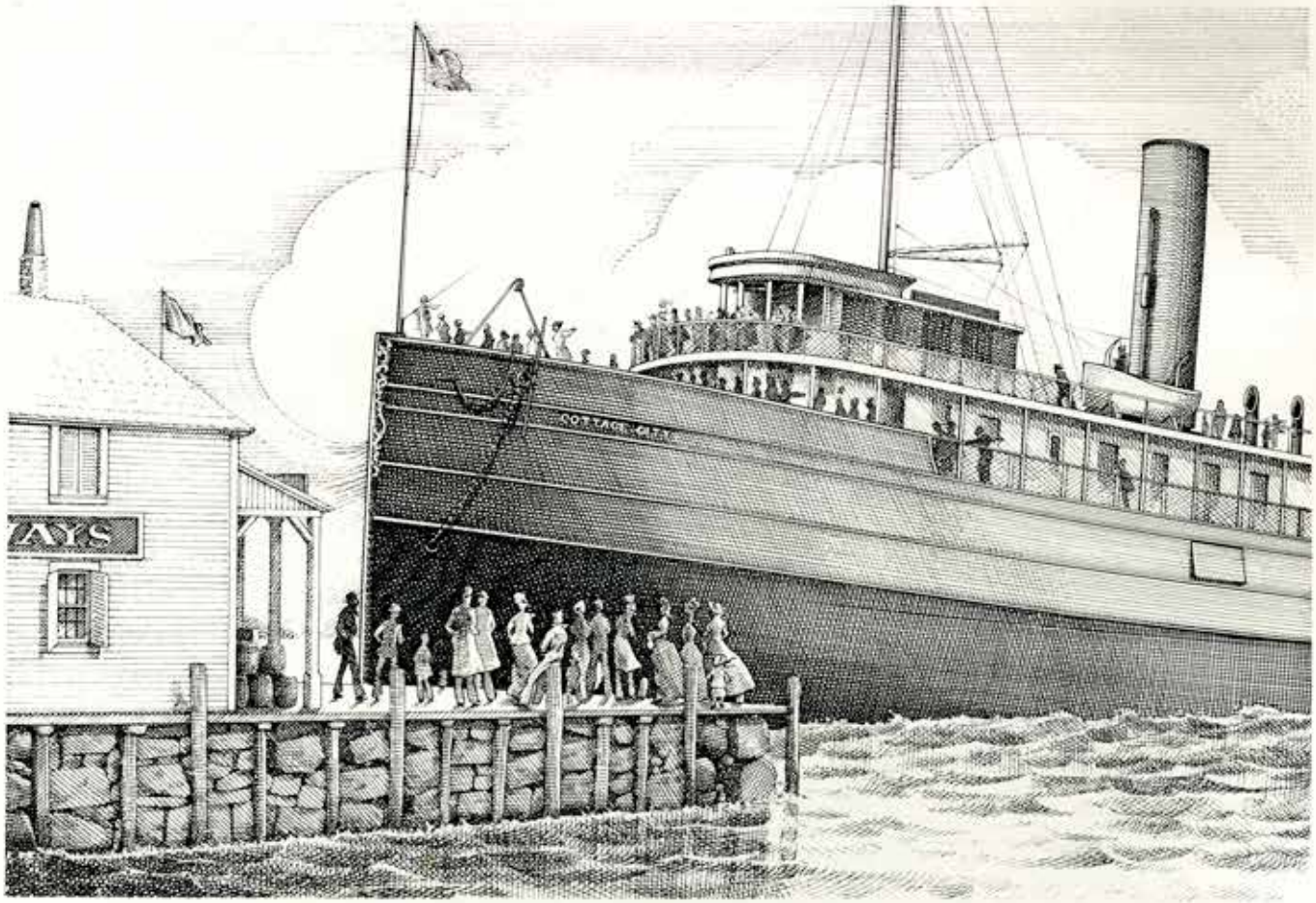
Winter 1987-88
HOLIDAY ISSUE
$4.00

am

ARTISTS IN MAINE



In that year, Bath Iron Works was born. With a legacy of pride in Maine's shipbuilding tradition, founder General Thomas W. Hyde looked toward a future of promise as the age of sail gave way to a new era of steam and steel.

A legacy of pride. . . a future of promise. It's as true today as it was a hundred years ago. For without the skill and dedication of generations of Maine shipbuilders, the hallmark Bath-built® would never have become a synonym for excellence. And without innovative, experienced management, our small shipyard would never have become one of the preeminent names in American shipbuilding.

Thanks, Maine, for a great shipbuilding tradition.

Maine launched a legend in 1884.

A history of Bath Iron Works is on display at the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath.

BIW

® BATH IRON WORKS CORPORATION
Bath, Maine 04530

Publisher
JONATHAN TIM SOLEY

Editor
SUSAN ELIZABETH RYAN

Art Director
GENA NEILSON

Photographer
JON BONJOUR

Contributors
CATHERINE ANDERSON
ROGER CONOVER
JAMES LINEHAN
PATRICIA DAVIDSON REEF
ROSE SAFRAN

Briefs Editors
KATHY ANN JONES
CHAKÉ EMIRA KAVOOKJIAN

Copy Editors
REGINA KNOX
ELLEN LIBERT

Production Assistant
JUDITH WAINWRIGHT BOYES

Printing Consultant
PRODUCTION PLANNING ASSOCIATES

Advertising
ADAIR KATHLEEN O'REILLY ASSOCIATES

ARTISTS IN MAINE is published quarterly by Artists in Maine Inc., a Maine corporation with offices at 1 Exchange Street, Portland, Maine 04101, telephone (207) 772-4340. JOSEPH L. SOLEY, chairman.

Typesetting, Anthoensen Press, Portland; Color Separation, Graphic Color Service, Inc., Waterville; Printing, J. S. McCarthy, Augusta.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Inquiries and address changes should be sent to Artists in Maine, P.O. Box 367, Portland, Maine 04112.

MIKASA

FACTORY STORE

SAVINGS UP TO 80%

Choose from Dinnerware, Crystal, China, Giftware,
Stemware, Flatware, Cookware and much more.

Tremendous Savings at our two locations in Maine

U.S. Route 1
The Maine Outlet
Kittery, Maine 03904
207-439-6550

OPEN
7
DAYS

31 Main Street
Freeport, Maine 04032
207-865-9441

CONTENTS

COVER:
Celeste Roberge with *Northern Archives: Walking Cairn*, 1987,
steel and found stones, 9 x 2½', collection of the artist

Cover photograph: Jon Bonjour

READERS' REVIEWS

I was very impressed with the magazine and of course much enjoyed seeing reviews of the Irish show and of Natasha's and Nancy's work. Thanks for all the good words and work. Only one error: *Overlay* is published by Pantheon—they'd have a fit!

Lucy Lippard, Georgetown

Thanks for pointing out the erratum!

Editor

I enjoyed the interview with John Coffey. His comments and observations seemed to me to be right on the mark. As an artist "from away" who has spent four/five months every year in Maine for twenty years, I have followed the art development very closely. As one of the founders of the Deer Isle Artists Association, I remember when there were almost no places in the state to *see* contemporary art or, if you were an artist, to exhibit it.

So it is very exciting to me to see the awareness and importance of *all* the arts in this state being elevated to such a level. May it continue to grow. Certainly *AM* magazine will play an important part in its growth.

Judith Ingram, Stonington

I would like to commend the Bowdoin College Museum of Art for its insight and aesthetic judgement in committing new resources to the establishment of a permanent photographic collection (*AM*, Spring '87). Having shed its 1970s image as a fledgling within the art market at large, photography is now a serious, and increasingly profitable, medium for the private dealer and institutional collector alike.

Mr. Benington's article was thorough, informative, and knowledgeable, but may have left some doubt in the reader's mind as to the collectability of color print materials, that now comprise a significant portion of contemporary work.

That most color print processes (like Kodak's Ektacolor) are inherently unstable is due to two factors: the chemical processing, or chromogenic formation, of color dyes during the development stage; and the prevalence of resin-coated color papers. Dyes formed by chromogenic formation will exhibit fading and staining within approximately a ten-year period of their production. Significantly, this deterioration will occur in either light or dark conditions, meaning that chromogenic prints will fade whether they are exhibited or not. Resincoated papers are equally unreliable, yet virtually all that is available to most photographers today.

Neither Kodak's Dye Transfer process or Ilford's Cibachrome materials rely on chromogenic development to form the image. The color dyes in use here are "pre-formed" dyes, or color agents that exist independent of the action required in image formation. As the name implies, Kodak's color dye solutions are merely transferred to a receiving/support sheet of high-quality fiber-based paper, with no chemical activity involved at all. In the case of Cibachrome, the dyes are in place when the emulsion is manufactured, and the only chemical reaction involved is the bleaching away of unwanted color. Ciba's polyester-based support material is well known for its dimensional stability and longevity, and may rival dye-transfer's dark storage and light-resistant properties, although data on these two processes is in a constant state of updating.

However, it seems unlikely, due to the prevalent amateur market, that the dye stability of chromogenic materials will improve significantly in the near future. Consequently, institutions and private collectors should pay attention to the environmental factors (namely light, heat, and humidity) which increasingly cause damage to even archivally processed black-and-white prints. Closely supervised conditions of storage and display will not only reward the collector, but will protect the well-founded, and long-awaited, reputation of photography as an artistic medium.

Donna Lee Rollins, South Portland

What's Up.

REVEALING THE SPIRIT: PAINTINGS BY ALICE NEEL

Museum of Art, Olin Arts Center
Bates College
Lewiston, Maine 04240
207-786-6158
October 8–December 13

"Revealing the Spirit" is a major exhibition of paintings by the late Alice Neel (1900–1984). Spanning six decades, the works on display—portraits of her children and their families and of neighbors, and views from her apartment window—reflect Neel's own fascinating life in Spanish Harlem.

Though a prolific painter since the 1930s, Neel's work did not achieve widespread recognition until the 1970s. As a painter of people and of the human spirit, she adhered to realism while much of the art world was immersed in abstraction. Neel's ability to capture the likeness and to reveal the weaknesses and strengths of the sitter's personality gives her works an intense, provocative quality. She has been called a "collector of souls."

Alice Neel, *Jenny*, 1969, oil on canvas, 35½ x 26", collection of Jonathan and Monika Brand, at Olin Arts Center, Bates College

INSIDE OUTSIDE: PRIVATE ART

Area Gallery
Campus Center at USM
Bedford Street
Portland, Maine 04103
207-780-4090
November 21–December 23

"Inside Outside" is an exhibition curated by North Whitefield artist Natasha Mayers which will bring together private, self-revealing work by professional artists and work by "outsider artists"—the mentally disabled and prisoners from the Maine State Prison system. The exhibition is not an attempt to label people—all works will be shown anonymously—but rather seeks to uncover a common inner thread in the creative process.

Since the 1970s Mayers has been involved with art programs in the Augusta Mental Health Institute and the state's prisons and it is through these connections that she was able to assemble the exhibition's "outsider art." In addition, Mayers solicited from professional artists throughout the state works that "might not fit [their] self-image or style . . . it might be too feminist, political, or angry, or filled with taboo subject matter . . . but it should be incredibly strong work that won't fail to make the viewer respond; work from the heart and soul." Among participating professional artists are Matt Blackwell, Harold Garde, Lynn Harwood, Janice Kasper, Alan Magee, Sue Pedersen, Robert Solotaire, and Richard Wilson.

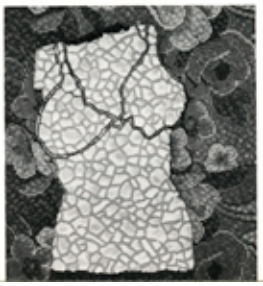
JACK WELCH AND THOMAS STENQUIST: MIXED MEDIA

Thomas Memorial Library Gallery
6 Scott Dyer Road
Cape Elizabeth, Maine 04107
(207) 799-1720
November 20–December 29

The Thomas Memorial Library's new wing, designed by the Portland Design Team and completed last year, houses a new alternative gallery in the Portland area. It offers entry-level exposure for the work of talented artists at the outset of their careers and broader exhibition opportunities for established artists. As a nonprofit gallery, artists exhibited are chosen by the Cape Elizabeth Arts Commission and may sell their work free from commission fees. While the space is new, the Thomas Memorial Library exhibition program is more than ten years old, and in recent years the gallery has featured works by Allison Hildreth, Elena Jahn, Barbara Haber Janoff, Alfred Fuller, and Marsha Donahue.

In November and December the library gallery hosts a show by two recent Portland School of Art graduates: found object and painted constructions by Jack Welch, and painted reliefs and collages by Thomas Stenquist.

Jack Welch, *Woman*, 1987, linoleums and ink, 19 x 27", collection of the artist



Portland's new Gallery 127, named for its location on Middle Street; photograph by Rand Raabe

GALLERY 127

127 Middle Street
Portland, Maine 04101
207-773-3317

Principal and director of Gallery 127, Kathryn Begg previously operated a corporate art consulting business, Portland Fine Art and Antiques, and intends to show many of the same artists she represented there to her corporate clients in the new gallery she opened last July.

Upcoming shows include an exhibition of drawings and etchings by Walt Kuhn opening in November, and a two-person show featuring Gregory Welch and Glenn Grafelman in January.

MAIA DESIGN AWARDS '87

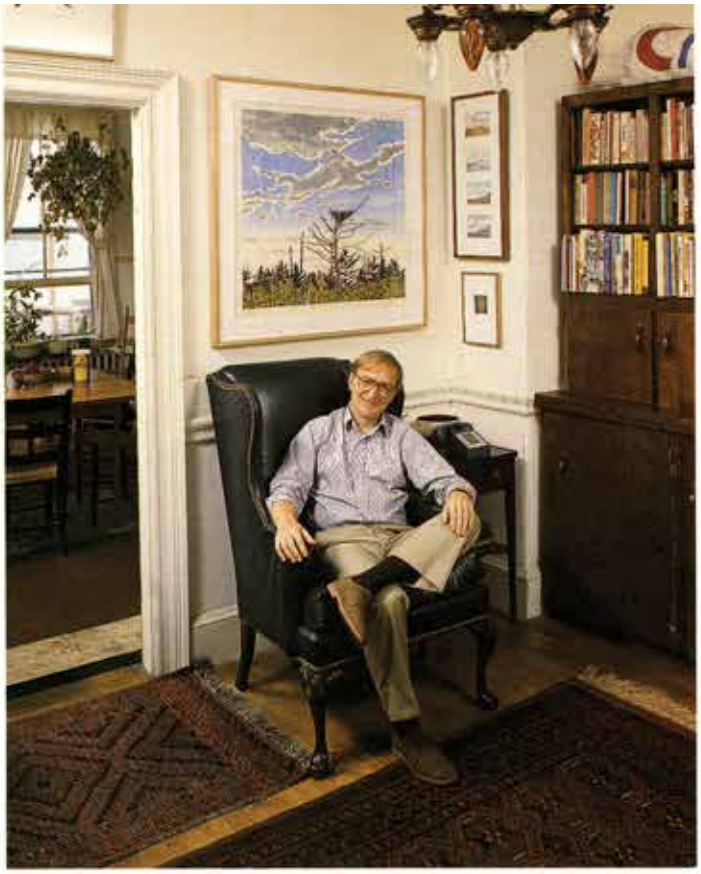
Bowdoin College Museum of Art
Walker Art Building
Brunswick, Maine 04011
207-725-3000
December 5–January 17

During the holiday season Bowdoin hosts an exhibition of the winning projects from this year's Maine Chapter of the American Institute of Architects' biennial design competition. Open to all architects registered in Maine who practice principally in the state, the competition seeks the best, executed general architectural and contract interior designs in the state substantially completed after January 1, 1984.

Winning projects will be determined in October by a jury of three out-of-state professionals: Turner Brooks of Starksboro, Vermont, architect and American Academy in Rome award winner; Jefferson B. Riley, principal of the Centerbrook architectural firm in Essex, Connecticut; and Douglas Brenner, editor of *Architectural Record*. The exhibition will be selected from the winning submissions by MAIA's Design Awards Committee, chaired by Brunswick architect Steven Moore, and assembled by Bowdoin Museum of Art curator John Coffey.

POINT OF VIEW:

Bruce Brown on the Art of Collecting



A NATIVE of Portland, Maine, Bruce Brown has been collecting art, primarily prints, for the last ten years. His background is variegated and individualistic: after graduating from Boston University in the early sixties, he set off on a sort of extended Wanderjahr, during which he attended classes at the Sorbonne and held jobs such as road manager for an American harpsichordist's European concert tour; motor freight manager in Portland and Lewiston; instructor at the Poland Springs Job Corps Center for Women; and editor of a promotional magazine for Warner Brothers in New York. After obtaining a master's degree in education from the University of Southern Maine in 1972, he began working and teaching in Freeport, where he currently coordinates gifted and talented programs. He classifies himself as a schoolteacher.

His extracurricular career, in addition to collecting, has involved him in a myriad of cultural endeavors in Maine, such as the Portland Concert Association, where as a board member he is involved with artists selection; the Maine Arts Festival in Brunswick, where he coordinated the volunteer force in 1981; the Maine Arts Commission, where he has served on the artists-in-residence panel; and the Portland School of Art, where he contributed to Lisa Allen's exhibition of contemporary prints in Maine private collections in 1985. And last winter, he participated in that school's evening seminar, "Collector's Circle." For his support of the arts in education Brown was the recipient, in 1984, of the Maine Arts Education Association's first Arts Advocacy Award.

Briefly this past year Brown operated a private print dealership in his Portland home. This year, in addition to his job in Freeport, he assumes the position of curator at Maine Coast Artists in Rockport. And he continues to be an avid collector.

Editor

SER: How did you start collecting?

BB: It really was by accident, I think. About ten years ago I was teaching a course at Freeport High School on Maine heritage, and I needed to expand the course from nine to eighteen weeks. It seemed to me that the kids should know something about Maine artists. I was thinking of Andrew Wyeth in the twentieth century and Winslow Homer in the nineteenth, and I couldn't really go much beyond that from my own knowledge and acquaintance. It so happened that Tom Crotty who lives in Freeport then had two sons at the school, and they frequently asked me for rides to Portland since I live here in town. For a long time, I just dropped them off in front of Tom's Frost Gully Gallery and kept on going, but one day I went in. And on the floor I saw a little seascape by Stephen Etnier done in his area around Harpswell. Before I knew it I had taken it home. That was my first major purchase, and I still have it.

SER: What made you buy it?

BB: I got this crazy idea, thoroughly irrational, that if I moved to Oklahoma—I mean I actually thought this—if I moved to Oklahoma, I would want to take something of Maine with me. Now there's no chance in hell that I would ever move to Oklahoma, or probably any other place.

SER: So it was a moment of insanity?

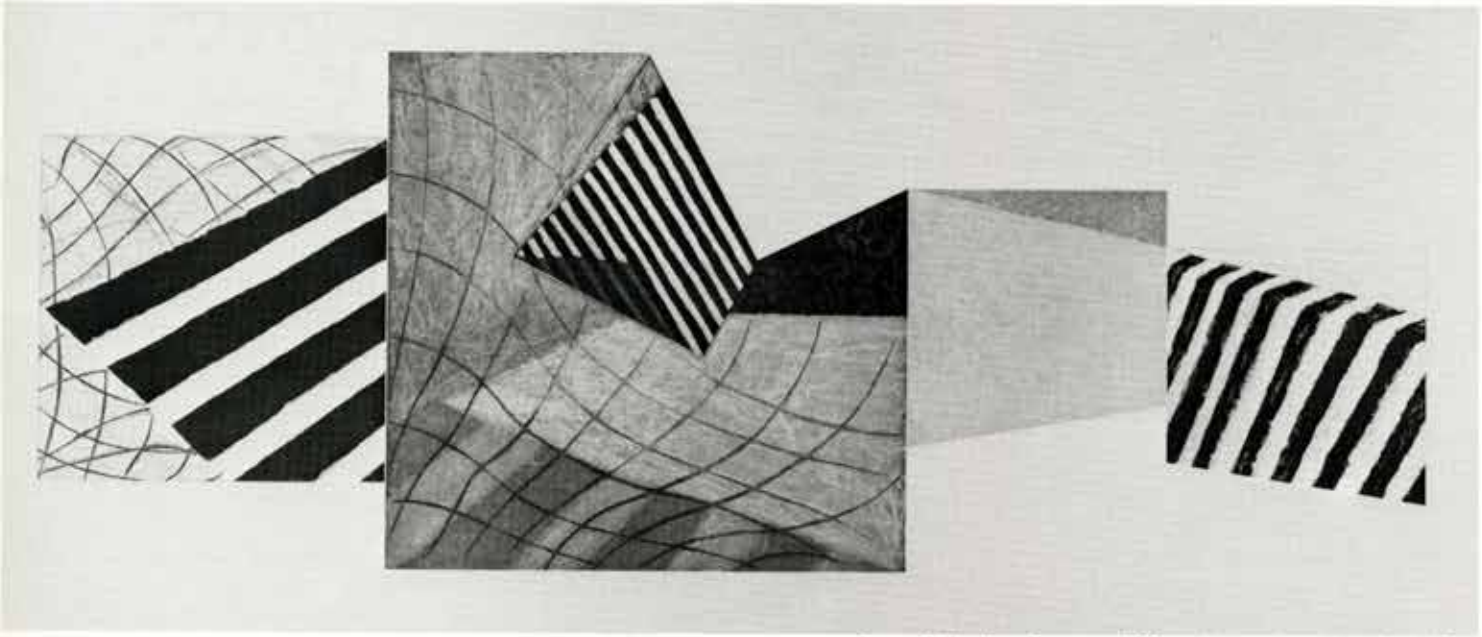
BB: I suppose there's something slightly unbalanced about collecting.

SER: You see a picture in a gallery, perhaps, you tell yourself something —anything—in order to walk out with it?

BB: Yes, well, by the end of that week I wasn't seeing the picture, I was seeing green dollar signs within the frame. So I took it back, but Tom was terrific in helping me reconsider my original impulse to acquire something wonderful, and I came home with the painting again. And I think what happens is that, once the dam is broken, once that first initial purchase is made, the rest of it just follows suit.

