

LOADED

Benjamin Weissman
Jan Tumlr
Mitchell Syrop
Amy Gerstler
Richard Hawkins

Richard Kuhlenschmidt Gallery
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Benjamin Weissman

REAL ME

There's a game to be played, to be taken seriously, a special game that happens on a big night when everything's quiet and still. That's how I think of it. It shoots the nerves way up, gets me breathing fast, rushes me home an hour early from work. It's so demanding. It's so fun. It's so bad, wacky, low.

A puff on a cigarette. God this room is great. What was the architect thinking? I live in what appears to be upside-down bread loaf pan. Drown yourself.

Warm tonight. This is my last cigarette. Puff. Out. Maybe some champagne. Later perhaps, at the height of it all. No no no, right now, I must taste bubbly this instant. A brilliant man always keeps a bottle chilled in the fridge for gloom, intrigue, and celebration. One never knows.

A toast. Here's to a pitiful man who enjoyed himself in spite of two million short comings. We... love you.

Thank you very much. You're all very sweet. Now stop looking at me. Enjoy yourselves, I'll be right back.

Stay with us. Don't go.

Must go. Urgent.

Step into my office, grab scissors; waltz right into the little gameroom, the bathroom. A look in the mirror. You're a man. Not bad. Thank you. You're welcome. Off with my pants, off off off. Look, there's a penis down there. Who's going to eat it? Someone with a huge appetite I guess. We cut the crotch away from the underwear, pull the fabric down over your hips: now it's a skirt. You're a hoola dancer. Dance boy. Hairy... little...

balls... sag for attention; me me me. Won't someone tickle me?
You in the back row, shut up.

So cruel.

We pull the two boys out for a good scratch. Poor things.
They're so forlorn. I love you. Good bye now.

Thanks Mister.

We rub lipstick on the mouth, so succulent, slip hoops
through the earlobes, glue eyelashes on the eyes; a little
mascara, couple dabs of rouge, strap the bra around the chest.

Awfully pretty.

Take out the lasso.

(Theatrical, aloof.) You know Cummerbund, you look so
handsome tonight, but I'm afraid I'm just too pooped to go out.
(Yawns.) You'll have to stalk the world of pork chops alone if
your cabin fever is as bad as it sounds.

(Jam hands in pockets, peeved.) Is that so? I think you take
the homebody thing too far. I think you're cheating on me.

Don't be silly. (Dismiss with hand wave.) I love you.
You're my hammer and anvil. All creatures pale in comparison to
you. You're it in my book, (dips index finger onto tongue, draws
letters, it, in the air.)

(Folds arms across chest.) I bet you have some side order
outside right now waiting for you to flash the lights three
times.

(Three-quarter look, hands on hips.) Why are you thinking
these things? Stop being a grumpy buffalo. (Straighten-up, grab
hold of neck.) What are you doing? (Squeeze lightly.) That hurts.
(Struggle.) Let go of me. (Lasso around neck.) What are you

doing? Are you completely crackers? (Sticks out tongue.)

Oh, my little stink boy, I'm sorry. Did I guess the secret code? Is the plumber or the Fuller Brush man on his way up? (tighten rope, soft punch to face.) Looks like we're going to have quite a scene now.

(Continue to struggle.) Shut up.

(Push against wall opposite mirror.) No, you shut up. (Solid punch to face.) You're a sneak, a trickster, an evil swine.

(Frightened, disoriented.) Ouch. That really hurt. You're paranoid. (Lift end of rope up to mouth, smear lipstick.) Quit it. What are you doing with the lasso? You're ruining my mouth. Let me go. (Slip rope over head, tightens around neck.) Stop it. I can't breathe. (Cough, stick out tongue.)

You look stupid. And very old. Close your mouth when you're dying. (Stomp twice on the floor.) And now the knock at the door. All these surprises. (Hand on chin, in mock query) Gee, I wonder who that is? (Tighten rope.)

Stop choking me, I'm serious. (Gags.) I can't... breathe.

(Pleased with himself.) Thought you could push little old me out the door for a couple hours while you have a carnal tryst with a strapping young colt. (Punch in the stomach.) Sorry to spoil all the fun, (punch again) but you're a dead cunt with a boring cock. (Bang face against mirror.)

(Flail, spit.) Please, please stop. Answer the door. I'm sure it's only Milton. I really can't breathe. You're going to kill me. (In tears.) I love you. You, (sing song) and nobody else but

you. You've got to believe me.

You're nauseating me. I'm going to kill you. (Punch in the face. Tighten rope all the way, and pull; slam head against back wall.) You shouldn't live another second. (Slam.) You're too old. You're a wrinkled slimey pile of shit. (Stuff rag in mouth.) Shove this sock in your mouth. I hate your tongue, so fat and smelly; (slam) I hate the sounds it makes. (Slam.) You're gone. I'm out of here. (Slam.)

(Inaudible) Don't leave me.

--Benjamin Weissman

Jan Tumlr

The Gift of Life

(an excerpt)

by Jan Tumlir

My friend's face had gone quite pale and as he spoke the blood drained from his lips. Never had I witnessed him in this state. Although I could sense how desperately he tried to make himself understood, he seemed incapable of sustaining a thought for long enough to communicate it. Also, his voice has changed; it had dropped an octave or two and I began to detect a faint growl which grew increasingly pronounced as he rambled on, gesticulating madly and in a manner which did not suit him at all. "Can't you see," he said. "The image, the window...All of my experiments have come to this...Outside is not...Good." He pointed to a rectangle on the wall that was lighter than the rest, retaining distinctly the silhouette of a picture that had been removed, yet whose presence had been faithfully retained as a result of the years of cigar smoking that had taken place in that room. "Remember that small oil painting...It was the first...I had to put it away." At the moment, the wind which had been gathering in strength outside, blew open the window, scattering the neat piles of paper on my friend's table and mixing in some leaves. Reaching for a page still floating above his head, he overturned a small bottle upon which a crude skull and cross-bones had been drawn. The liquid which poured forth was of a strange luminous quality and smelled vaguely of semen. With trembling fingers he attempted to contain it and return it to its bottle; but the mass spread, indeed it seemed even to increase in volume as I watched it, until it covered the entire table, soaking the papers and setting them aglow.

The liquid, he explained, was precious. It had been produced from the essential extractions of natural things. From the roots, shoots and flowers of plants; from the cores, barks and leaves of trees; fluid extractions from every kind of animal, up and down the evolutionary scale, from the single-celled organism to the most complex life-form, from its skin and bone, from every tissue, every organ. It had taken years to prepare.

Upon his desk was displayed a reduced model of the machine he had employed in the production of this liquid. It was quite simple: a tubular chamber, hydraulic press and a spigot and faucet near the bottom of it. Every kind of matter had been systematically crushed within this apparatus to obtain the few drops which, according to a recipe of his invention, were combined to produce this marvelous substance.

Now, this information which I presently relate as sensibly as it is possible for me to do was not told to me in this way. I