About that same time I remember acquiring another small piece from the Channel Ten Auction. I had been working at the auction as a cameraman, on the audio board, and as an auctioneer, so I spent some time there. One night I came in and a small green image was being taken away. It was a little silkscreen print called *Agamenticus from Cook's Bridge* by John Laurent, and without even getting a good view of it, I placed a bid and won. I think it was fifty-five or sixty dollars. A couple of days later I went up to the studios in Lewiston to pick it up. There were people there picking up chairs and tables and all this interesting stuff they had bought, and I asked for my piece and they brought out this little green image, and everybody in the place looked at me as if I were crazy. "Oh, you poor fool, you paid something for that?" Well, of course it was wonderful and I loved it, so the first two items in my collection

Opposite: Brown at home seated beneath Neil Welliver's *Osprey's Nest*, 1979–80, woodcut, 35¾ x 36"



Susan Crile, *Lane Preserve*, 1986, etching and aquatint, 24 x 54"

were by Steven Etnier and John Laurent.

SER: What did you know about these artists?

BB: I knew *of* them, their names were familiar to me, but I don't think I was very au courant about Maine art at that time. I did not know John Marin's name, for example. But during that year when I was expanding my course in Maine heritage, I was responsible for ordering the audio-visual material for the English department in Freeport, and I ran across a little film strip for about ten or fifteen dollars about John Marin's Maine landscapes, his Maine watercolors, so I ordered it and could not *believe* how fabulous it turned out to be. Then shortly thereafter, within a matter of a year or two, I met John Marin, Jr., who ran a very interesting gallery up in Cape Split. It was a real trek up there, it took almost as long to get up there as it does to drive to New York. But it was always worthwhile, and I bought a couple of small things from him, always wishing it were more. I guess that's true for everybody. And collecting on a school teacher's salary has been a little hard.

SER: Most people would say it sounds impossible.

BB: That's right. I was asked once to appear on a panel at Bates College. It was the first time that I was asked to speak in public about collecting. And one of the other speakers that day, from Sotheby Parke-Bernet, gave some guidelines about sensible ways to collect. He indicated that collectors should put about ten percent of their disposable income toward collecting. But to my mind that's not a collector at all, I mean, anybody who is collecting anything knows that you throw caution to the winds. You beg, borrow, or steal, practically, to get your fix. It gets that bad sometimes, and maybe it's a little neurotic, but I guess I've always felt that people who make some real accomplishment don't do it by taking a safe ten percent route. I feel that way about collecting, and I don't seem to be able to stop, nor do I want to.

SER: Was there any other reason why you started?

BB: Well, I'm a native of Maine, I was born here in Portland, and I lived in the little town of South Paris for nine or ten years. My dad was involved in the trucking industry, and I had a spin at that too for a while, but I spent a lot of time traveling in the summer. I lived in Europe one winter, and I've lived in New York. But my decision to come back to Maine was a very conscious one, and I knew I had a feeling for this place that ran pretty deep. I wanted to do something that would enhance my real appreciation for this place. So I thought about the possibility of collecting Maine art, and that stayed with me for quite some time. Then, with my curiosity and some good guidance from Nancy Davidson of Barridoff Galleries, I began going to Boston. And I began looking at things beyond the state line. Then Boston eventually led to New York, which is interesting because when I lived in New York before I went to museums but never to art galleries.

SER: Why not?

BB: I always thought, "What would I do in a gallery?" I felt I didn't belong. And I think people feel that way a lot, galleries somehow are rather awesome places, at least people think of them that way. But it didn't take me long to learn, thanks to the lessons I had here in Portland. The galleries that I dealt with here in Maine couldn't have been more helpful and supportive, and they gave me the courage to try elsewhere. My experiences in Boston and New York have always been equally as pleasant. And I think that's one of the great joys of collecting. You get to know some really terrific people who have similar interests. Anyway, after going to Boston and New York and developing an interest in American work by itself, now I have bought a George Baselitz print. That has extended my horizons to Germany. And in my fantasies I see myself going to Düsseldorf and Cologne and discovering what's happening over there.

SER: Did you ever take any art history courses?

BB: At Boston University I had one course, and I loved it. I even proposed to my parents that I would like to major in fine arts. They were appalled and indicated that there would be no support from them for that. I had no way of building a defense as to why

majoring in fine arts would be a good thing to do. And in those days I was a terrible student, I was pretty much floundering around anyway.

SER: So that was it as far as formal background?

BB: Actually, I took a year's course and then a summer course. One was a survey and I've forgotten the second. But I remember writing a paper, and going to the Museum of Fine Arts and getting very interested in a large Titian.

SER: So when you began buying works of art some ten years ago, you were not basing your choices on background or research but instinct.

BB: It's always been instinct, I think. I'm not a very scholarly fellow. There has to be sort of a visceral excitement about a piece, I think that's what I'm mostly interested in. If I don't understand the title of a work, it doesn't bother me very much. I'm much more interested in what an artist can do, a vision that an artist can share, that seems really different and unique.

SER: And you're one of these people, without a lot of extensive art background, who instinctively can deal with things like abstraction and expression?

BB: If I'm to compliment myself in one way, I believe I have a reasonably good eye.

SER: Did your pace of collecting keep increasing over the years?

BB: What happened, I think, must be rather typical. The first urge was to buy almost everything in sight—everything seemed beautiful and everything was somewhat affordable because I was looking at works that cost from maybe seventy-five to two, three, five hundred dollars. I shortly exhausted my resources for such purchases, so then I was forced to become a little bit more discriminating. The reality was that I would have to limit my buying to three or four works a year and that basically remains unchanged. I spend a lot of time looking, I make long lists that I constantly revise. My wish list is very, very long, but my actual acquisition list is pretty damn short.

SER: So you established a collection and then for a short while you opened a print dealership.

BB: Well, I'd always been extremely happy just to be a collector. It was just a quiet activity that consumed a good part of my life. But last fall two things happened to change that. When Pat Nick opened the Vinalhaven Press show at the Portland Museum of Art, it seemed to me that it deserved support and that I would like to offer some support to her project. In conjunction with that show, Diane Villani, a publisher of prints in New York, came to talk about contemporary artists and printmakers, mostly in New York, and she presented a slide show of people she thought were important in terms of fine art prints at this time. I realized that I was familiar with everything she was showing. And it struck me that probably all those years of looking and taking trips to Boston and New York had given me a certain background and experience in this area. So I came away thinking that maybe my role should change a bit. Now it just happened that my friend Dean Velentgas had also become very interested in prints, and on free Saturdays we'd run down to Boston and go around to the galleries. He was thinking about opening a gallery, and so we decided that it would be fun to try a print show together. We thought we could offer a pretty solid show if we combined works from both our collections, and then took some works on consignment from the Vinalhaven Press. So that's how last spring's print show came into being.

SER: So this has been a watershed year for you.

BB: It seems that way. To me, the Vinalhaven Press exhibition was one of the most interesting shows that the museum has sponsored in the new building. And Pat was enormously helpful to Dean and me. I've also discovered that my own aesthetic seems to respond better to works on paper perhaps more than, say, oil paintings, and so I've been perhaps forced to go out of state more to find works that really do interest me.

SER: Is it also because works on paper tend to be a little cheaper?

BB: Of course. I could buy an Alex Katz print at a very affordable price whereas I couldn't really consider an oil painting. But even that's changed—prints are not so affordable these days either. So it's the old bind again: every purchase is something of a financial struggle. But I think our idea for the show was to present the best possible cross-section of what's available in recent contemporary prints, something that doesn't appear very often in Maine. That was our goal. But the thing was, as one knowledgeable person said to me, "Isn't this kind of a foolish venture, you and Dean having the print show?" Because it's very possible that we may be the more recognized print collectors around this area, and if the two of us are putting on the show, who will our audience be? Are we going to sell to each other?

SER: The opening was crawling with people. How do you account for that popularity?

BB: Well, first, perhaps, Dean's first show of Larry Hayden had drawn a lot of notice. So I think there was some carryover from that. It was still a new gallery, and there was a lot of excitement. I think the second thing was the nature of the show itself—it was indeed different in kind from most galleries' shows. I can't think of a time when people have seen Robert Longo and David Salle, some of the so-called hot names, together in a show in Portland. Third, this was my first show, so you get the friends and relatives who will come the first time and then may never come again. But shows in well-established galleries certainly attract people to openings, and it's not unusual to have a packed house on opening night in Portland. I think people look forward to going out and seeing what's up.

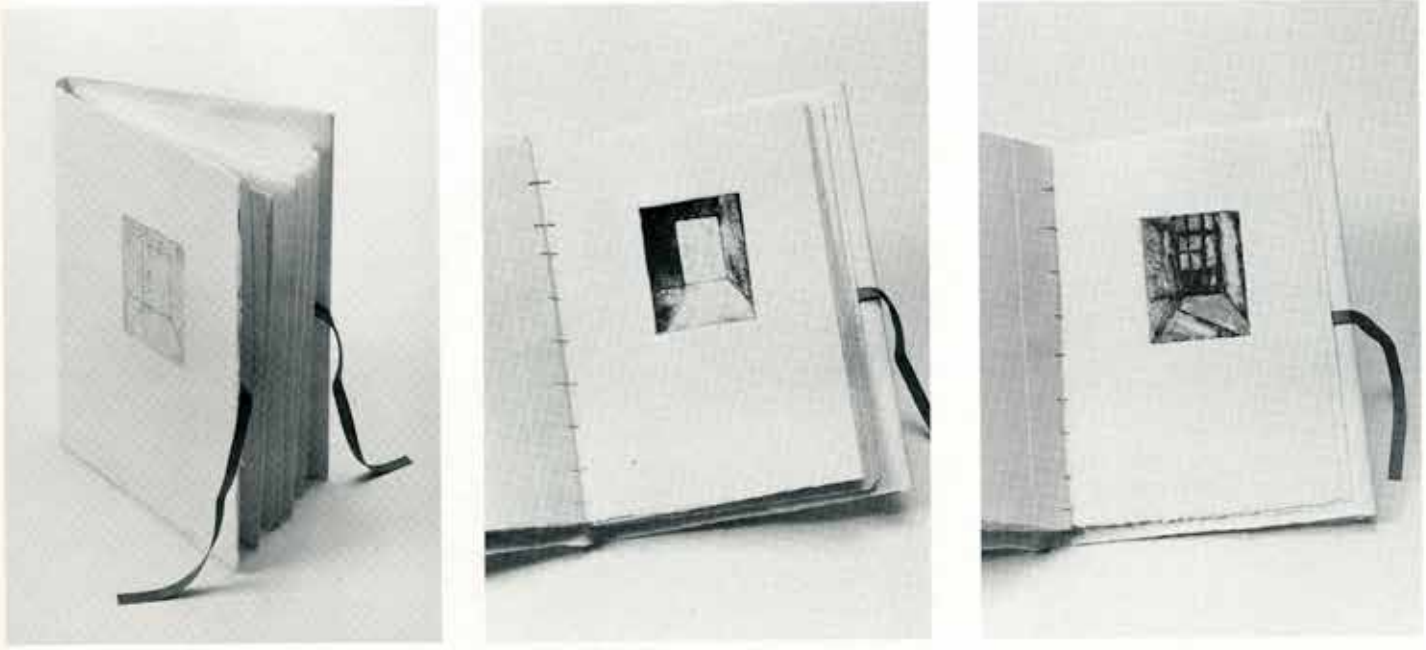
SER: How did your show do?

BB: It sold very well, amazingly well, I think. There was a terrific response from businesses; Bill Alcorn, in particular, president of Wood Structures in Biddeford, a company that is building a fine collection and not just of prints. The public response ran the gamut from people who had no idea of what prints were all about, people who might be shocked at $1500 for an Ellsworth Kelley—"Why isn't this $49.95?"—to the other end of the scale, people who really welcomed seeing something different. But it broadened people's awareness a little bit, in terms of both the print medium and artists' accomplishments.

SER: What did you learn from doing the show?

BB: That I really wanted to continue to do that sort of thing. But I have to be realistic. My real life is teaching school. Then I thought that a more practical idea might be to organize two or three short-term shows a year. I looked into that, you know, because our print show had been so successful. There was a sort of impetus to do that. But life has to be lived. First obligations first, I guess. But now the job with Maine Coast Artists has come along and I can use what I've learned, organizing shows for them.

SER: And what about the idea, the so-called Portland trend, of the collector becoming a dealer? What's really happening here? Is this a natural



C. Kavookjian, *Passages*, 1987, book of monotypes over etchings, seventeen images plus cover, 8¾ x 12"

response to people collecting art, people finding they want to turn it over?

BB: I'm not sure it's quite that. That wasn't my intent. You work hard at building a collection, and I would be loathe to part with ninety-five percent of it. It's been real hard work to put it together, and I don't want to see it dismantled. I guess what you want to do is to offer some special support to artists who excite you, whose work you're very interested in.

SER: It sounds like your previous interest in dealing art, and now in curating shows, are basically spinoffs from being a teacher *and* a collector.

BB: I think collecting has been a very important educational experience for me. In a slow kind of way, perhaps my own ability to interest other people in prints would lead to education for them. I guess there's always the teacher coming out in me. If I can play a small part in widening people's awareness, I think that's very exciting. And just in thinking about having something to offer a potential "audience" means that I have to learn more myself.

SER: In your curating, then, you'll bring your experience as an educator to bear.

BB: The point here is that I'm not that all-fired knowledgeable. I don't have degrees in the fine arts. I'm just somebody who sort of picked up an interest in the visual arts and has tried to follow through. But, I know it's exciting when I run across someone whose work is new and interesting for me.

SER: What kind of advice would you give people in general about collecting? What could you say to them as a result of your experiences in learning how to collect? The interested viewer that might show up one day who might consider buying art, but who knows nothing or doesn't feel confident. What kind of advice would you give them on how to recognize quality in art and what it should mean for them?

BB: I think a work of art first has to evoke some kind of emotional reponse. I think there has to be technical competence, but more than that there has to be what I guess you could call a spiritual vision. I think you have to become emotionally involved. But you also try to keep as much dross out of the collection as possible, to try to exercise prudent judgment.

SER: But when you talk about emotional judgment and prudent judgment, aren't you contradicting yourself?

BB: I think there are two parts to the matter, the intellectual and emotional components, and I think there has to be a bit of both. But the bottom line is that you get very excited—emotionally charged by a work. You become personally involved in it.

SER: And at *that* point, you step back and say, "What kind of a purchase is this? Who is this artist? What place does this piece hold in his work? What kind of work is it related to?"

BB: Of course. You try to buy the very best piece you can possibly afford by an artist, and it may mean finding a promising young artist who's just starting out and whose prices are still affordable.

SER: Rather than a really minor thing that just carries a big name.

BB: I think so. I think what it comes down to is that when a person's work strikes you, you see as much of it as you can and that may mean following shows for several years. And then, once you feel familiar and comfortable with art and an artist's work, then you acquire as good a piece from that artist as possible. I guess I've given up the idea of having a really minor piece by somebody who's out of my league because in the long run there are probably better alternatives.

SER: Have you ever bought a mistake?

BB: If you mean by that, a work that I truly didn't like almost as soon as I got home, the answer is yes. Once. But within a matter of months, I took it to New York and sold it for more than I paid for it. Just enough more to pay for my trip.

SER: Have you ever been influenced by reviews? Do you read them to see what the critics think of artists that you have been looking at?

BB: I think I am more apt to listen to a dealer or gallery owner. The thing about working with a gallery is that you try to find one you like, whose aes-

Georg Baselitz, *Schwarze Mutter Weises Kind*, 1986, woodcut, 27½ x 39½"; from an edition of twenty, this is the only impression sold in America

thetics seem to be like your own. You have to try them out and build a personal rapport. Some rather good relationships can develop between patrons and gallery staff, and it certainly has been so in my own case. I listen very carefully now to what galleries will say, fully recognizing that they're interested in selling. But at the same time they know that I, as a client, want to be pleased. So they tend to be very honest, and somewhat open, and just share their enthusiasms and what they like and what things are not so great. For example, with a couple of galleries I work with, I provide them with lists of artists who are in my collection so that they can get a sense of it. And they may see even more clearly than I where it's all leading, because I'm not sure that I always know when my interests change. There's a lot more agitated work in my more recent pieces than my past purchases, there's a lot more blackness in my pieces than there has been in years past. I can see a concentration on figurative work emerging, and an interest in artists' self-portraits and portraits of artists' friends. All seem to be emerging from a rather amorphous collection. But a good gallery can help with things like that.

SER: So do you respond to the idea of reviews?

BB: Not particularly. And still I think I've become reasonably well aware, for someone living in Portland, Maine, of who's emerging, who has a growing reputation, who's popular, things of that sort. I think you could run through the list of names in my collection and say, "This is a sampling of important contemporary artists." I do think that in many instances people who are at the top deserve to be there because of the work that they do. But I do not read the art magazines extensively.

SER: Why? Because you've never found them to be of much value?

BB: I think there are two reasons. Sometimes I don't understand them.

SER: Because they don't explain their names and their terms?

BB: Yes, sometimes they get involved in issues that somehow seem beyond my ability to understand what the hell they're talking about.

SER: Or?

BB: Or I just simply don't see them. I don't have time to track down reviews.

SER: Do you mean that being in Maine not many reviews are available to you on a regular basis, and you don't subscribe to six or seven out-of-town newspapers and art journals?

BB: I don't any more. I used to do those things, but life just doesn't lend itself to it. There's no sense in having that stuff kicking around the house if I'm not going to use it.

SER: But could you conceive of reviews being useful if, for example, in reviewing a show, they really gave you some background about the artist or the theme of the show? Talked about other, related shows and compared them?

BB: There's no doubt about that, as a dealer or as a curator, one has to get background information on artists, who they are, where they've shown, track down articles that have appeared about them, so that people who are interested can read up as well. So, yes, reviews that provide me with information are helpful.

SER: And, in such a context, would you listen to a critic?

BB: When it comes right down to it, the best critic has to be me. I have to decide for myself whether there's enough inherent interest—power and glory—in a specific work for me to want to have it in my collection, regardless of what any critic may or may not say. When I put my money down then I'm making a critical judgment, an essential critical judgment.

SER: One that you personally have to live with.

BB: Absolutely. I learned long ago that there is no defense for buying a work of art because somebody says, "This is wonderful," or "It's going to be worth a lot of money one day," or anything like that. I think, maybe yes and maybe no, but that's the wrong approach. You have to buy the work because you love it and somehow you just can't live without it. To me, that's the most critical element of criticism. There's just no other consideration.

Portland Museum of Art curator Martha Severens before Dennis Aufiery's *Blue Key* (1980, oil on canvas, collection of M. G. Lewis and Company, Winter Park, Florida), part of this past summer's exhibition, "Skowhegan: A Ten-Year Retrospective"

ART BRIEFS

MARTHA R. SEVERENS: NEW CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS AT THE PORTLAND MUSEUM OF ART

LAST April Martha R. Severens, articulate, insightful, and full of positive energy, plunged into the challenges of her new position as curator of collections at the Portland Museum of Art. At the museum, where there is one curator—and that position has been vacant since the summer of 1986—her responsibilities are truly extensive. In her own words, she sees herself as "keeper of the collection"—the collection, in this case, being all that the museum owns, including such constituents as the State of Maine Collection, the Albert Otten Collection, and the Charles Shipman Payson Collection. She's the one who ultimately makes the decisions about what goes on exhibition, what can be loaned out, conservation priorities, collecting, de-accessioning, research, publication, and programing. While putting together exhibitions is a collaborative effort involving all departments of the museum—at least until a new director is hired—the ultimate responsibility for shaping the content and character of the museum's offerings rests with Martha Severens.

One of her initial goals as curator is to promote the museum's collection. "I feel it's been in this building, it's been on the walls, but it hasn't made a real impact on people. It hasn't been remembered. A lot of this has to do with visibility, interpretation, and education."

Severens sees education as the primary means of making the collection more relevant. By using more labels and interpretive wall texts she hopes to give museum-goers more information about what they are viewing, "so that they look, react, think, and remember." Brochures discussing certain collections can circulate outside the museum and are one way of increasing the visibility of the museum's holdings. But because of the need to find additional sources of funding, publication of more costly materials like catalogs is still a long-range goal.

Martha Severens came to Portland with ten years of experience as curator of collections at the Gibbes Art Gallery in Charleston, South Carolina, where she also lectured at the College of Charleston until 1981. Prior to that she received her bachelor's in fine arts from Wells College, Aurora, New York, and a master's in art history from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and taught at Oberlin and Ashland colleges, both in Ohio. During Severens's tenure at the Gibbes, she helped revitalize that institution by organizing exhibitions, writing and publishing catalogs, supervising grant programs, restructuring an antiquated cataloging system, and lecturing throughout the community.

While the Gibbes Art Gallery is smaller than the Portland Museum of Art, there are parallels between the two institutions. Both are located in port cities that are concerned with historic preservation and both house art primarily from their own states. Severens was attracted to Portland partly because of these similarities, but also felt the position here has a great deal more potential.

Severens's first major effort, "Paperwork," an exhibition this fall of works on paper from the collection, was scheduled to coincide with the final phase of a grant received by the museum in 1985 for conservation, remounting, and matting of the museum's more than five hundred works in this category. She designed the display not only as a showcasing of works never before on view, but a didactic experience as well, with an exhibit illustrating the ravaging effects of acids, sunlight, moisture, and heat on paper.

As for addressing the needs of contemporary artists living and working in Maine, Severens has determined that the museum must be more active. "We are a community museum as well as the state's largest art museum. I feel we have a responsibility to take an interest in the artists working in Maine and provide a resource for them." Severens regularly attends museum and gallery openings, locally and along the coast, to establish contact with the art community and acquire an awareness of the currents

continued on pg. 32

COVER PROFILE:

Northern Archives: Celeste Roberge's Earthy Humanism

ETHNICALLY, historically, geographically, even psychologically—in many ways Maine is carved out of Canada. Today some forty percent of Maine residents are of Canadian descent. The mark of their culture in Maine, as in the rest of northernmost United States, has been perhaps too subtle to be appreciated, too much taken for granted as our own. Sculptor Celeste Roberge is one who has considered the character of Canada in her quest for an essential northerness: "I think because Canada is so isolated, so *much* further north, a quarter of its land mass is within the Arctic Circle, it's uninhabited. There are twenty-five million people in Canada, ten percent of what we have in the United States, and they're spread over an incredibly large area. So I think that people in Canada are very much aware of their landscape and distance and geography. I was thinking to myself, 'Why did I go to Nova Scotia?' Because it's at the extreme eastern point. But it's not just geographical, it also has to do with a sense of something else, of infinity and isolation. I think that's the kind of extremism I was attracted to."

Roberge was born in Biddeford, one of the towns in Maine with a large Franco-American population, much of which arrived en masse in the late nineteenth century when the textile mills thrived, required cheap labor, and, as industries do today, imported it. But her parents didn't come down that way. They were from Tingwick and Warwick in Quebec's Eastern Township and immigrated when the province suffered severe economic recession after World War II. Her father was French Canadian and operated factory boilers; her mother was Irish Canadian and a seamstress. The family all spoke French, and her education at French Catholic day schools in Biddeford was bilingual.

Quite naturally Roberge's sense of peoples' backgrounds and social behavior was honed at an early age. The first in her family to attend college, she studied sociology at the University of Orono where she became involved in Franco-American affairs and was the first editor of the *FAROG Forum* (FAROG, which stands for Franco-American Resource Opportunity Group, is an acronym for the racial slur, "frog"). For that paper she wrote such interviews and articles as one about Eugene Bouchard, a Waterville artist who founded the Norridgewock Historic Site in 1974, a landmark in the French and Indian Wars. Roberge's write-up records Bouchard's remark: "Look at the Maine history books and you don't see anything about Frenchmen. As though we had no heritage."

In search of that heritage she took advantage of a scholarship program and spent her junior year at L'Université de Sherbrooke in Quebec, where she became involved with theater, taking acting workshops and doing some costume design. And there she met a lot of artists. "I never thought of myself as an artist. But there's something about being in another country, it's like you get to break away from your habits, your traditions, and so it's like the world is more open. You can redefine yourself. Being in Quebec brought out another side of my personality. It's just like languages—you speak one language and you're able to express certain things, and if you learn another language, you express other things. And I think that just by speaking French all the time, my personality changed."

After graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Orono, Roberge moved to Portland, took one course in drawing at the University of Southern Maine, and enrolled in the Portland School of Art. "I was thinking of going into printmaking, but then I got there and I took sculpture. Within a week I knew sculpture was it." She took all the sculpture courses she could at the school, all with Portland sculptor John Ventimiglia, whom she found an excellent artist, technician, and teacher. "So I struck it, I was very lucky. When I look back, I think, God that was so crazy. I was twenty-six years old, no one had ever told me I had talent, and I'd never done it before. I just said, 'I'm going to try this.'"

Ventimiglia recalls her as a student: "I think that when she threw off some preconceptions of what art is and faced some challenges in drawing and design, she was surprised at what she found. And then she just took off. She

Opposite: Roberge with *Northern Archives: Geographies*, 1987, three pieces: steel and granite, 21d x 28¾"; steel and burnt wood, 21½d x 29¼"; lead over fiberglass, 20½ x 26¼", collection of the artist

Right: Botanical Series: Daphne, 1984, steel and wire, 8 x 9 x 8', collection of the artist; *far right:* detail from *Geographies;* 1984, steel, wire, and solder; size of a human head; collection of M. G. Lewis and Company, Winter Park, Florida

always went beyond expectations, beyond the norm, and became fearless. And she was incredibly well-read and aware of what was going on in sculpture outside of Portland."

Her disbelief in limitation and her amazingly rapid maturation as an artist led to her application, acceptance, and scholarship award to the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, rare for an art student of only three years. But she never felt like an ingenue: "It made me take myself even more seriously," she says, "because I was with people who took me seriously." Some aspects of the experience were tough—the isolation and the obsessiveness there—and she spent a week "on the raft." "But at Skowhegan I also learned that art isn't just made in the studio. You can learn as much being with other people and talking, or reading, or going for a walk, because the studio environment is a very controlled, dead environment—it's an enclosed, framed space. And that isn't where art comes from."

After Skowhegan Roberge took a break. With her sociology background and her bilingual ability she went to work at Pine Tree Legal Assistance and found the work challenging and demanding. The first year she couldn't do sculpture at all. But she saved the money to buy welding equipment and set up a studio. She began exhibiting, at the Maine Festival in Brunswick, at Maine Coast Artists in Rockport, and at the University of Maine at Orono, but as the years wore on she felt she just couldn't produce enough work.

A trip to Montreal with her brother led her to apply to the art department at Concordia University. She wanted to return to that French Canadian atmosphere again, to express herself in that language. However, the tuition fees for non-Canadians were too expensive. Still the urge to go north persisted. She spent a couple of weeks at St. Andrews on the north coast of Scotland and the Isle of Sky in the Inner Hebrides. Taken with the cold, windy topography, she did a "botanical series," as she calls it, of tempest-tossed trees made of steel and wire and based on the English hawthorns that characterize the northern Scottish shorelands. Then, ironically, after applying to more art schools, this time throughout New England ("I included Nova Scotia in New England!" she recalls), she found herself in the Scottish-settled city of Halifax at the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design (NSCAD). Founded in 1887 as the Victoria School of Art and Design, NSCAD remained sleepy until the nineteen sixties, when a Canadian painter named Garry Kennedy assumed its presidency.

Kennedy, in his mid thirties, with lofty, art-without-walls ideas, practical tactics, and a belief that the study of art is a branch of higher learning, brought about programs and a certain esprit that made NSCAD an international art center and the cradle of conceptualism. Combating Halifax's relative isolatedness, Kennedy vastly upscaled the school's visiting artists program and in the late sixties and early seventies students found a constant influx of art personalities from around the globe, like Douglas Heubler, Vito Acconci, Carl Andre, John Chamberlain, Robert Morris, Dennis Oppenheim, Lucy Lippard, and Les Levine, to name only a few. Progressive "media" like conceptual and environmental art were taught earlier there than elsewhere and courses like "World Encounter," in which students visited different countries to study diverse cultures, forced students to rethink their relationships with art and the world around them. By the mid seventies NSCAD had moved into new quarters in a waterfront block in the heart of Halifax, rehabbed by their environmental design department, and maintained a New York loft on East Houston Street in SoHo. This year the school celebrated its hundredth anniversary with an international symposium on Dada deity Marcel Duchamp.

When Celeste Roberge entered NSCAD in 1984 the excitement was perhaps muted but the school remained in high repute, with "the study of art as an intellectual discipline" still official policy. "A lot of the conceptual artists ended up becoming very politically involved," she recalls, "so the school turned in a very international-political direction—anti-capitalist, anti-nuke, feminist."

She had not considered her work particularly content-oriented up to that time. Pieces like her 1981–1982

Far left: Geography's Body, 1985, steel and wire, figure: 50 x 75 x 23½", sphere: 38"d, collection of the artist; *left:* Albrecht Dürer, *Melancholia I*, 1514, engraving, 9½ x 7 ⅜", courtesy of The Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, gift of William Gray from the Francis Calley Gray Collection

Opposite: Roberge's studio in Portland with *Northern Archives: Walking Cairn*, in progress

steel hanging, *The Cellular Structure of My Reptilian Brain*, she considers basically formalist, and its relationship to abstract drawings was brought out recently when the work was exhibited as part of the Portland School of Art's "Drawing Toward Sculpture" exhibition earlier this year. But the pseudo-organicism of that piece, and its title, belie Roberge's deep-rooted concern with beings, processes of thought, and the nature of humanity. Ever the social philosopher, at NSCAD Roberge felt mostly like an observer, not getting caught up in any particular art trend. But "people that I associated with were feminist, and I participated in a reading group and we read a whole gamut of stuff, from works about socially conscious art to political writings and poststructuralist criticism—like writings by Jean Baudrillard and Edward W. Said, books like *The Anti-Aesthetic* [*Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster, Port Townsend, Washington, 1983]. Anyway I wasn't politically involved, my work is not message-oriented, it's much too personal for that."

What attracted her even more than the school was the place itself: "The physicalness of the land, the roughness of it, the coarseness of it. What do you think of when you think about Nova Scotia? You think about water, wind, fish, rocks—a very raw landscape. I think I wanted a primal experience with the land, because sculpture is so earth-oriented and body-oriented, I thought I needed this experience in order to grow as a sculptor. I still don't feel like I've had enough. It's very elusive. I feel like I want to go back, I want to go further north, I want to go to Newfoundland next."

The cerebral atmosphere at NSCAD and the sparse, chill beauty of Nova Scotia life catalyzed a new direction for Roberge: "I think what happened at the end of it was that I wanted to pull myself back into it more, in a real body sense, a real human sense. I also felt I wanted my work to be more humanist, more about human issues."

The result was a group of works in which abstract-formal and metaphoric-confrontational ideas interface, as in *Geographies* (1984), a group of three egg- or head-shaped objects: two of them open grid containers, analogues of earth's meridians, containing stones and wire wadding respectively; the third made of solid lead. In another work, *Labyrinths* (1985), a similar steel-cage egg enclosing "Goldilocks" wire wadding resides beside a triangular variant of the mythical Minotaur's den. The eggs—or heads—in both sculptures are lifesize and thus decapitated, surrealistic, unsettling, like Brancusi crossed with Oppenheim. "I didn't even realize the connection until I'd made my first 'head,' and then I thought, 'Oh, Brancusi, of course, this is coming out of a tradition.' But since I was exploring the notion of 'geographies,' I wanted this object to seem weightier, more confrontational. You look at it and it's like you're looking at your own face, sidewise. It's that kind of relationship."

Geographies was an exploration of what she called "appearances"—about the difference between an object in front of you and the ideas it summons to mind. The culmination of such life-sized forms that force viewer identification was her thesis piece at NSCAD, *Geography's Body*. It consists of an empty, openwork sphere or globe fashioned from steel rods, and a metaphysical meditating mannequin with steel-wire, square-stock "skin" encaging rusty wire wadding—material "resembling used Brillo," according to *Maine Sunday Telegram* critic Philip Isaacson (March 29, 1987). Confrontational, impossible not to react to, this three-dimensional diptych has a host of art-historical predecessors. The seated figure, head-on-hand, was conventionalized at least as early as Hellenistic times when it was used for philosophers and priests in monumental Roman wall paintings such as one from Boscoreale in the Museo Nazionale. *Geography's Body* is also a spiritual descendant of a key image of the Northern Renaissance, Albrecht Dürer's 1514 engraving, *Melancholia I*, in which an allegorical figure also contemplates a sphere. Dürer's figure has been identified by scholars like Erwin Panofsky (*The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, Princeton University Press, 1955), as the personification of the humor associated by medieval authors with a predominence of black gall in unsociable, ill-tempered, intel-

lectual personalities, and also symbolizing Saturn, Geometry, and Artistic Genius. Further, according to another scholar (Peter Sohm, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, IX, 1980), the engraving also illustrates man's cycle of sin and salvation—the Christian version of human perfectability. The significant contrast of ideal form and bodily disarray—which Roberge's figure clearly shares with Dürer's—is at once symbolic and physically expressive, offensive in fact (Roberge recalls the reaction of Garry Kennedy, who was on her NSCAD thesis committee: "I hate this thing, it makes me sick—but you ought to make more of them").

Identification and revulsion are fearsome when felt together. And as such Roberge's work was dismissed by Maine critics who faulted it because of its forebears: the word trite appeared in every review. Indeed, such forebears comprise a lineage of quality that places considerable demands on its descendants. As Panofsky pointed out, *Melancholia I* assumed the baggage of dozens of assorted precedents, but transformed them into a new entity. *Geography's Body* meets a similar challenge. Roberge's is an aggressive, raw-guts interpretation of the same universal polarities that concerned Dürer: mind/body, ideal/real, perfect/flawed. Thus, the bipart sculpture brings to mind ideas about the periodical nature of artistic imagery, such as the "formal sequence" concept of art historian George Kubler:

> Every important work of art can be regarded both as a historical event and as a hard-won solution to some problem. . . . any solution points to the existence of some problem to which there have been other solutions, and . . . other solutions to this same problem will most likely be invented to follow the one now in view. . . . When problems cease to command active attention as deserving of new solutions, the sequence of solutions is stable during the period of inaction. But any past problem is capable of reactivation under new conditions. (*The Shape of Time*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1962).

Rosalind Kraus (*Originality and the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1985) makes a similar point when she identifies the repeated rediscovery of the grid in twentieth-century painting—always under the

Wrathful Deities: 1983, aluminum wire and stainless steel, 5 figures: each 78" high, base: 108 x 79 x 4", Portland Museum of Art

But then, "The Idea of North" is itself an excuse—an opportunity to examine that condition of solitude which is neither exclusive to the north nor the prerogative of those who go north but which does perhaps appear, with all its ramifications, a bit more clearly to those who have made, if only in their imagination, the journey north.

Glen Gould, "'The Idea of North': An Introduction," *The Glenn Gould Reader,* Alfred A. Knopf Inc., New York, 1984

banner of originality—as an etiological response to a recurring situation.

Such art-historical and poststructuralist postulations elucidate the scale and terms of Roberge's sculptural field. The problem represented in *Geography's Body* is both classic and currently perceived, the solution both traditional and experiential. The result is imagery that locates the personal in the cosmos and charges humanism with visceral force. "It's like bringing the human complexity—the human mess—into contact with pure abstraction, which is what it's contemplating," Roberge says. "The abstraction is very beautiful, universal, a form of perfection—it's very Platonic. But the figure isn't Platonic—it's ugly, raw. One of my fellow students commented when she saw it, 'This is not safe sculpture'. I was very glad she said that, because I don't want to be safe, not any more. I felt like I had done all this exploring for two years, now what's my statement? And that was my statement."

For her next statements Roberge returned to the large scale of earlier works like *Wrathful Deities* (1983), now in the Portland Museum of Art. The three-part *Northern Archives: Geographies* (1987), done after her return to Portland, formally and thematically enlarges upon a predecessor within Roberge's own oeuvre, the 1984 *Geographies.* But in the 1987 sculpture the containers are much bigger and so draw attention to their contents, materials that represent "transformation." "Any natural material is like a state of being," Roberge explains—wood can become charcoal or even stone; stone can become dust. Lead, the solid form in the sculpture, has age-old associations with alchemy, the medieval science of material transformation. These materials are rendered humanistically relevant because they are contained within resting head forms, enlarged beyond the lifesized versions found in the earlier *Geographies* and *Labyrinth* and literally referenced in *Geography's Body.*

The lifesized analogy, thus expanded, then grew to topographic scale, and Roberge transformed self-portrait into monument. *Walking Cairn,* unveiled at Hobe Sound Galleries North last July, is a humanized landmark. The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that "cairn," after the old Gaelic "carn" meaning "heap of stones," is a word that accumulated particular meanings over time: "boundary marker," "memorial or gravemarker," "landmark or landmarker" in remote mountain or coastal locations that guided voyagers or indicated a *depôt* of provisions, or simply, "a mere pile of stones." Since the cairn amassed meanings progressively, over time, in association with what it was used to mark, Roberge's *Walking Cairn* is a landmark of meanings acquired through experience, and progressively, through movement and time. The nine-foot-high "pile of stones" is encased in a steel-cage self-portrait of five-and-a-half-foot tall Roberge, and it is a record of Roberge walking, as indicated by the sketches in her studio. "I do a lot of walking," she says, "I take treks. I'm a very gentle walker. I climb small mountains, go to lakes, walk along the coast. In Scotland they call it 'hill walking'." In part, *Walking Cairn* "came into being" during specific walks Roberge took along the Maine coast, on beaches east of the Penobscot Bay. There she collected the round, pinkish igneous rocks characteristic of those northern beaches —rocks that are themselves records of the origin of the land and of the motions of waves—to fill in the "flesh" of her cairn. Altogether, this monument of anthropomorphized geology is a marker of multiplied actions and experiences—a northern archive.

Recently Roberge returned to Scotland, one of the isolated northern extremes in her geographic inventory —places, as she says, of cold, raw matter. This time she went to Orkney where she saw the remains of ancient megalithic monuments like the Ring of Brodgar and the Standing Stones of Stenness, both third century B.C. She also viewed a lot of art, in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London, of a more contemporary nature—and she was surprised to find recent works, especially among those dealing with northern contexts, that are analogous to her own. "At first that disturbed me. And then I thought, after all, we are all products of our times." By addressing, as artistic problems, concerns and feelings that are widely perceived, and seeking solutions through individual thought and experience, mighty works of stature and eloquence can be produced, works with visual, physical, and intellectual resonance. Celeste Roberge grasps this. Moreover, as a sculptor, she has only just begun.

Art au menu

PORTLAND'S RESTAURANT GALLERIES

You might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see!"

—the Mad Hatter, *Alice in Wonderland*

TRADITIONALLY, the worlds of art and gastronomy rarely mix, except at museum and gallery openings, when crowds seem more compelled by the hors d'oeuvres and drinks than by the paintings and sculpture. During the past ten years, a growing number of Portland's more adventuresome restaurants have begun regular programs of showing art. Some hope to improve business; others are ideologically committed to art or to artists. This new exhibiting venue does allow artists, many of whom feel cut off from the narrow confines of the few commercial galleries, to display their work to a much larger, more heterogeneous group than a predisposed "art audience."

Potential physical dangers to the art and a certain level of audience distraction mar the restaurant as an ideal art arena. Some artists won't consider showing in them because the context isn't "serious" enough, and a number of art professionals agree. Have such places proven effective showcases for the area's artists? In Portland, the answer appears to be a qualified yes. But has the "art audience" truly been widened by the restaurants' efforts? This is less clear. Does this new presentation form signal a dawning era of widespread attention to, and collecting of, Portland's band of artists? Probably not. But it does at least suggest that a hopeful "art democracy" is alive in Portland. People who go out to eat—even in modest little sandwich shops—get repeated chances to look at work by largely unknown artists. In a relaxed, unintimidating environment, diners can live with art for a while and can begin to feel comfortable making judgments about it. A number are even buying it, and, since the restaurants take no commission, artists have the rare opportunity to keep all their profits. Portland's artists, eateries, and general public all benefit in a way not currently happening in most cities.

Why a smattering of Portland restaurants began showing art some ten years ago has to do with the city's constituents: many young, liberal counterculture leftovers had settled or returned here, and a number of these nascent impresarios had previously studied art. Nick Burnette, owner of The Baker's Table, opened the restaurant ten years ago with two artist partners. Right from the start, they showed art in their brick-lined basement cafeteria. Burnette says he's never worked hard on the art aspect of the business; he's very relaxed about who can show there. For him, the most important thing about having art in his restaurant is that the works are exposed to many kinds of people. "Art isn't class oriented," he says. "Fishermen have bought art here as well as professional people." Alan Lovell of Alan's Incredible Edibles had studied photography at the Portland School of Art before he found himself in the food business, almost by accident, when a summer ice cream and cookie enterprise unexpectedly took off. Like Burnette, Lovell takes a casual approach to the quality of his changing art displays, emphasizing his commitment to the artists' freedom of expression. "I don't consider myself a gallery; I do it to change the walls and give people a chance who might not get the chance. . . . Even if I don't like it, I let people decide for themselves," he explains. The level of professionalism varies wildly from show to show:

Cafe Always with last summer's show of works by Portland artist Ellen Gutekunst

alongside irregularly placed sconces and several burned-out lights, amateurish pencil drawings of Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, and Judy Garland dotted the tall walls when we spoke recently. However, some well-known artists, including Alison Hildreth, who now shows at Barridoff Gallery, and Howard Clifford, recently honored with a show at the Farnsworth Museum, have exhibited work at Alan's.

Several newer eateries have followed the example set by these older establishments, but with an eighties "business is the bottom line" flavor rather than an ideological commitment. The minimally furnished, warehouse-style Green Mountain Cafe has allowed artists to show their work on cinderblock walls for the past four years, but insists on certain restrictions: no nudes, and nothing "offensive" (they once took down a wall relief assemblage with religious overtones). Local artist David Cedrone recounts being told not to show any drawings of "big fat people, because people are eating!" "We're not here to make political statements," concludes booker Betsy Hyde. The Art Gallery Restaurant used to exhibit young, innovative artists with the encouragement of Cybil Martin, wife of owner John Martin, but when the place changed hands, the art took on a distinct "Early Maine" tourist flavor. The owner of Cory Staid Gallery in Kennebunkport was hired as the art consultant, and low-grade watercolors of barns and Maine landscapes, hanging on distracting striped wallpaper, were the unfortunate result.

Joe Soley, owner of the rapidly expanding Seamen's Club, likes to collect art himself and shows paintings from his collection at the restaurant alongside borrowed objects, including Afghani rugs and local artists' works. Consequently, the many rooms have a hodgepodge quality. A minor furor resulted when Soley abruptly removed several paintings by local artist Carlo Pittore, whose bloodied boxers' heads disturbed some diners. "We are in the restaurant business. Our primary objective is to satisfy our customers," defended Soley in a letter to the *Maine Times*. The incident highlights the potentially major conflict faced by restaurant owners who want to show art. If the owner wants to show innovative, demanding work, he or she must develop an attitude, reflected in the restaurant's style, which will bolster such work against the potentially negative reactions of customers. It's a difficult line to walk, and the restaurateur, who after all is not a professional gallery owner, could lose customers as a result.

At the quiet blond oasis of Portland Wine and Cheese, quiet blond owner Michael Hoy attractively highlights art on a long, well-lit wall facing high streetfront windows. The only art he rejects is work with "no guts, like the 'scenic Maine' kind of commercialism." Indeed, a recent display of Peter Bennett's crisp, colorful drawings of robotlike figures had a sinister, threatening undertone that gave the work quite a bit of dramatic tension. Sarah Spalding's miniature abstractions, hung somewhat obscurely over the wine racks, shared with Bennett's pictures a superficial prettiness that quickly revealed a keen and unsentimental vision. Hoy readily admits that customers sometimes dislike the work he shows, but says their remarks don't bother him: "I want the art to have character."

Cheap, funky, hip, and always jammed with devoted regulars, the tiny Good Egg Cafe has shown art for the last three years "because it's fun to do," says Mary Ledue, one of the

Breakfast bistro The Good Egg

owners. The restaurant commissioned Toni Wolf's humorous, surrealistic blue mural over the grill, a sign of a serious commitment to art. Anyone can show, and the walls are usually crammed, salon-style, almost to the ceiling. Prices range from five dollars to eight hundred dollars or more, reflecting the great diversity in accomplishment, and ego, among the exhibitors.

Jim Ledue, brother of the Good Egg owners, both owns and runs the two Alberta's restaurants, each of which house art in stylish settings appropriate for their innovative, New-Wave food. The new Alberta's has a small enclave dedicated to changing exhibitions, which so far has specialized in photography. On a recent visit, the black-and-white photographs proved unexceptional, but the arrangement of the art was careful and clean.

With its painstaking attention to detail, immaculate gallerylike walls, track lighting, and thoughtful connections between art and dining accoutrements, the intimate Cafe Always stands like a beacon among Portland art-showing restaurants. Tables are covered simply in bold yellow cloth, with sleek black place settings making a dramatic contrast. Similar to modern still lives in themselves, the table arrangements serve as an ideal foil for contemporary painting. The owners, Cheryl Lewis and Noreen Kotts, both studied art before their present incarnations as cook and manager; Cheryl attended the San Francisco Art Institute for five years, and Noreen was a photographer. They hired Rose Marasco, a professor of photography at University of Southern Maine, to organize exhibits for the space, which is now booked a year ahead. Though they show an occasional artist from outside the area (during August this year they'll present Ken Carson, a New York painter), they made a commitment to showing primarily local artists because they want to support the talent they see in Portland. "Galleries are limited here. We want to show work that's not easily accessible," Cheryl says. She believes art can be seen to good advantage at the cafe because "people aren't intimidated by art in restaurants. They can become familiar with it; they spend much more time with it [than they would in a gallery]. . . . Some people hate what we show. We take a big risk; the restaurant business is vulnerable." Fortunately, the cafe's clientele has responded enthusiastically. Portland painter Toni Wolf sold out her first show, with paintings priced from eight hundred to fifteen hundred dollars. Her recent second show of self-portraits, priced higher (up to two thousand dollars), sold well.

Wolf, like many other young, ambitious artists, sees showing in restaurants as a stepping stone to gallery representation. Though grateful for the support and attention she received at Cafe Always, her recent success has fueled her desire to find a commercial gallery and possibly leave Portland for Boston or New York. She admits to a change of attitude: "I used to think I wouldn't play the art game, but now that I've had more attention . . . I would definitely not want to go back"—to showing in some of the city's more casual art bistros. "It's time to prove something new to myself. Portland has great potential, but there aren't enough artists here, and the galleries haven't changed much in the past five to ten years." However, Wolf is clearly interested in being represented by one of the city's galleries.

Some artists showing in restaurants, on the other hand, reject the commercial gallery structure as "too elitist." Sarah Spalding says she would reject

The Seaman's Club bar

Portland artists recently on the restaurant gallery circuit: (top to bottom) Sarah Spalding, Toni Wolf, and David Cedrone

an offer from a commercial gallery (though she has not had one as yet). She deliberately chose to show at Portland Wine and Cheese because "art sustains people. It's too detached from real life in galleries. That's why I make my pictures small — I'd like people to handle them, like cards." She also objects to the high prices charged by galleries, saying "they eliminate most people" from the possibility of buying work. Spalding, who cleans houses to survive, prices her paintings so "people like me can afford them"—most cost between sixty and one hundred twenty dollars. Without the attraction of Portland's rather unique restaurant scene, she might leave the city, as she considers the art restaurants the only real venue for adventuresome artists. Art galleries are too "commercial" and charge prices that are too high.

Twenty-three-year-old David Cedrone agrees with Spalding that commercial galleries are too "artificial"; he enjoys the wider crowds that frequent restaurants. Cedrone should receive the Art Eatery King award; he has prepared over twelve restaurant exhibitions of his "pop-up" boxes and paintings during the last two years. Many people respond vigorously to his whimsical, Baroque scenes of animals, angels, and friends. Pragmatically pricing his work at "five dollars an hour for my time," Cedrone's work sells briskly from ten to two hundred dollars. He is even able to support himself modestly, in a two-room attic apartment, on sales. As endlessly inventive in his approach to marketing work as he is in making it, he says if there were no restaurants showing art in Portland he'd hold "art yard sales" and "art parties" and would paint more t-shirts, which he sells for thirty dollars a piece. He admits he feels the pressure to paint "light, fun, silly things" that are "less stressful" because they sell easily, but he believes that his real, more complex feelings come out in the work regardless. "People may be tromping happily through the woods [in my pictures], but they're tromping on cats!

There's ways of getting in [my darker feelings]."

Older, more established artists predictably express reservations about showing in restaurants. Fred Lynch, who has been represented by Barridoff Gallery for ten years, believes that eating and drinking do "an injustice" to art; the context isn't "serious" enough. He applauds a restaurateur buying a piece for a specific, permanent spot in the room, but feels artists "put themselves too much on the line" in their work for it to be judged in such a distracting environment. "The ego of the artist is fragile and important," he states. "They can't really take the offhand, even cruel, remarks someone might make when they've had a couple of Scotches."

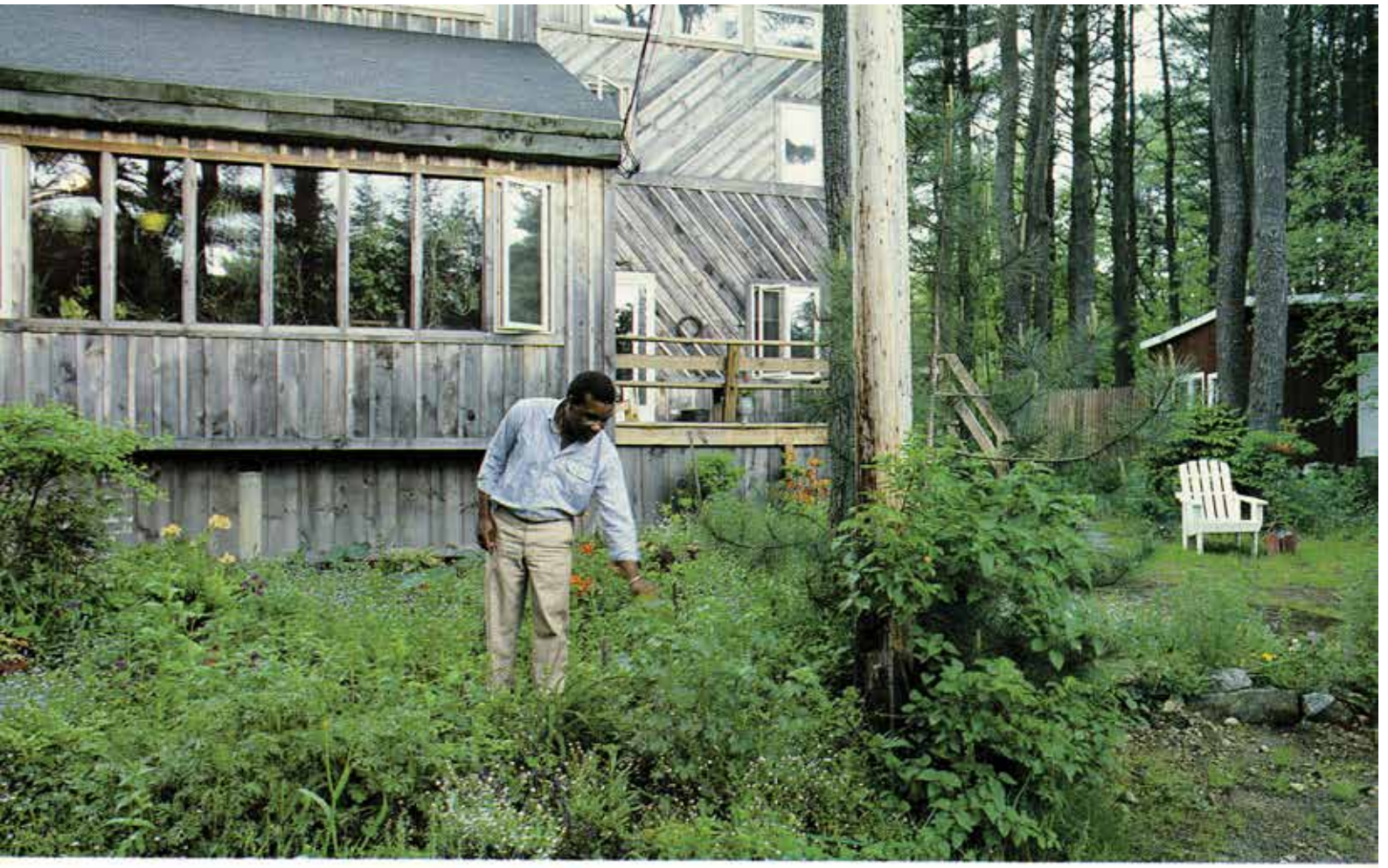
Howard Clifford, a Maine native who has been living in Portland since 1972, represents himself "by choice" and though he has shown in a number of local restaurants in the past would not do so anymore. Since his recent show at the Farnsworth Museum, he has abandoned restaurants, saying "I don't need to show there now. I show in museums now." Clifford believes that making and selling the work is all one act. "Selling the work is right in the front of my mind, as soon as I begin a picture," he states, explaining that he thinks extensively about who should buy a work and then tries to get them to do so. Apparently he is successful, as he can display a list of possible clients who have expressed interest in buying one of Clifford's hard-edged, acidic landscapes, which cost up to sixteen thousand dollars.

Dealers, not surprisingly, are less than thrilled about the emergence of art restaurants. Annette Elowitch of Barridoff Gallery exclaimed, "It's terrible!" when asked for her reaction to the scene. "People think they're being generous by showing work, but they should *buy* art!" She qualified her distaste for the service, saying "if an artist sells, I guess it's ok." New gallery owner, Dean Velentgas, agreed that "it's double-edged. Some of what's shown is so wretched, it would be better not to show anything, [and] the restaurant environment is too distracting," but agreed that "it's good to have young artists showing."

As noted earlier, none of these restaurants takes any commission on work sold; indeed, most try to help the artist a little by donating some food or beverages at an opening reception. They all perceive showing art as a community service, as well as being good for business. The casual atmosphere of an eating establishment and the physical risks for art displayed there will probably always restrict such venues to young, unknown artists. Nonetheless, in a city with few alternative spaces for showing, these places play a very useful and potentially exciting role. For the public, the restaurants provide a comfortable approach to art appreciation in a way usually reserved for connoisseurs, in the relaxed, companionable, intimate course of eating, drinking, and living. It seems to me that this is how art should be enjoyed: with respect for, and relevance to, life.

Amy Lighthill

Amy Lighthill is a freelance writer and curator and a former assistant curator of contemporary art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



David Driskell: Afro-American Art in the Pines

DAVID Driskell, black artist and educator and scholar of Afro-American art, divides his life between a residence in Hyattsville, Maryland, and a studio-home amid a grove of cathedral pines in Falmouth, Maine. Driskell's multifaceted works dealing with the black artistic experience in America are definitive and pioneering, pursued with the sensibilities of a communicator of considerable personal poise. Decisive and wise, in person Driskell inspires the confidence of those around him. He listens attentively, speaks with humility, depth, and humor, and conveys a soft-spoken impressiveness.

Born in Eatonton, Georgia, the son of a Baptist minister and the grandson of slaves, Driskell was educated in the public schools of North Carolina. In 1953 he attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and in 1955 received his bachelor's degree in fine arts at Howard University. He studied at the Netherlands Institute for the History of Art in the Hague under a Rockefeller grant, and then in 1962 completed his master's in fine arts at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Since then he has dedicated his life to creative activity and the encouragement of creativity in others and has spoken to myriad museum and university audiences in America and abroad.

As an art historian, Driskell revealed the black artist's soul-searching struggle for identity, survival, and recognition in America. Driskell's first comprehensive approach to this subject was "Two Centuries of Black American Art," a major exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1976 that traced black culture from the 1700s in Africa to the 1920s in America. In the exhibition catalog he writes, "The Black artist is no different from any other in his struggle to express his own individual sensitivity to order and form and at the same time relate to the cultural patterns of the time and place in which he lives. Art has no racial barriers." However, our society has been largely unaware of the cultural contributions that black artists have made. Driskell's monumental research on Afro-American art has gone a long way in identifying black artists of great significance who have not been appropriately recognized.

Among his recent work in this field is "Hidden Heritage: Afro-American Art, 1800–1950," an exhibition organized in 1985, by the Bellevue Art Museum and the Art Museum Association of America, that has appeared at ten major museums around the nation (it opened for the last time at the Oklahoma Museum of Art on November 15th of this year). It enlarges upon the groundwork of the earlier Los

Carnival #2, 1985–86, gouache, 22 x 30", collection of the artist

Angeles exhibition but in a format appropriate to the massive touring program. "Hidden Heritage" and its catalog examine such black artists as Joshua Johnston, a nineteenth-century Baltimore slave turned free portrait painter in Philadelphia; Edward Bannister, who did Romantic landscapes during the 1850s similar to those of the Hudson River School; Edmonia Lewis, America's first black woman sculptor, a student of Harriet Hosmer in Rome, who exhibited around the United States in the 1870s; and Henry O. Tanner, Eakins's only black student at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, who exhibited his poignant religious paintings at the Paris Salons in the 1890s. Modernists treated include Aaron Douglas, who combined cubism and social commentary in the twenties and thirties; painter Jacob Lawrence, whose 1940 series, *The Migration of the Negro*, was bought jointly by The Museum of Modern Art and the Phillips Collection; Elizabeth Catlett, a black sculptor and painter who synthesizes African and Mexican sources in works that reflect social, Third World, and feminist issues; and Romare Beardon, whose semi-abstract paintings and collages apply universal themes to aspects of black life and culture.

Driskell also contributed the central essay to *Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America* (April 1987). That catalog accompanied an important exhibition, curated by Driskell, at the Studio Museum in Harlem on that community's art in the 1920s,which featured works by Aaron Douglas, Meta Warrick Fuller, Palmer Hayden, and William H. Johnson. He also recently curated and wrote the catalog for the exhibition, "Contemporary Visual Expressions," at the Anacostia Museum in Washington, D.C., featuring four contemporary black artists: Samuel Gilliam, Martha Jackson Jarvis, Keith Morrison, and William T. Williams. Now he is at work on a book on Washington, D.C.'s black artists.

A foremost authority in his field, the importance of Driskell's scholarship has not been missed by his colleagues. Lynn Boles, associate professor of anthropology and director of Afro-American studies at Bowdoin College, says: "David Driskell is an important voice because of his influence and prestige as an art historian in mounting, curating, and writing about major black American art exhibits which reach a very wide segment of the public. His outreach is an important contribution not only to the black community, but to the entire public at large. He has made black art more accessible to many people." And Hugh Gourley, director of the Colby Museum of Art, adds: "David Driskell has made a great contribution to art historical research in this country. He has been a pioneer in the study of black artists and has placed them in the mainstream of American art."

Driskell began teaching Afro-American art history during the late fifties in courses at Talladega College in Alabama, where he became head of the department. From there he became associate professor in the department of art at Howard University, Washington, D.C., and director of the Howard University Museum, where he began writing and organizing shows about local black artists of national stature like Lois Jones, Alma Thomas, James Wells, and James A. Porter. From 1966 to 1976 Driskell was chairman of the art department at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and director of Fisk's University Galleries. While at Fisk, his interest in American black artists and in educating the public on this subject developed into large-scale undertakings such as "Two Centuries of Black American Art" and a series of Afro-American exhibitions at University Galleries. In 1977 Driskell became professor of art at the University of Maryland, College Park, where he served as department chairman for five years and where he still teaches. He prefers the direct experience of the classroom to administrative work: "Teaching is very creative in itself. Teaching is a sharing and learning process. It provides stimulation and

Summer Garden, 1984, gouache, 22 x 30", collection of the artist

Festival: Thelma, 1968, woodcut, 17 x 20", collection of the artist

opposite:

Driskell in his Falmouth studio with *left wall:* c1900s "log cabin" quilt from Round Pond, Maine; (in front), *Festival: Thelma; far wall:* Senufo headdress, c1950s, Ivory Coast; *right wall:* (left), *African Quilt* made by Driskell, 1973, fabric, 56½ x 80", *on desk*, a 1911 Remington Rand typewriter given to Driskell by his first employer in Washington, D.C., (right), Driskell's *Upward Bound*, 1980, oil on canvas, 48 x 72"

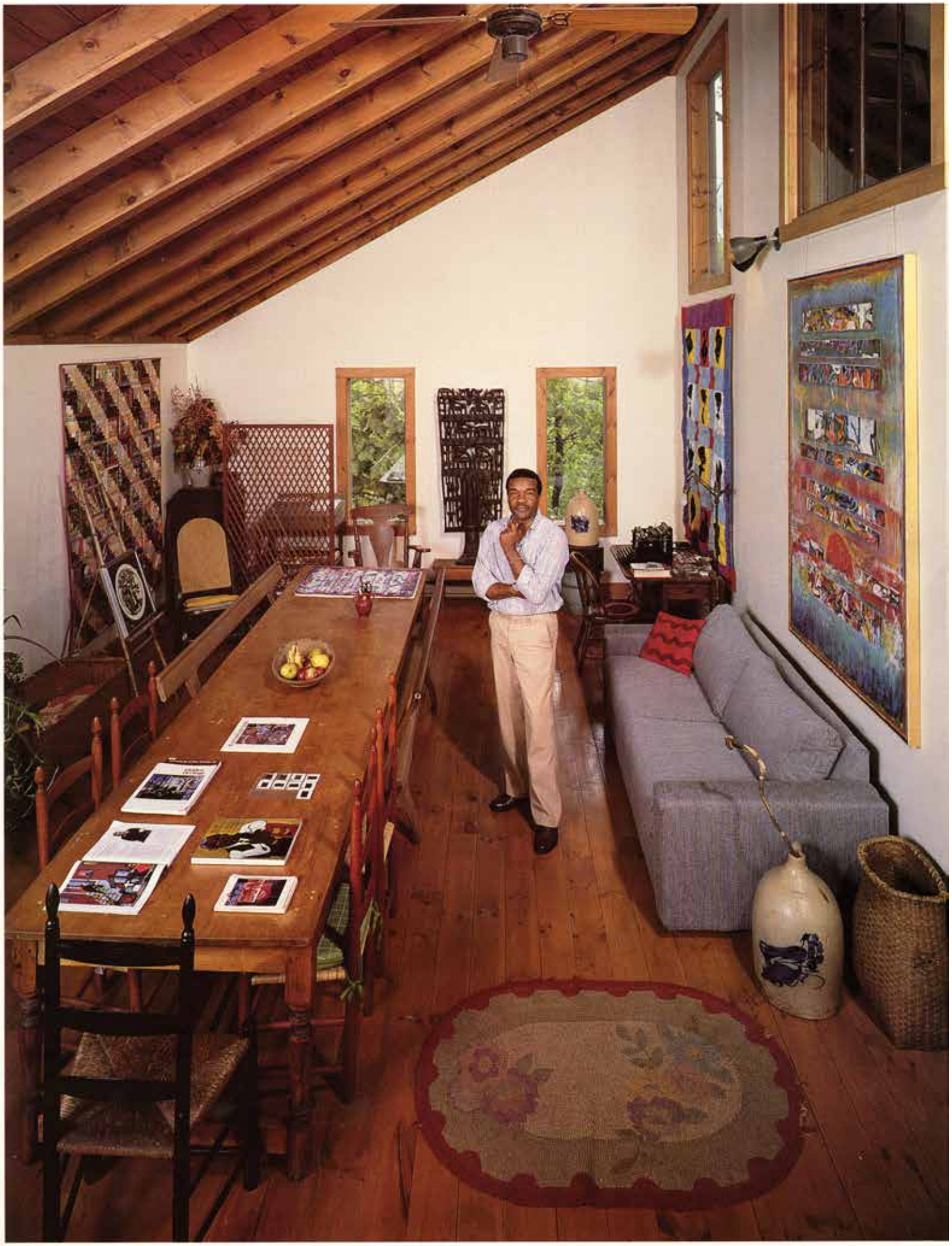
feed-back of fresh ideas."

Last year Driskell was the recipient of Skowhegan School of Art's Governors Award for outstanding service and leadership in the arts. The award presentation speech by Warren Robbins, Founding Director Emeritus of the National Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian Institution—which Driskell helped develop and continues to support—concluded, "[Driskell has] dealt with what the late American socio-historian Harry Elmer Barnes, in a different context, once termed an 'historical black-out'. What a fitting way to describe the educational grievance that Driskell has dedicated himself to redressing."

As an artist Driskell has made his own significant contribution to Black American art. His earliest paintings dealt with traditional landscapes, later evolving through cubist and Cézannesque periods and other early modern influences like Matisse. Then he began to explore relationships between pattern and picture plane, on the one hand, and the patterned imagery of African and folk art, including early American art, on the other. His interest in quilts, for example, stems from watching his mother make "log cabin" quilts as a child. The experience emerges in his art, in *Upward Bound*, for example, a 1980 oil painting hanging in his studio. A colorful pink and blue abstraction, it strongly recalls textile designs like modern African batik. He says: "My work in this painting was influenced by the textile process. I tore strips of canvas apart after having painted them, then realigned them. By so doing, I created new patterns and forms that were influenced by the quilting process." But the painting also relates to other kinds of patterns, like the forms of the ebony Senufo headdress from the Ivory Coast displayed near the painting, as well as more personal imagery—a central rising sun form in *Upward Bound* bears reference to a solar eclipse and an important trip to Africa Driskell experienced about the same time.

Primarily an oil painter, Driskell is also drawn to woodcut because of the immediacy, boldness, and strength inherent in woodcut technique. A semi-abstract woodcut print of his wife done in 1968 and entitled *Festival: Thelma* is an important work to Driskell. It reveals an interest in theme versus geometric or abstract pattern. The woodcut's flat, bold, sharp-edged forms and stark simplicity transcend time and the particular person. The strength of the expression suggests the inner strength of Black women.

Interestingly, when in Baltimore, Driskell's work centers on figures and portraits, and when in Maine, celebrates nature and the beauty of



landscape. Commenting on a painting of a single pine tree that he did in 1971, hanging in his Falmouth home, Driskell recalls: "When I came to Maine in 1953 I was taken by the strength and beauty of the Maine pine tree. I used to paint them in a landscape setting. Then I started painting segments of the tree. I did a series showing pine trees in four different seasons for my thesis at The Catholic University in 1962."

He spent his first summer in Maine in 1953, as a student of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Impressed by the quiet beauty of the Skowhegan campus as created by his teacher, colleague, and longtime friend, Bill Cummings, founder of the school, Driskell decided to make a second home in Maine. Falmouth attracted him because it was located near transportation lines, not far from Portland—he wanted to combine the advantages of Maine's natural environment with proximity to libraries, live theater, and concerts for his family. Most of all, he wanted green grass and pine trees in a natural unspoiled setting—unpolluted and private.

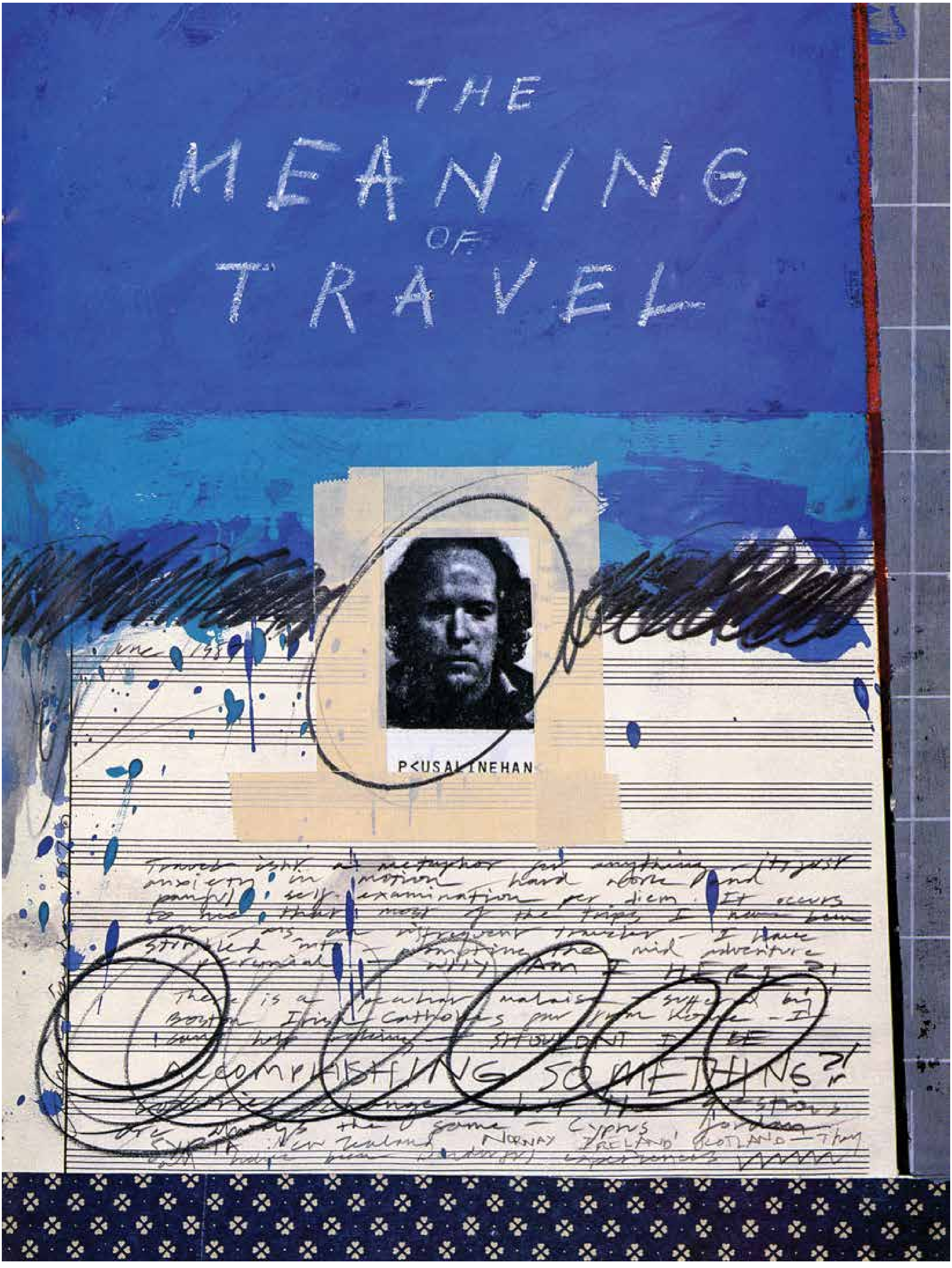
His house blends into that environment. He designed it together with Garth Miller, a young Falmouth architect and a graduate of Bath's Shelter Institute. The two-story, unstained pine facade is dominated by one long glass studio window hung entirely with green plants. Inside, a cathedral ceiling with artist's skylight crowns a two-story space that opens to the second floor through arched windows from an old meeting house which the architect had found at an auction in New Sharon, Maine. "How one lives is an extension of oneself," Driskell says. "We are an accumulation of past and present experiences. We draw on them. We live in the present by pushing forth in new territory. Our home reflects both. It should be a place where one is elevated and free with family and friends."

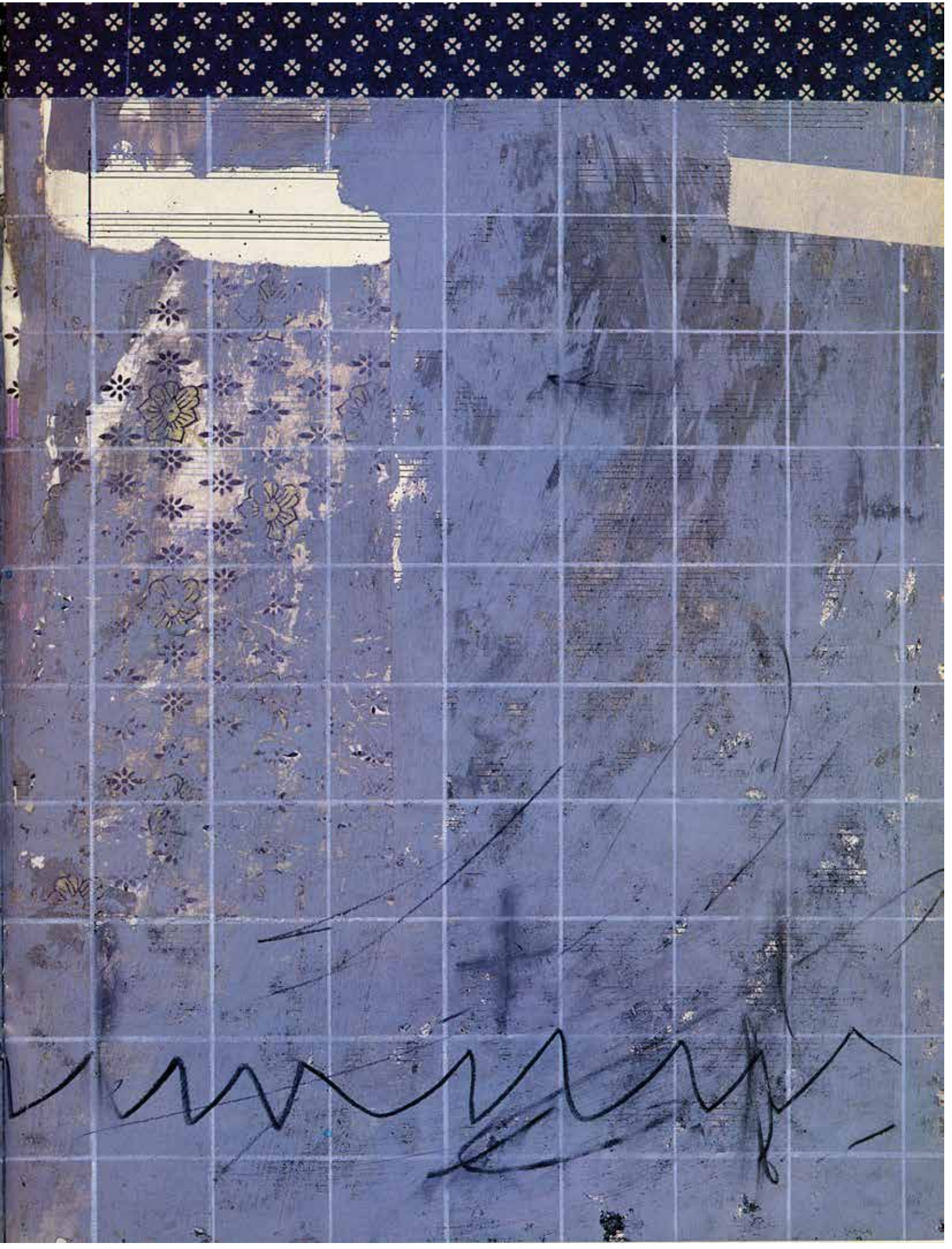
Driskell's studio-home is aesthetic and functional and expresses both the private and professional man. In the summer, vegetable, herb, and flower gardens that he plants himself flourish on each side of the house. Over a nearby brook he built a small, picturesque bridge. Transplanted orange day lilies sprout in clumps in a rock garden created by the artist. Tall pink and rose sweet William, blue forget-me-nots, and blackeyed Susans below the front door welcome visitors. This quiet environment appeals to Driskell and his family, who say they made a second home in Maine because of the state's quality of life.

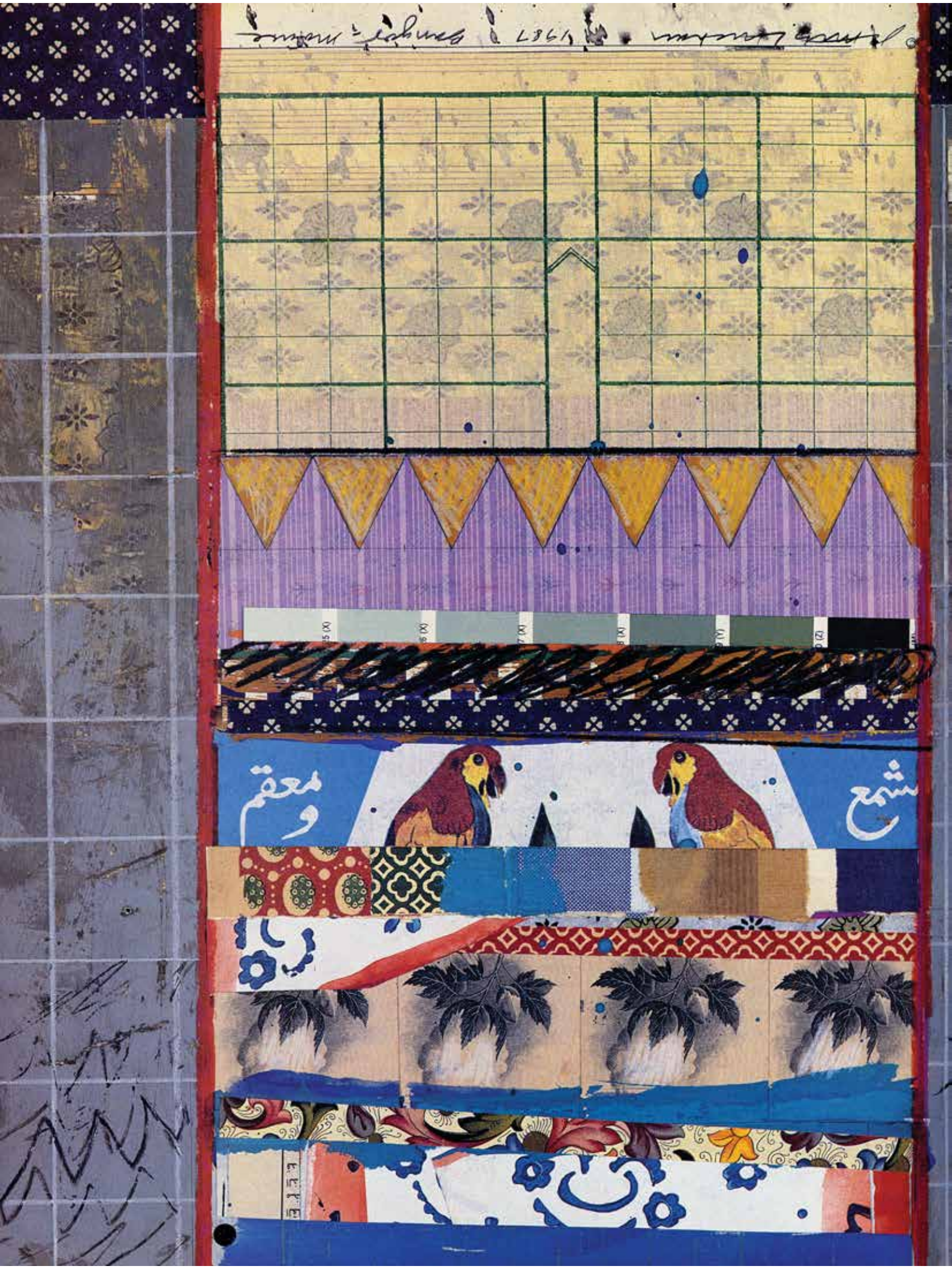
His interest in early American culture and in African heritage is reflected here: in his studio along with the nineteenth-century "log cabin" quilt are handsome blue and gray jugs from the same period. Handmade Shaker baskets hang from kitchen rafters. The Senufo headdress at the end of the room dates from the 1950s but is a traditional ceremonial headdress that honors a patriarch or deceased male member of the family. A Dan mask, from Liberia, symbolizing maternal protection, hangs on another wall, near a statue, also made by a Dan artist, of an African bird called a hornbill, a symbol of protection for crops. Driskell recalls that his interest in African art "was kindled by the scholarship of James A. Porter when I was an undergraduate at Howard University. Since that time I have been a student of African culture searching for those sensibilities that help to establish our roots in more than one culture." One sees such rootedness in Driskell's home: American antiques, African objects, and contemporary design together reflect his connecting of the past and the present. About the role art plays in a man's life, he says: "Art is functional, it satisfies man's needs for beauty as well as practical needs of necessity. We can see this historically in traditional African art, in the quilts of early America, and in contemporary art. Art reflects man's needs in each age. An artist has a priestly task. He has an extra vision and must communicate beauty and the needs of humanity in order to make us more human. Historically art has had an important spiritual role in all societies. For example, the madonna symbol in religious art and the symbol of the child and lamb representing purity. In secular art, we have a strong symbol in America of the Statue of Liberty. She is a metaphor of the American Dream: freedom for all."

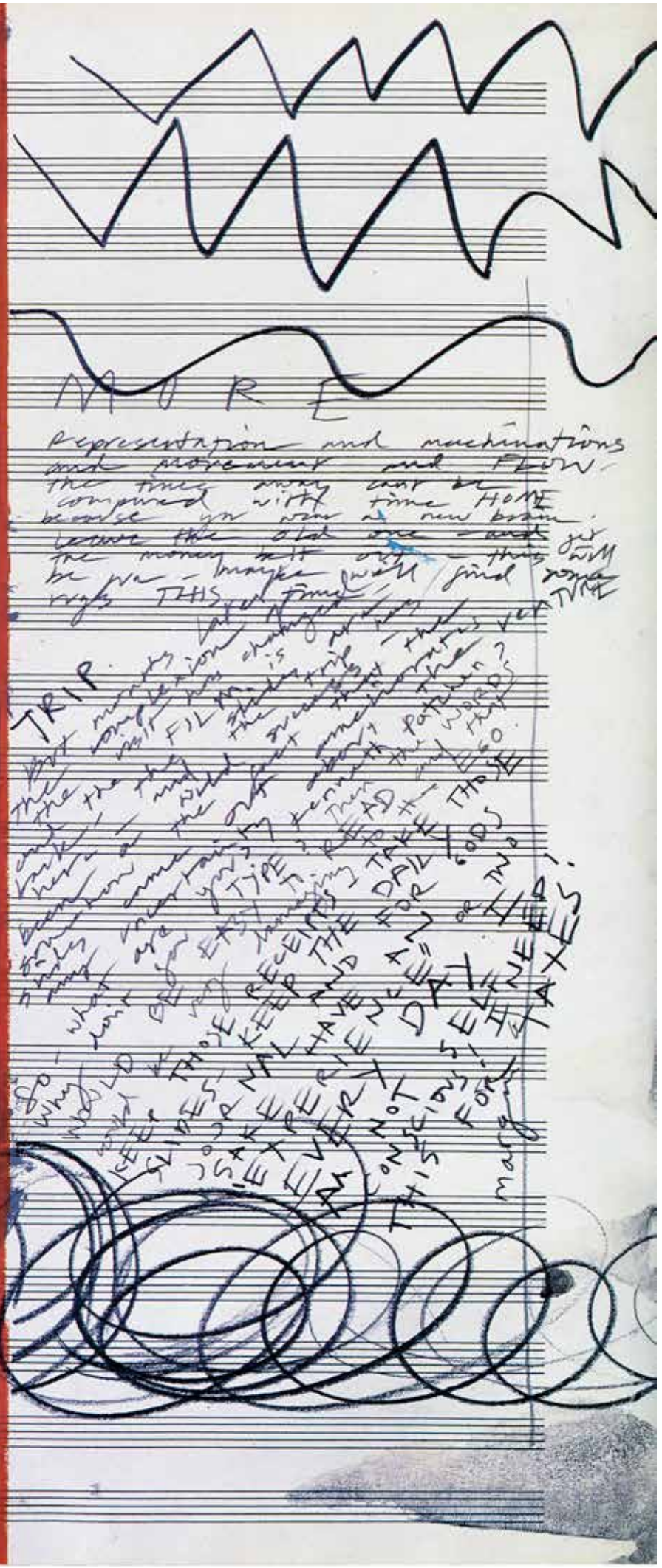
Patricia Davidson Reef

Pat Reef, a resident of Falmouth, is regional editor of Art New England *and author of* Bernard Langlais, Sculptor *(Kennebec River Press, 1985) and* Dahlov Ipcar, Artist *(Kennebec River Press, 1987).*


THE MEANING OF TRAVEL
P<USALINEHAN
ACCOMPLISHING SOMETHING?!

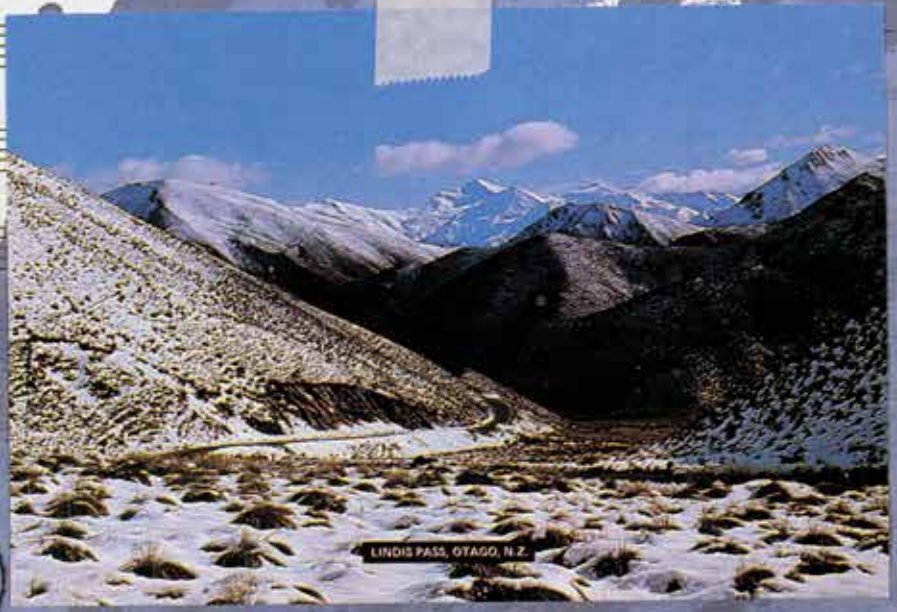



شمع
و
معقم

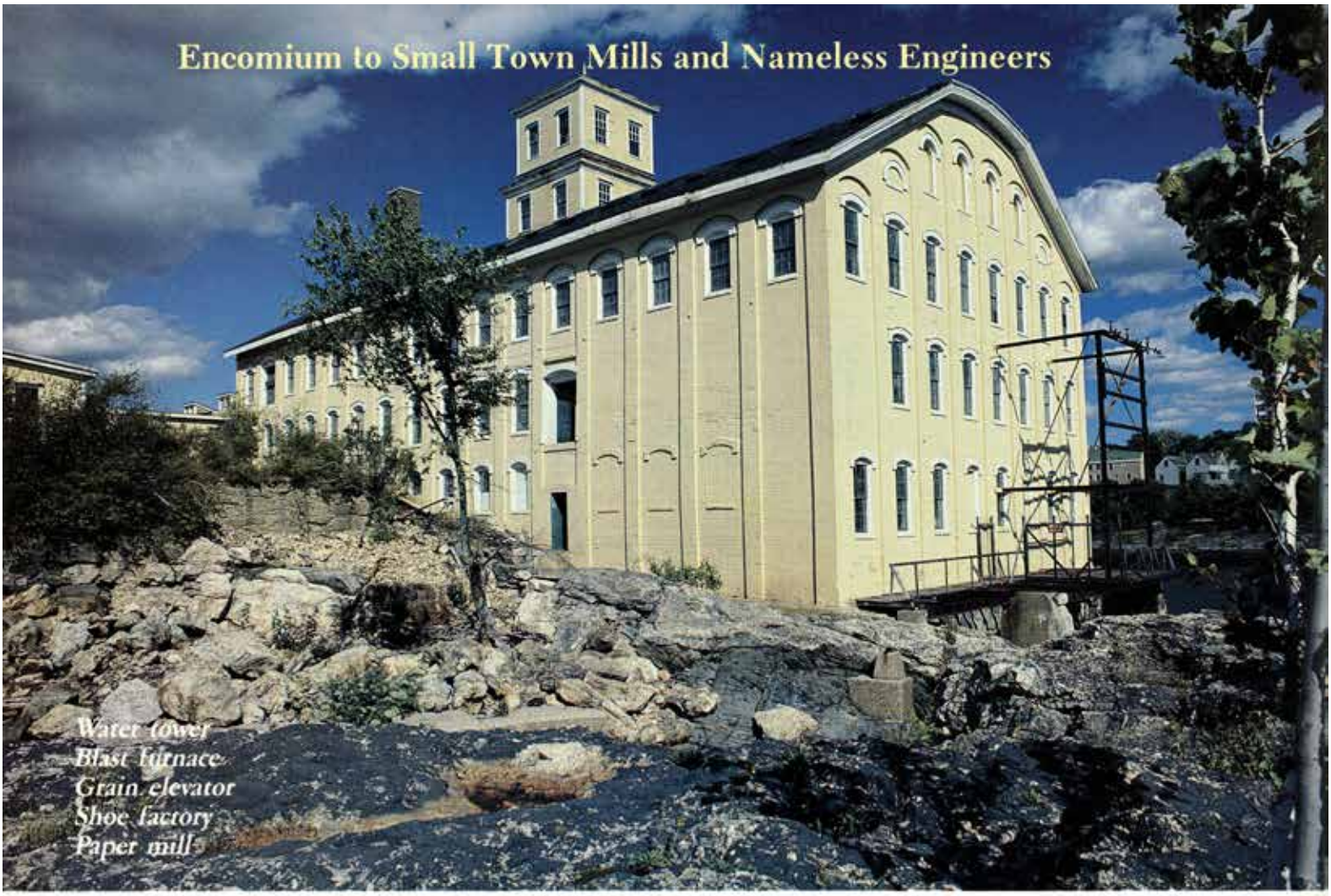

MORE
Representation and machinations
TRIP.

There is writing for MEANING - and writing for FLAVOR ~~and this is the latter~~ = WRITING FOR A CRITICAL DENSITY in this piece. AN INTRODUCTION IF SORTS. I PLAN TO WORK on THE MEANING OF TRAVEL for a while. Some paintings and some DRAWINGS. It all seems to come down to the EVIDENCE - not that every trip produces a REAL METANOIA / or even those PROFOUND EPIPHANIES. BUT they do produce POSTCARDS. Is it fatuous to expect MORE ~~—~~ ? OR MORE REALISTIC TO BE A SELF-ABSORBED MALCONTENT? I think most of the great travel writers - the Naipauls, Theroux, Morris De Tocqueville INDIA (DID I MISS ANYONE?) are just THAT / AND MORE OF COURSE. PROFESSIONAL MALCONTENTS.

END.



Encomium to Small Town Mills and Nameless Engineers



Photograph by Jon Bonjour

THE moment the mind conjures an image of any one of these artifacts of our country's older industries, we think of large and unadorned structures made up of incomparably clear forms that put a friendly and honest expression on the face of technology. We think of timber and brick and concrete and steel and practically every structural system known to man. We think of human ingenuity and technical inventiveness, of gravity-defying towers and deafening machinery tuned by workers whose yellow lamps burned intensely through the night shift. And we think of the canals, bridges, dams, and tunnels that were built to serve our industries' needs. A few industrial facilities dating from the nineteenth century still house the industries they were built to serve. But the great majority have been demolished, overgrown with graffiti and creeper, or transformed into pseudoplaces. But where they still stand at all, these heroic achievements of American civil engineering are symbolic objects in the landscape, points of order in nature, proof of man's dominion.

An academic discipline, industrial archaeology, has evolved to study and take inventory of these structures, and a federal campaign, historic preservation, provides cultural as well as economic incentives for their image maintenance. My fondness for landscapes of nostalgia in general and for nineteenth-century industrial complexes in particular is not antiquarian; it coexists with an equally strong interest in contemporary architecture. But I am uncomfortable with modern warehouse districts and industrial parks, and I notice an increasing use of an older industrial imagery in nonindustrial settings. Does this belie the contemporary architect's own suspicion that the public is less trusting of "soft" vocabularies of form? I think it does. It is as if the architect designing a conference facility that looks like a factory building, or a bank that resembles an arsenal is saying, "I promise this building is functionally honest, structurally sound, and stylistically transcendent of fashion. I evoke Industry to say I am Good."

This essay is a tribute to Maine's landmarks of civil engineering and to the anonymous engineers of those works who were the trustees of a public aspiration. When a new mill was built, it had a significant effect on the economic and social character of a region. But until recently, industrial buildings have been very little discussed by architectural historians. This essay is also meant to challenge Maine's design-minded citizens' and preservation advocates' preoccupation with pedigreed monuments designed by architects of certifiable importance, eccentric follies erected by millionaires, and private mansions and summer cottages built by summer residents. For there is very little new to discover there. It is all right to talk about lighthouses, barns, and churches, but we should also be talking about roadside diners, mail-order bungalows, and paper mills.

To official architecture as such, Maine has contributed little directly in the way of buildings. Maine entered the twentieth century under the spell of late eclectic classicism and rural vernacularism. While it is true that college campuses and municipalities have brought some distinguished architectural signatures to Maine, their effect on the state has hardly been galvanic, and their contribution to the state's commerce and industry has been almost nil. Let me suggest that the most interesting ghosts of

Photograph © Cervin Robinson 1987

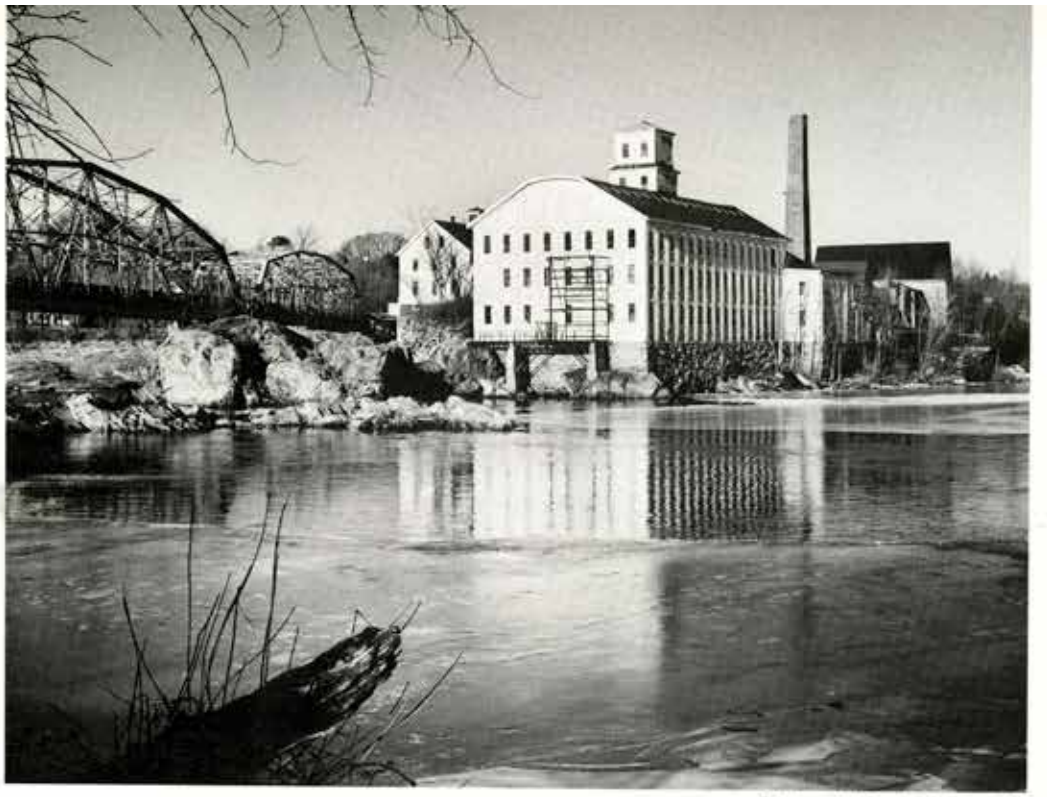
Maine's architectural heritage are not John Calvin Stevens, Henry Vaughan, and George Burnham, but the anonymous engineers and entrepreneurs who were at once designers and builders. The mills and factories by the tracks in Lewiston, Topsham, and Bangor comprise an industrial vernacular as engaging as any coastal or agricultural vernacular of our pastoral or maritime past, and more engaging than any urban buildings of "New Portland." But the buildings to which I refer have yet to attract a critic worthy of their austere virtues. This is not an attempt to fulfill that charge, but to put a tentative stake in the ground to mark a place where others might dig profitably.

To advance this gentle polemic, there are a number of sites I considered whose individual features are as worthy of notice as the mill I will spend some time discussing. But the old Bowdoin Mill (or the Pejepscot Mill or the Great Bowdoin Mill as it has been renamed under successive owners) on Great Mill Island in Topsham has interested me for twenty years and has long been regarded as one of the best preserved and most indiscriminately admired industrial complexes in Maine. It is the oldest surviving wood paper mill in the state and has recently been the subject of local press coverage in connection with its sale to Pejepscot Mill Restoration Associates led by Pamela Gleichman of Portland.

I first discovered the Bowdoin Mill as a freshman at Bowdoin College and was naive enough to imagine that this was a vocational wing of the college I was attending, until I found entrance was forbidden by guards. Eventually I talked my way onto the site with a quiver of brushes and easel. And found? Another campus: here was a coherent arrangement of brick and timber frame structures more related in texture and scale than the buildings of the Bowdoin campus I had come from; buildings, moreover, which maintained the individuality of their original detailing and human scale in their well-used appearance and that—but for the signs of industrial enterprise around me—could have been an academical village, a college or institute. The inner courtyard flanked by buildings on either side of the island invites pedestrian use, and the two-story wooden cupola atop the original masonry mill building could, with a little imagination, be mistaken for a poet's perch. Certainly this skyward loft overlooking the Androscoggin is a place as suitable for meditation and reflection as the penthouse of Coles Tower a mile away. The whole orientation of the site with its fifteen-odd interconnected buildings surrounded by water and connected to the mainland by a causeway expresses the symbolism of *retreat*.

The original mill building was erected in 1868 by Charles D. Brown and E. B. Denison, the founders of the Topsham Paper Company. Vaguely Italianate in appearance and still the largest structure on the island, the building is one of the most dramatically sited industrial properties in Maine. Its southern elevation rises from a granite foundation squaring off a bend in the Androscoggin River. Travelers unfamiliar with the area driving north from Brunswick across the Frank J. Wood Bridge cannot be prepared for the handsome sight of this yellow brick affair which suddenly greets them as they cross the river.

Encoded in the southern elevation is a system of arched bays defined by recessed brick planes which are in turn punctuated by hooded and pedimented windows. The bays rise to three stories at the east and west sides, four at the curved peak of the slightly overhanging gambrel roof. The same bay system is carried throughout the building; on the side elevations are sixteen vertical bays climbing three stories, giving a vertical thrust, and therefore a relief, to a building and indeed a site, which otherwise wants to be read horizontally. It is not unusual to find single-story worksheds in industrial buildings of this era with pitched roofs and visible end gables. But to find a multistoried mill built in 1868 with these characteristics is most unusual and is probably why the building registers so strongly on passersby. The multistoried mill structures of this era had, with very few exceptions, a flat-topped roof or a parapet around the top of the walls to make its pitches invisible from the ground. Some of the older mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, have pitched roofs, but they are mansarded, giving a flatter



Photograph © Cervin Robinson 1987

appearance. This fact alone warrants the Bowdoin Mill's admission to the history books and should prompt further curiosity about the unknown designer who, in 1868, was setting precedents in Topsham, Maine.

In 1902, a second mill building was erected to house the general offices of the Bowdoin Paper Manufacturing Company. As to who designed this more conventional, colonial structure, we do have a name: George F. Drew, the company's regular engineer. The orientation of the later building is the same as the precursor structure, but set further back from the river. Period photographs suggest that its proportions derive from another mill building that was erected on the other side of Main Street in the 1880s or 1890s, but that building was destroyed by a flood in 1936.

What is striking about the mill is that no single structure epitomizes the site, and while most of the twentieth-century additions do not elicit any particular recognition unto themselves, their presence contributes to the overall effect of coherence, to the overall impression of a strong sense of place. The brick building is certainly the best executed, but all of the buildings are strongly rooted to their site. This feeling of self-context is heightened both by the separation from the mainland and by the clustering of smaller buildings creating a coherent yellow landscape. Earle Shettleworth has pointed out that the improvisational character of the whole, made up of so many wooden frame buildings connected by underground passage, skyway, stairwell, and jerry-rigged corridor is also similar in form to farmhouses and other farm-related buildings in the surrounding countryside. He is right: finishing, cutting, storage, and shop houses seem to grow organically out of one another. And these rooms changed function to adapt to the changing demands of production. There was once a stable on the site; later it became a storage area. Former guest chambers and sleeping quarters later became workshops. This mill, like most industrial complexes of its era, has always been in a state of adaptive reuse.

The rhythms of the building are like the rhythms of jazz: plan the piece, then make it up as you go. The mill has changed hands many times, and it will change hands again. Under some owners new buildings were added and others demolished. The complex has always been in a state of repair. But somehow the strength of the original building and the advantage of its natural setting was always respected on the drafting tables of the "regular engineers" who added on here, connected there.

Owners of the various paper companies that the buildings housed saw their businesses through good times and bad. Floods, bankruptcies, and difficulties getting power to the site caused plant shutdowns. Things perked up when new owners took over, cheaper power sources were found, and the mill was converted from a paper manufacturing to a paper processing plant. Go there, and wonder how a stately colonial residence with a pavilion roof found its way onto the site, why the old red mill was painted yellow, and why the flood-prone Androscoggin has been so kind.

The mill is no longer a mill, and there are no longer lamps burning through the night shift. But what people always thought of as "the mill" remains, and I do not think its future character can but benefit from what is already there.

Some songs have a pitch so strong
you just have to follow the tune.
Some places do too.
Old Yellow, the jazz is in you.

Roger Conover

Roger Conover is the architecture and design arts editor for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press and a recent Loeb Fellow at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. He is advising Pejepscot Mill Restoration Associates on the development of the Great Bowdoin Mill.

BOOK REVIEW

A Century of Color, 1886–1986: Ogunquit, Maine's Art Colony
by Louise Tragard, Patricia E. Hart, and W. L. Copithorne,
Ogunquit, Maine,
Barn Gallery Associates, Inc., 1987.
Designed by Lisa Douglis
Printed by Mark Burton Company, Inc., Boston

George Kunkel, *Approaching Storm*, 1973, acrylic collage, 24 x 36", collection of the artist

EVERY art colony that has appeared in America has had its own mystique, a certain combination of elements pertaining to personalities, atmosphere, time, and location that render its history special. Often that history is lost or inaccurately transmitted as key members of the art community die off, especially when a colony ceases to survive or changes drastically. Thanks to the recent publication of *A Century of Color*, the essence of one such colony, located in Ogunquit, Maine, has been documented.

Over the course of a hundred years, Ogunquit evolved from a tiny Maine fishing village to a summer art and resort colony, ultimately to become a crowded tourist spot filled with shops, motels, and arts and crafts galleries. Situated on the southern Maine coast and named after Mic Mac and Abnaki Indian terms for "place by the sea," Ogunquit suffers a summer population overload, mostly affluent and from Boston, that now spills over to spring and fall and diminishes the subdued charm and isolated beauty that attracted Boston and New York artists, art teachers, and their students a century ago.

By uncovering old photographs and documenting the oral history of the Ogunquit art colony, authors Tragard, Hart, and Copithorne have produced a vital monument to Ogunquit's famous past. Generously highlighted with thirty color plates of significant American art created in Ogunquit, the volume is also richly embroidered with amusing anecdotes, interesting personality sketches, and tales of famous rivalries, recreational pranks, and party frivolities. The result offers a sampling of the art produced by the Ogunquit colony and a glimpse into the mores and lifestyles of people who made significant contributions in American art history.

Starting with the colony's academic origins, with a school founded in 1888 by Boston art teacher Charles Herbert Woodbury, whose students, many of them women, were "proper New Englanders," *A Century of Color* chronicles key historical events, frequently interlacing them with "little incidents" and colorful quotes. And so we learn how the talented award-winning artist Woodbury who taught his students classic marine painting with the motto, "You don't paint what you see of the wave—you draw what it does!" was spoofed mid-class, first by a fishermen disturbance and subsequently by an avant-garde nude model who "crashed" a serene seascape lesson.

During Woodbury's ascendancy, Ogunquit grew as a resort, and small hotels appeared in the area offering comfortable accommodations. Prominent, established artists such as American Postimpressionist Maurice Prendergast came to paint the vacationers, leaving a permanent record of a gentle, leisurely world, essentially elegant and privileged.

A Century of Color goes on to tell how, "As Ogunquit's reputation as a significant art colony grew, three new art schools were . . . established. Victor D. Brenner's Summer School in Modeling provided sculpture classes from 1914 to 1920, and in 1919 and 1920 Russell T. Hyde enrolled . . . twenty students in his Summer School of Drawing and Painting. However, Hamilton Easter Field's Summer School of Graphic Arts—later renamed Thurnscoe School of Modern Art—was by far the most influential." For with Field came summer refugees from New York City—a whole new breed who painted differently. As Lloyd Goodrich, art historian and former director of the Whitney Museum of American Art explains: "Ogunquit was an experience of the kind of teaching which was more . . . lined up to modern art, [with] more emphasis on emotion, color, the instinctive style of painting . . . [Field] was a remarkable man who has never been given the credit he deserves in the history of modern art in this country."

Brooklyn Eagle art critic, founder of *The Arts* magazine, author, artist, and world-traveler, Hamilton Easter Field's list of accomplishments includes his encouragement of young talent as a teacher, friend, and patron. He supplied a place where artists could live and work and urged his students "to live in touch with native Ogunquit life, just as Monet wears the

Charles Herbert Woodbury, *Breaking Wave*, c1925, oil on canvas, 24 x 34", private collection, photo courtesy of Vose Galleries

sabots and the peasant dress at Giverny."

Field's students and artist friends were a cosmopolitan set—some born abroad and others students of Laurens at the Académie Julian in Paris—who intermingled locally and enjoyed the easygoing Ogunquit lifestyle. Among them were many whose work would be found on the walls of world famous museums: Bernard Karfiol, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Maurice Sterne, Max Weber, Marsden Hartley, Stefan Hirsch, and Leon Kroll. Among them, too, was Field's famous protégé, Robert Laurent, whose fluid art deco figurative sculptures are found in such places as New York's Radio City Music Hall.

With the Laurent story, a veritable essay on the value of mentor support in artistic development, as well as the effectiveness of environmentally rooted inspiration—the book reaches a high point. Field, whose mother was a French Haviland and one reason for his apparent Francophilia, brought fourteen-year-old Laurent here from his native Brittany, the place, we are told, that genuinely influenced Laurent's sculpting style, in his words, "a style that sprang from the soul of a people . . . not a preconceived or self-conscious style . . . not inclined toward a decorative or unnecessary embellishment . . . but a native assertion of faith."

Field was a bachelor. At his untimely death in 1922, Laurent became his heir. *A Century of Color* details the youthful Laurent's need to establish his own artistic reputation, his closing of Field's school to free him to do so, and his subsequent reopening of it in 1935 as the Ogunquit School of Painting and Sculpture, which operated until the early sixties. Some of the last students from that school, such as Pat and DeWitt Hardy, have remained in Maine, continuing the tradition of Ogunquit-trained artists living and working in the state.

If the book has a weakness, it lies in its failure to position the modern Ogunquit story, which it details well, within a broader view of summer art colonies in America. Other places with different mystiques, Rockport and Provincetown in Massachusetts and Woodstock in New York, for example, like Ogunquit have lost vigor as creative centers amidst a post–World War II tourist attitude that regards such places as "quaint" and made artists objects for gawkers and shutterbugs, the mass marketing of cultural

Hamilton Easter Field, *The First Footbridge,* 1916, oil on canvas, collection of Barbara Hilty

events that rendered art viewing an activity for the ultrachic, and the proliferation of art schools of varying merit just about everywhere and anywhere. Serious artists must be environmentally and socially selective. Artistic retreats that become expensive, tourist-ridden, overcrowded resorts tend to lose their appeal as creative milieus. Ultimately, such places tend to attract the dilettante artist rather than the career professional.

Today Ogunquit, like many other American art colonies, is primarily a place in which to exhibit rather than to paint. Serious Ogunquit-inspired artists have moved their studios elsewhere, to peripheral Maine communities. Ed Betts now paints in mid-coast Maine, but shows in Ogunquit. Beverly Hallam continues to develop her striking, innovative compositions from nearby York, and Ed Hergelroth has retired to a serene riverside in the same town to paint his "Hergelrocks." Ogunquit's and Portland's commercial galleries, rather than private studios, are their sales outlets.

Some traditions persist. In summer, people from many sections of the country still infuse Ogunquit with the dynamics of varied viewpoints. The presence of art teaching certainly continues as with Robert Laurent's son, artist John Laurent, a recently retired University of New Hampshire professor. And Ogunquit continues to educate. The ample quarters of Barn Gallery Associates, founded in 1958, offers special exhibition, film, and lecture programs and hosts the Ogunquit Art Association, whose membership has been broadened to include artists living anywhere in Maine or within a one-hundred-mile radius. Artist-collector Henry Strater's Ogunquit Museum of Art is a cultural center where colony artists such as Walt Kuhn, Peggy Bacon, John Marin, and Robert and John Laurent are represented along with renowned Americans whom Strater knew or contacted during his broad artistic experience—artists like Charles Burchfield, Reginald Marsh, Morris Graves, and the sculptors William Zorach and John Flanagan. Walt Kuhn memorabilia, such as costumes used in his highly acclaimed circus portraits, and the stamp from the famous 1913 Armory Show which he had organized along with Arthur B. Davies and Walter Pach, can be appreciated in nearby Cape Neddick Park at a gallery created by Kuhn's daughter Brenda.

Authors Tragard, Hart, and Copithorne have invested *A Century of Color* with excellent documentation —extensive quotes from period art reviews, selected comments from art historians, generous input from Ogunquit friends and relatives, and rare photographs of people and events —and all these secure a sense of time and place that might otherwise have been lost. But in the end, the art resulting from the dynamics of the Ogunquit colony, with all its interrelated associations, is its strongest and certainly its most exciting testimonial. The book's exquisite color reproductions of works by Woodbury, Prendergast, Field, Karfiol, Hartley, Strater, Betts, Hallam, Laurent and others celebrate Ogunquit's unique personality, feeling, and inspiration as words cannot, for Ogunquit's most lyrical voice is visual.

Rose Safran

Rose Safran is a York-based writer formerly on the staffs of McCall's *and* Family Circle *magazines, who contributes to Ottawa-owned newspapers and the* York Weekly *and teaches journalism at the University of New Hampshire.*

Amaryllis: A Study in Red, 1986, watercolor/paper, 35¼ x 36¾", Collection of David and Susan Workman, Stamford, Connecticut

CATALOG REVIEW

Carolyn Brady, Rockland, Maine, The William A. Farnsworth Library and Art Museum, 1987.

THE William A. Farnsworth Library and Art Museum in Rockland, the fourth oldest art museum in Maine and the only one devoted specifically to this state's art and artists, actually combines art gallery with historic house museum (the Greek Revival William A. Farnsworth homestead, built in 1854) and art reference library. In line with the latter, the Farnsworth has had a modest but respectable record of exhibition documentation, with its small but carefully produced catalogs, since its third exhibition season (the institution, founded in 1942, opened to the public in 1948). In 1950 a delightfully designed brochure with green ink on slick white paper, containing an introduction by Frederick S. Wight—then associate director of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston—and a complete catalog raisonne, accompanied the feature exhibition of that season, "Painting on Monhegan." During the fifties and sixties the Farnsworth provided the world with petite but precedent-setting publications on Waldo Peirce, William Thon, and Andrew Wyeth. In 1975 the Farnsworth assembled a comprehensive catalog of its painting and drawing collections. Other notable projects since then include a major catalog for the 1982 retrospective of Robert Indiana's work prior to his moving to Maine, assembled from the artist's collection. Fine, brochure-sized documents have accompanied the Farnsworth's Alex Katz, Louise Nevelson, and Neil Welliver exhibitions during the past three years.

Alongside this tradition of Maine art publications the Farnsworth has established a more recent custom, developed in accordance with its conjoined house-and-art museum function: a volunteer flower committee of amateur and semi-professional florists provides the domestic interiors with year-round period-style arrangements and the art gallery with floral designs to complement each individual display of art. The result is a unique, floriate signature to the Farnsworth's presentations that is particularly appropriate for the homestead-museum, given the spiritual significance of flowers in the nineteenth-century. Against such a backdrop, this past summer's exhibition of recent works by watercolorist Carolyn Brady (a summer resident of Vinalhaven Island) was fitting and fascinating. But its catalog is another story.

In overall appearance the catalog, *Carolyn Brady*, is more stylish and alluring than the bulk of Farnsworth publications. The pages are pink (as was the champagne at the July opening), and, together with the bright red cover, lavender inside covers, and eight brilliantly-colored plates, it is a visually spirited and appealing paperback. Its publication was made possible by Brady collectors Sue and David Workman and Mrs. William Janss, and the Nancy Hoffman Gallery, with which Brady is affiliated in New York. The pamphlet was produced entirely in Baltimore, designed by Robert O. Shelley of R. S. Jensen, and printed by Britannia Limited, with color separations by Baltimore Color Plate. In all, a nice, vivid piece of work.

The text of *Carolyn Brady* was written by Irene McManus, former art critic for the *Manchester Guardian*. The author's overriding concern throughout is that Brady not be thought of in a conventional context of great American watercolorists, but rather as a committed modernist. Providing Brady with the label of Abstract Realist—imaginative, to say the least—McManus emphasizes the artist's formalist approach, discrediting all the associations and meanings that pertain to Brady's very recognizable subjects: "She isn't using her mother's blue and white pitcher over and over for reasons of sentiment. She uses it because of the way the whiteness of the pitcher reflects the colors of the objects around it and the ground it's worked on." To drive home her point, the author invokes connections between Brady and a strong but strikingly odd lot of modernist heros—Philip Pearlstein, Mark Rothko, Georges Braque, Paul Cézanne, John Marin, and Fernand Léger—along with, more appropriately, Charles Demuth, who also explored flowers in watercolor. More an argument than an essay, the multitude of terms, idioms, "isms," and leaps of artistic context are more than a stretch for the reader—they are

Carnations and Classic Roses, 1987, watercolor/paper, 52 x 72", Stuart Handler Family Collection, Evanston, Illinois

September Lunch: The Day's Mail, 1986, watercolor/paper, 40 x 60", Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Thurston Twigg-Smith, Honolulu, Hawaii

downright confusing. And where a succinct, art historical clarification of Brady's contribution is needed, one finds accolades but few insights.

The question is whether positive proof of Carolyn Brady's "modernism" is really a valid or even interesting issue. First of all, the artist deals with subgenres of still-life painting—the flower piece and the breakfast piece —that were born in seventeenth-century Holland, when the combination of particular flowers or the display of an interrupted fete were meaningful spiritual allegories. Brady uses traditional baroque referents, like Delph ceramics and hand-painted vases, filled glasses, and books, that reappeared in nineteenth-century still-life painting in America. She could not be unaware of that rich story, which was presented as recently as 1984 in a major exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, "Reflections of Nature: Flowers in American Art" together with its twentieth-century sequel. (In the show's elegant and well-researched catalog , curator Ella M. Foshay explores the historical, formal, and universal dimensions of flower painting for a very contemporary art audience.) Finally, even Brady's use of photographs rather than real objects or arrangements as the immediate "models" for her paintings parallels the traditional use of field sketches by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century floral masters.

Moreover, Brady expresses the essential duality of floral imagery—sexuality and spirituality—that has been recognized by natural philosophers and artists from Aristotle and Leonardo to Emerson, and that was revealed by American artists in the nineteenth century via the precepts of Linnean botany. That system drew attention to flowers as reproductive organs that were the basis for plant classification, and unveiled the grand scale of species, vastly multiplied in the New World, that elucidated the magnitude of God's creation. Brady herself gives voice to this inheritance when she is quoted by McManus in the essay: "To me it seems very sexy. I think about that when I paint them, that the flowers are really sex objects in that they attract to get themselves reproduced," and, in another place, that the act of painting flowers is "a kind of concentration that alters your consciousness, like religion . . . It gives you self-knowledge." Clearly Brady is cognizant of the rich tradition of flowers in art, rife with symbolism, natural observation, and the essences of regeneration and life. And certainly she addresses it in contemporary terms, on a blown-up scale and with a sense of design and pattern that meets our late-twentieth-century sensibilities. But is it true, as McManus states, that flowers are just still lifes, and "still lifes [are] . . . the most abstract representational medium [genre]," or that "the monumental, heavily-worked watercolor is enjoying a tremendous new vogue . . . because the true subject of the still life is painting itself"? Is it really necessary to strip Brady's works of their diachronic resonance, or organismic riches, by dismissing their subjects as mere matters of paint?

On the other hand, the catalog's backmatter, particularly the resume of Brady's collections, exhibitions, and bibliography, is a thorough job and provides a welcome resource. Indeed, the bibliography makes clear that no thought-provoking treatment of Brady's work has appeared in print. It's too bad the Farnsworth catalog doesn't alter that situation. Or that it falls shy of the Farnsworth standard exemplified by the visually more modest twenty-page Neil Welliver catalog that accompanied the Farnsworth's 1986 summer show. That catalog carried an essay by Currier Gallery of Art director Robert M. Doty that rivaled John H. Goodyear, Jr.'s text in the lavish 1986 Rizzoli publication, *Welliver*, in terms of scholarship, and surpassed it in terms of coherence. Nevertheless, *Carolyn Brady* is an attractive addition to the Farnsworth library and does provide a record of a very beautiful exhibition in Rockland by a contemporary American still life painter.

Photographing People: Learning to Sing the Body Electric

The Maine Photographic Workshops in Rockport (MPW), one of the most significant educational centers for photography in the East, held its fifteenth session this summer. Running annually from June to September, the school brings internationally acclaimed photographers to Maine to lead courses in color, black-and-white, architectural, landscape, natural history, figure, still life, portrait, advertising, journalistic, and fine art photography as well as workshops in film and video, television journalism, film and video acting, and script writing. It offers one-week masterclasses and "crash courses," two-week courses, and, for the last seven years, a Workshop in France held at Fontvieille, near Arles. An associate of arts degree program in photography is also offered jointly by the MPW and the University of Maine at Augusta.

The MPW has evolved largely through the efforts of founder and director David H. Lyman, whose photography has appeared in *LIFE, Outside, Sports Illustrated,* and other nationwide country and sports magazines. The school's campus centers around Union Hall, the former Rockport town hall built in 1852, overlooking Rockport Harbor. Information about programs and admission to the school should be obtained from The Maine Photographic Workshop, Rockport, ME 04856.

Catherine Anderson provides this personal account of one moving masterclass in figure and portrait photography during the 1986 session, accompanied by photographs she and her classmates have taken since attending that class.

Eugene Richards during portfolio review at the 1986 Maine Photographic Workshop. Photo by Hazel Hankin.

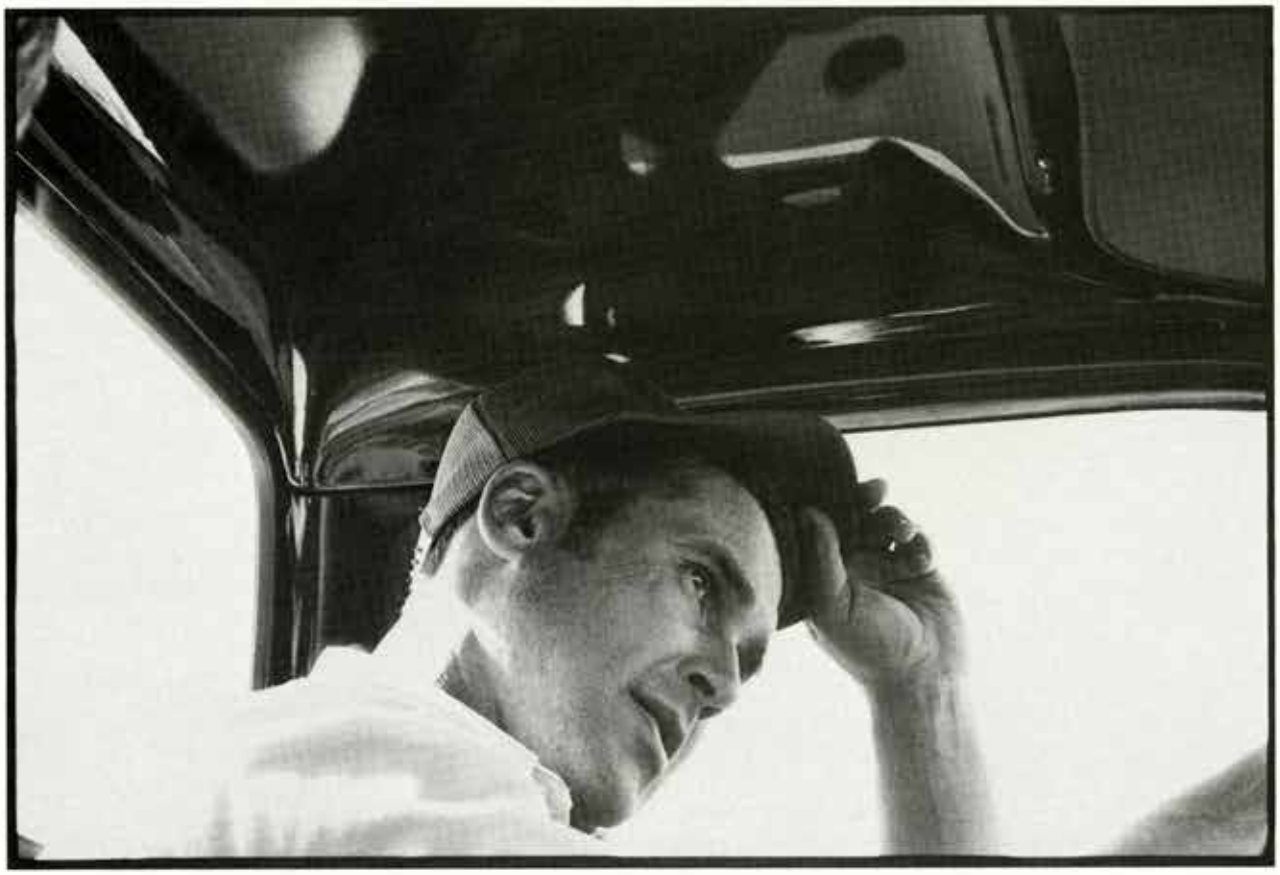
EVERY time I pick up a camera and turn myself to the work of making a portrait, the lesson is repeated: the essence of a person is not necessarily to be captured in a symmetrically-framed, sharply-focused, evenly-lit picture of a face atop a carefully cropped-out body. It is only when a photographer of people learns to "sing the body electric," learns to revel in all parts of the human body and the unique characteristics and motions that adhere to each part, that he or she will begin to make good portraits.

A year ago at Rockport's Maine Photographic Workshop (MPW) I learned this lesson in Eugene Richards's masterclass, "Photographing People." And in Walt Whitman's poem, "I Sing the Body Electric," the only written matter presented in the one-week class, there is a virtual prescription for the photographer of people that throws into sharp focus the lesson that Richards offered; one need only substitute the photographer's verbs "look" and "shoot" for Whitman's last two words:

> *The swimmer naked in the swimming-bath, seen as he swims through the transparent green-shine, or lies with his face up and rolls silently to and fro in the heave of the water, . . .*
>
> *The wrestle of wrestlers, two apprentice-boys, quite grown, lusty, good-natured, native-born, out on a vacant lot at sundown after work, . . .*
>
> *The march of firemen in their own costumes, the play of masculine muscle through clean-setting trowsers and waist-straps, . . .*
>
> *Swim with the swimmers, wrestle with wrestlers, march in line with the firemen, and pause, listen, count.*
>
> (Leaves of Grass, *1855*)

° ° ° ° °

On a rainy, zone-five morning in August, twenty-odd photographers, young and old, professionals and "serious" amateurs, gathered in a cramped classroom. Because he is so unassuming, dressed always in jeans, worn jeans jacket, and sneakers, it was difficult to distinguish Gene from the participants. But it wasn't long before his articulate, soft-spoken dialectic reduced a room full of expectant photographers to a hushed assemblage of eager students. This was another sort of



Rob, 1986

Antonia, 1986

mentor. One would have to listen carefully to mine the gems buried in this meandering vein of anecdotes and annotated slide-presentations.

The first two exercises, he warned, would be painfully simple for the more advanced members of the group, but well worth doing nonetheless. We were to team up with a classmate and each shoot a roll of one another, moving only one thing—the camera. In the second exercise, blur was the key and we introduced it into another series of frames by either selective depth of field, or motion of either the camera or our partner.

He was right. The exercises were simple, yet the results were astonishing. When the contact sheets were tacked on the wall, it was immediately evident that breaking the traditions of frame and focus produced fascinating pictures. Arms, hands, facial features, feet, legs, torsos filled all or only part of the frame in various degrees of focus. So much was to be gained by breaking the conventions of composition. Instantly, there were so many options.

The importance of not being tied to conventions was to become a recurrent theme, in conjunction with the assurance that the MPW is a place to experiment and fail. Richards had just given us the basic tools for that experimentation, as well as the "permission" to use them, and had begun to create the kind of forgiving support system that made it possible to fail in our first attempts.

Whereas the first exercise was painfully simple, the first assignment would be painfully difficult—impossible, in fact, for some in the class. It would be the true test of our willingness to challenge our own aesthetic preconceptions and personal inhibitions and the only way, he contended, to make our photography more sensitive.

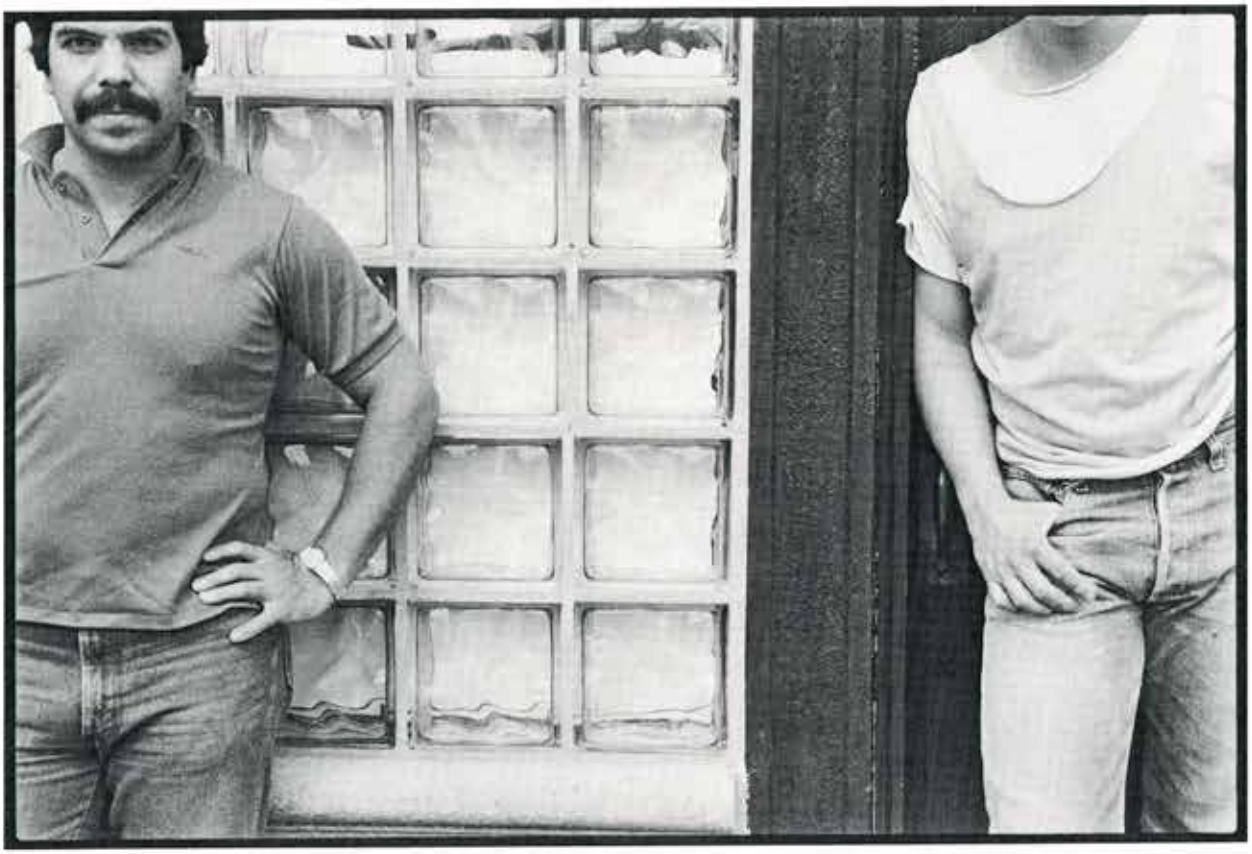
We read Whitman's poem, with its exhortations of the wonders of the human body, and its observation that

> *There is something in staying close to men and women and looking on them, and in the contact and odor of them, that pleases the soul well,*
> *All things please the soul, but these please the soul well.*

Once again we paired up, but this time an entire day was to be spent photographing each other nude. After being together for only three days, all we had to go on in choosing a partner were impressions and gut feelings. I remember this as the most tense, awkward time of the week.

Slowly though, class members paired up, wandered off, and tried to get to know each other well enough to do the assignment with a minimum of self-consciousness. This too was to become an important lesson. The telling photograph, according to Richards, is more often than not taken when the photographer and subject have some degree of rapport, and the camera becomes, in a sense, invisible. We had the better part of a day to establish a relationship with our partner; the street photographer or studio portraitist rarely has more than a few minutes. Yet in the intensity

Willard and Charlotte, 1986



2 men, 26th St., 1986

of the one-week MPW class, it seemed like only a minute since we had met our partners.

I had been gravitating toward Hazel Hankin of Brooklyn, New York, one of the only full-time freelancers in the group, since our first day at the MPW. We teamed up, went back to the Victorian house where I was staying and scrambled for available light at drafty window sills and in a dusty attic. Once the initial awkwardness was over, we could have gone on well into the evening. The only things stopping us were hunger, failing light, and MPW's darkroom deadline. We had begun to sing the body electric.

That day, I had success experimenting with motion in heavily backlit shots of Hankin moving in a cupola flooded with light. Hankin produced some classic nude studies and a number of telling portraits. Meanwhile, across town classmate Russell Smith, a studio photographer from Norwalk, Connecticut, was taking quite literally Whitman's lists of specific body parts and creating a series of what we came to call "human landscapes," fascinating closeups of the joints, pores, and facial details of his partner.

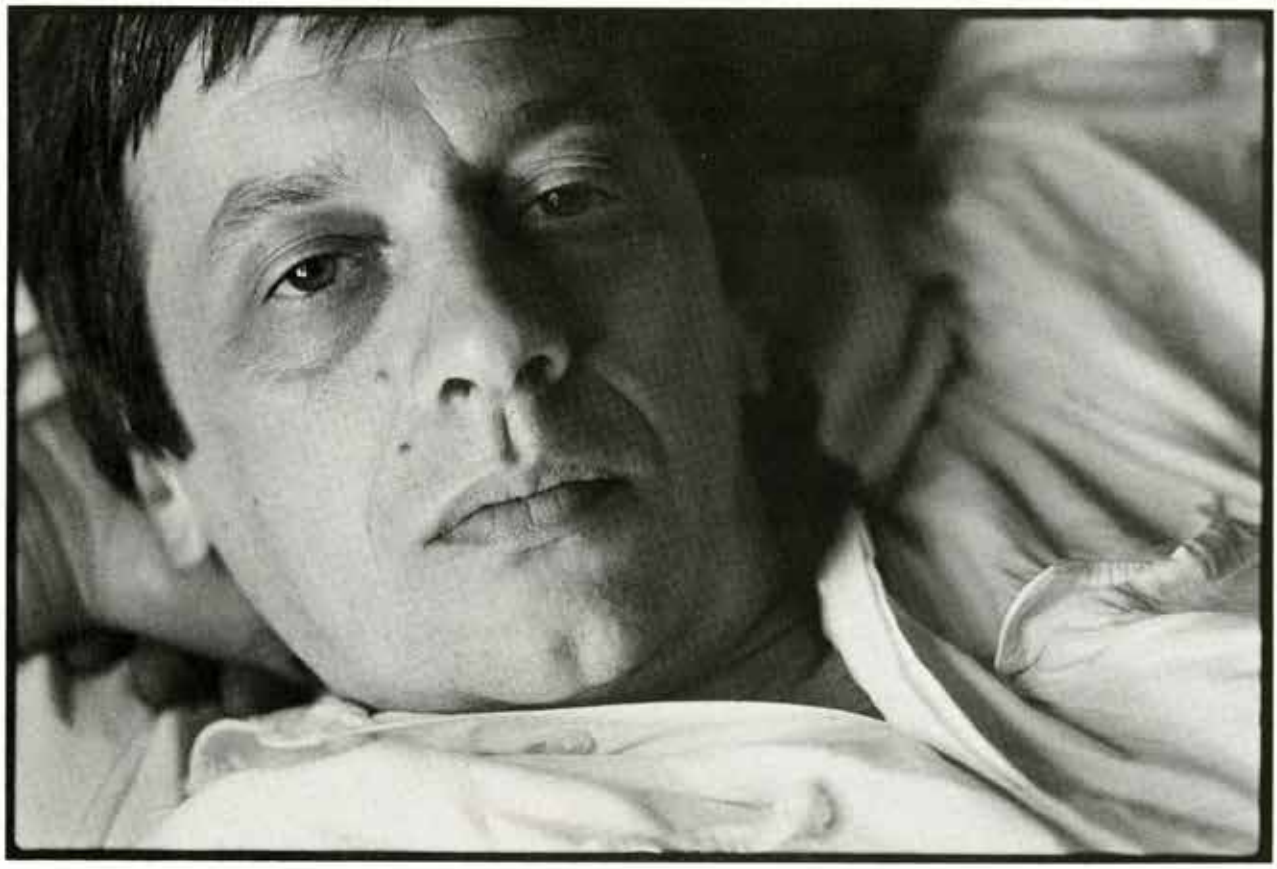
The next day's slide show, a self-edited compendium of everyone's work, was quite extraordinary. The photos ranged from the sensuous to the sublime, and some stood out as truly capturing, in their own unique and often unconventional ways, the personalities of their subjects. Now a chorus was singing the body electric.

° ° ° ° °

After taking two courses at the MPW, I have noticed an underlying strategy at work, unintentional perhaps, for getting participants to experiment. The idea seems to be to keep them in a constant state of exhaustion and overstimulation. It is often only in such a state that people will drop their inhibitions long enough to try new things. Richards's classes were prime examples. They convened at 8 or 9 A.M. and usually started with several hours of viewing and discussing the work of everyone from Edward Steichen to Robert Frank. After an hour lunch break there was more discussing and viewing; perhaps a lecture by one of Richards's colleagues.

On one such occasion, Donald McCullin visited and poignantly narrated a slide show about F. Eugene Smith's work, including many war photos, along with more of McCullin's own. Many of us were sobbing when the lights came on. This was heady stuff—the first and second generation of hard-core photojournalism, with a narrative describing the horror and hopelessness of being a photographer on the front line in Vietnam, or in an insane asylum in Beirut that has been shelled for five days straight. Richards, too, is part of this tradition, of photojournalists who risk their lives to show the suffering of some, so that others will become outraged and moved enough to do something about it.

After seeing McCullin's earlier work, we had the rare opportunity to see actual working prints of one of his more recent project
—dark, foreboding landscapes of the English countryside. McCullin confessed to the class that he was no longer emotionally capable of photographing war, that he had returned home to what he hoped would be a more normal existence. The sad



Portrait of Jerry Bernt at Maine Photographic Workshop, 1986

Punkers, New York City, 1986

irony was that McCullin had not and probably never could again. These stormy, sweeping landscapes struck us as just another phase of his war photography. I recall this, the second-to-last day of our masterclass, as the fullest of all, because after the emotionally draining afternoon with McCullin, we were given our last assignment, the one in which we were to apply all the lessons we had learned thus far.

Most of us left for the Union Fair, the suggested site for our final shoots. We broke up into small groups and headed west into the only brilliant afternoon we were to have all week; it was already 4 or 5 P.M. We wandered around, stone tired, among the gaudy reds, yellows, and electric blues of the carnival. The late afternoon light, I remember, was magnificent. We shot until twilight, rushed back to Rockport, and just barely made the 9 P.M. deadline for MPW's overnight E-6 lab. We never set foot in a darkroom the entire week, though this is not the case with all the classes at the MPW. The MPW's overnight slide and contact sheet services were a godsend, given our breakneck pace. The slides would be waiting for us the next morning, but the day wasn't over yet.

On this evening, like most, we attended a large-screen slide show in Rockport's Opera House. The shows usually ran from 9 to 11:30 P.M. and were given by masterclass leaders and participants in the First International Photography Congress also held that year in Rockport.

That week, for instance, Ernest Haas narrated a presentation of his abstract color images in what would be one of his last public appearances. William Albert Allard showed his cowboys of the American West in the remarkable super-saturated colors he is famous for. Charles Gatewood presented some of the cold, brooding black-and-white images from his new book, *Wallstreet*. And in celebration of its first ten years in operation, Contact Press Images, an agency headed by Robert Pledge, presented the hard-hitting work of members David Burnett, Annie Leibovitz, Frank Fournier, and others. Richards, a member of Magnum, perhaps the world's most prestigious agency, showed slides from *Exploding into Life*, the photo-essay of his late companion's valiant but unsuccessful battle with cancer. Months later the deeply moving work won him Nikon's Book of the Year Award.

Clearly we were charged up, so that there was little desire or time for sleep. The strategy seemed to work well, though many of us left Rockport wondering what heights we might have reached had we had just a few more hours' sleep. Yet the very lack of it made us ripe for change and ready to absorb the wisdom offered us.

* * * * *

There seemed to be no end to the insights that sprang from Richards. One made a particularly lasting impression on me. He was constantly underscoring the importance of looking at other people's work, something I had stopped doing because I had begun to believe that art is created in a vacuum. If you look at someone else's work, you will inevitably copy it and no longer have any claim to originality or creativity.

This week, however, I realized that it is in copying that we learn. In fact, the

Night club, New York, 1987

News reporter among chants of "nigger go home," civil rights march, Forsyth Co., Georgia, 1987

hours of viewing in the masterclass developed in many of us an insatiable appetite for the work of others. After the masterclass I began to scour the bookstores of Maine for collections and have carried on a correspondence with another participant, Renee Elkin. Renee makes her living in the c-print section of Gamma's Chicago labs. In her spare time she takes her straightforward, straight-shooting eye onto the streets of the Windy City.

Elkin and I routinely send exhibit reviews back and forth, along with prints of our current "personal" work. We have also adopted a practice, picked up from classmate Jean Lagacé, of pasting single frames from contacts onto a piece of newsprint on which both the photographer and the critic can scribble comments. These sheets are easy and cheap to send through the mail and give us practice at "reading" contact sheets and editing our work.

The importance of ongoing projects was also stressed by Richards, who was in the final stages of his fifth book when he broke to come to the masterclass. His photographic life history is filled with projects, starting with his chronicle of the civil rights struggle in the Arkansas Delta in the 1960s, *Few Comforts and Surprises*. Later came *Dorchester Days*, a portrait of the rough Boston suburb that was his home as a child. He has also taken his camera and gentle humanism to the Lima, Ohio, State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, war-torn Beirut, and the emergency rooms of Denver, Colorado.

Though his photos are not the formal masterpieces of F. Eugene Smith, his photographic ancestor, they echo the impact of Smith's work, but in a style that has been described as angular, abrupt, jarring.

This was his eleventh year teaching at the MPW, and during the masterclass Richards talked a lot about his latest book, *Below the Line: Living Poor in America* (published by Consumer's Union of the United States in 1987). He was given only four or five days in each of a number of locales to come away with the definitive photos illustrating what poverty was like in those areas. I remember his story about the Appalachian family in whose living room he sat silently for several days, waiting for the right moment to pick up his camera.

I also remember one of the images he showed us from that project. It has made an indelible mark on my mind's eye. Two or three people are bathing in a river at dusk, smiling, the relief of the cool water on their bodies reflected in the smooth, undulating water. The horizon is oddly askew, as it often is in Richards's photos, but it is obvious that the camera is being held by someone who is in the water with the bathers, someone who is swimming with the swimmers, singing well the body electric.

Catherine Anderson

Catherine Anderson, a resident of Freedom, Maine, is assistant director of public affairs at Colby College and Colby College photographer.

continued from pg. 13

of Maine art. "We can't be all things to all people—we have to be discriminating—yet I feel more can be done . . . I feel committed to working with the artists in Maine."

AREA GALLERY AT THE USM CAMPUS CENTER

THE Campus Center Gallery—recently renamed Area Gallery—opened in the fall of 1985 at the University of Southern Maine's Portland campus (*AM*, fall/winter, 1986), but it wasn't until January of 1987 that it began to take shape as one of Maine's most innovative galleries. This change was largely due to the efforts of Lisa Petrucci, the Campus Center's cultural programing associate.

Lisa Petrucci shows off Area Gallery in USM's Campus Center

Petrucci says she wants to bring to Portland "art that reflects our times and society, whether that be in an aesthetic, social, or political vein. I want to put difficult art in an accessible place." Few gallery spaces are as accessible as Area Gallery. During the academic year it is filled constantly with a diverse student body, most of whom have rarely or never been to an art gallery and probably never would go if Area Gallery were not located in the heart of the Campus Center's major gathering space. Students are hardpressed not to notice what is on the walls, and Lisa Petrucci is making every effort to ensure that the art exhibited there is striking and challenging.

Twenty-three-year-old Petrucci, a painter herself, studied graphic design at the Art Institute of Boston and received a bachelor's in arts management and painting from Bradford College in Massachusetts. However, it was through working as a gallery assistant for Linda and Stephan Stux at their Boston gallery that she received her most valuable education as both painter and curator.

Petrucci is willing to take risks and eager to make a difference in Portland's art community. In the past nine months she has assembled a diverse program, including a group exhibition of her favorite artists from the Stux Gallery, a "Synergy" exhibition of works by three science fiction illustrators, and a two-person exhibition featuring the abstract painterly constructions of Portland artist Phillip Austin and industrial black-and-white renderings by Jim Higgins of Boston.

As curator of Area Gallery, Petrucci is in a unique position: she is under the supervision of neither the university's art department nor board of trustees, and she is under no restriction to sell work or represent the University of Southern Maine or Maine-connected artists. In effect she is operating a kind of institute for contemporary art (ICA) through the state university in Portland. While she is not concerned with balancing traditional representational art and abstract avant-garde work in her programing, she is intent upon creating a dialogue within the context and content of each exhibition. In curating a show, therefore, she consciously chooses works of artists with conflicting imagery, to bring out the uniqueness of each artist's work.

Petrucci is anxious to bring the work of national and international artists to Portland, but she is also eager to display Maine art—this past summer the gallery featured a strong exhibition by members of the Union of Maine Visual Artists (see below). Petrucci welcomes slides and resumes from artists interested in exhibiting at Area Gallery. Send materials along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Lisa Petrucci, Area Gallery, Campus Center at University of Southern Maine, 96 Falmouth Street, Portland, ME 04103.

UPDATE ON THE UNION OF MAINE VISUAL ARTISTS

IT has been twelve years since a small group of artists met at the Brunswick Unitarian Universalist Church to form the Union of Maine Visual Artists (UMVA). Through the years it has remained Maine's only statewide, artist-run support network.

After the initial founders' meeting, the union quickly grew to a membership of one hundred and twenty members in the late seventies. Due in part to the exodus of key founding members in 1979 and 1980—Charles Stanley (now known as Carlo Pittore), Maury Colton, Kathy Bradford, and Mark Petroff all moved to New York City—active membership dropped to a small core group. The group kept the UMVA alive through the early eighties largely through its annual December art sale in Portland. The sale allowed members to view each other's works as well as socialize and make some money. Now the union is experiencing new growth: membership is again up well over one hundred and members' works are more widely exhibited. Two years ago the O'Farrell Gallery in Brunswick curated a UMVA exhibition and, this past summer, twelve union members participated in "Selections from the UMVA" at Area Gallery of the University of Southern Maine.

At its founding twelve years ago, the artists who gathered together decided that their first priority was self-education. Each year new officers have been elected and each year the goals and ideas of the administrators have more or less determined the activities of the organization. While one year the focus was on exhibitions and public events, another year the UMVA was concerned with artists' rights, and still another with studio visits and artists' interactions.

Of major importance was UMVA's role in helping to bring about the artist's estate tax law (Title 27, Chapter 2, Sub Chapter II, 1979). Initially employed to alleviate taxes on Bernard Langlais's estate after the sculptor's death in 1977, this law allows such artists' estates to pay taxes in kind by donating art to the state. Maine was the first state to pass such progressive legislation and is now joined by California. In addition, the UMVA takes a strong stand against entrance or juror's fees by boycotting any exhibition in Maine that charges artists such fees. In 1977 the UMVA initiated "Maine Artists Week" proclaimed by Governor Longley to recognize Maine artists past and present, and held again in 1978 and 1979. The UMVA has sponsored more than three dozen exhibitions of works by Maine artists and in 1983 cosponsored the "International Maine Mail Art Exhibition" at the Maine Festival, Bowdoin College.

This year's UMVA administrators include returning founders Carlo Pittore, the group's first secretary-general in 1975; and Stephen Petroff, its first newsletter editor—both reassume their previous offices. As Petroff writes in the Summer 1987 newsletter, "I hope that, being twelve years older,

we can do it right this time . . . studio visits and an 'Art First' policy are taking shape. We certainly have lost none of our interest in artists' rights (in fact over the years Carlo Pittore has been one of the most publically vocal advocates in the country), . . . but the consensus is that this must be the year we make the art we've never made before . . . mutual support, mutual instigation, mutual excitation should be the main ingredients."

Perhaps the Union of Maine Visual Artists' greatest achievement in its twelve-year existence, besides the fact that it has endured, is the network of support and communication it provides for artists throughout the state. The UMVA creates a vital and much needed linkage among a membership dispersed from Kittery to Fort Kent. Through frequent meetings at members' studios, usually in the midstate area, and a bimonthly newsletter, the UMVA stimulates contacts and creates an ongoing opportunity for statewide "art dialogue."

The Union of Maine Visual Artists welcomes all interested artists. To join, contact Nancy Marstaller, RR 2, Box 2352, Brunswick, Maine 04011.

LISA ALLEN RECEIVES ROSWELL AWARD

IN July Lisa Allen, associate professor and chairman of the printmaking department at the Portland School of Art, headed west to Roswell, New Mexico, for a year of concentrated activity under the Roswell Museum Artist-in-Residence Program. This year Allen is one of four artists selected for this program which, according to Portland School of Art's vice-president of academic affairs, Ray Allen, "is probably the most unique and coveted award for visual artists in the United States."

For the past twenty years, the Roswell's annual artist-in-residence program has attracted artists from around the world. This year's applicant pool numbered in the thousands—an average of three to five hundred applicants for each of the six grant areas: painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, weaving, and ceramics. "This was my sixth year to apply to the fellowship program," notes Allen, "and from what I can gather, on the average it takes that many tries. Over the course of the years they learn a lot about you. They see slides of your work covering the length of time that you've applied. I was a finalist in the selection process in 1982 and again in 1986. The committee takes a long hard look at visual artists who are serious about their work over a period of time. The process tends to weed out those who might apply on a whim. I was determined to apply for the rest of my life if I had to."

Located in a southeastern New Mexico farming community, the Roswell's program is unique in many respects. First, artists are selected strictly on the basis of the quality of their work; neither age nor credentials are considered. During a grant period that ranges from six months to one year, each qualifying artist is provided with a house, a studio, materials, and a monthly living stipend. In addition, the grant is non-obligatory—an artist is not required to teach, lecture, donate works of art, or complete any commissions during the grant period. The philosophy behind the artist-in-residence program is twofold: it provides professional artists with time to concentrate on their work free from encumbrances and it enriches the cultural environment of southeastern New Mexico by attracting artists to the area.

Allen is a native of Illinois, where she received her bachelor's and master's degrees in fine arts at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana. She has long been attracted to the vast open spaces and extravagant light of the American Southwest. "I've never had an opportunity like this to work solely and continuously, for a long period of time, on my art," she comments. "This fellowship provides incredible validation for my career as a visual artist, but there's still the unanswered question of how I will take advantage of this 'gift of time.' All I know now is I'll be able to settle into my work like I've never done before."

Lisa Allen; *Square Wheel;* 1987, oilstick, pencil, and casein on paper; 30 x 45"; collection of the artist; photographed by Lyndon Keck

PERCENT FOR ART IN PRESQUE ISLE

EARLIER this year, Mark Huff, associate professor of art at the University of Maine Presque Isle, received a Maine Arts Commission Percent for Art award to provide public art for a major renovation project on campus: Wieden Hall (1960), which houses the auditorium, theatre, and physical education department. Architect Winton Scott oversaw additions to the Wieden Hall complex of a theatre shop, weight room, and small music practice room, which were completed during the spring of 1986.

Huff's project was the only exterior work among the four Percent for Art awards chosen for Wieden Hall. Selections for the project were chosen by an advisory selection committee comprised of members of the visual arts professions, from more than a dozen proposals submitted last spring. Priority status in all Percent for Art selections is given to works by Maine artists.

Currently, twenty percent of all Percent for Art projects in Maine are works in ceramic. Huff's piece, along with Paul Heroux's commissioned work for Northern Maine Vocational and Technical Institute, represents one of two major, non-figurative works in this medium in Presque Isle. Huff began the monumental ceramic relief for Wieden Hall in the fall of 1986, and he completed and mounted the piece in June. Entitled *Aroostook Dusk*, the sculpture marks a slight departure from the artist's smaller, self-contained ceramic pieces. It responds primarily to the architectural concerns of embellishment, façade, and the transition between exterior and interior space. Aesthetically, the piece expresses a sense of expansive landscape suggestive of the terrain around Presque Isle. It is a kind of environmental diptych: one segment is a free-standing ceramic wall that echoes and protrudes from the north wall of the building, while a facing piece creates a "negative" fifteen-foot space that viewers can physically walk through. The colors of *Aroostook Dusk* were achieved by fusing chalk, ranging in hue from pastels to deep teals and blues, with the ceramic clay. The piece was then fired to create a deeper glaze than traditional ceramic techniques.

Huff received his bachelor's in fine arts from Indiana University and a master's in fine arts from Louisiana State University. He came to the University of Maine Presque Isle in

1981, and he has participated since then in exhibitions throughout the United States including "Clay USA" at Radford, Virginia; "Small Works National" at Zaner Gallery, Rochester, New York; and "Maine Art Today" at Bowdoin College in Brunswick. Huff feels that the Percent for Art commission has been important to his advancement as an artist and says he has learned a great deal technically and aesthetically while creating *Aroostook Dusk*. In addition, the project underlines the efforts of the Maine Arts Commission in the recent past to address the increasing interest in the arts in northern Maine. Huff's piece, along with three paintings by artists Anderson Giles, Sherry Ireland, and Joe Lavasseur commissioned for the interior of Wieden Hall, are on view as permanent additions to the University of Maine Presque Isle campus.

Architecture-oriented sculpture in Presque Isle: Mark Huff's *Aroostook Dusk* (detail)

MAINE ART AT THE MET

LAST February the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened its first major space devoted to its collection of modern and contemporary art: the new 110,000-square-foot Lila Acheson Wallace Wing. Designed by architects Roche, Dinkeloo, and Associates of Hamden, Connecticut, the Wallace wing provides that collection with bright, high-ceilinged display spaces and a rooftop sculpture garden overlooking Central Park. The wing commemorates its donor, the late Lila Acheson Wallace, a cofounder of *Reader's Digest*. One of America's most highly regarded philanthropists, Wallace gave particular support to the arts in New York and, during her forty-year affiliation with the Met, established funds to develop the museum's nascent twentieth-century collection.

While the Met's modern collection is international, its strength is New York-based art dating from the 1913 Armory show through the New York School—decades when that city became an international center for avant garde artists. At the same time many of these, like Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Walt Kuhn, Arthur B. Davies, Stuart Davis, William and Marguerite Zorach, Robert Laurent, and Georgia O'Keeffe, established a trend of working and summering in Maine.

The significant impact of that trend was summarized in 1963-64 by a major exhibition, "Maine and Its Artists, 1710–1963," which toured from Colby College in Waterville to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. The exhibition and an accompanying book, *Maine and Its Role in American Art* (New York, The Viking Press, 1963, republished by Colby College), traced the development of modernism in this country and its coalescence with American regionalism—a phenomenon perhaps nowhere as clearly discernible as in works by artists who visited, summered, or resided year-round in Maine.

Since that show, another generation of artists that includes Fairfield Porter, Neil Welliver, and Alex Katz, continued the creative pilgrimage to Maine. All these artists are amply represented in the Met's twentieth-century collection. Now the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing implicitly reiterates the concept of the Colby-Boston-Whitney exhibition and provides New Yorkers and tourists to that city with a stellar opportunity to view the work of the Maine-connected modernists.

Lila Acheson Wallace Wing, Metropolitan Museum of Art, photograph by Brian Rose; *left: Mrs. N's Palace*, by Rockland, Maine, native Louise Nevelson, (1964–1977, painted wood and mirror, 140 x 239 x 180", gift of the artist)

Model of the new Augusta Civic Center by Moore/Weinrich & Associates, photographed by Brian Vanden Brink

THE NEW AUGUSTA CITY CENTER

AFTER fifty years in the planning stages, a new city center in Augusta is scheduled for completion in November. The complex project, designed by Moore/Weinrich & Woodward Architects of Brunswick, was begun in 1985. It includes a new 38,400-square-foot City Hall, Fort Western Museum, and the restoration of the 1754 Fort Western, one of the oldest surviving wooden fortifications in America and a National Historic Landmark.

In a city where little large-scale environmental design has been accomplished, the project will have a significant impact on the urban character of Augusta. The design solution seeks to restore the visual prominence of Fort Western on the banks of the Kennebec River and to provide a much needed public green space in place of an old rollerskating rink and auto tire dealership. The site planning eliminates an eyesore and gently clarifies the historic context of the city.

Equally important is the visual relationship of the new city hall to the historic context of Fort Western and the contemporary identity of city administration. The architects have referred consciously to the forms of Fort Western to identify the special precinct of the city council chambers. Exterior materials are very familiar to Augusta: brick, and concrete masonry that recalls the granite blocks of older government buildings in the area. The result is a building that is comfortable in its architectural context while also expanding that context. By successfully signifying the ancient and the contemporary, the design is expressive of the positive state of government in Maine. Continuity with the past and foresight are rarely achieved together in government or in architecture.

Significant urban design opportunities occur only rarely north of Portland. It is encouraging to the design community (and to the public as well) that the City of Augusta has undertaken planning on such scale and constructed a building with strong and unconventional imagery.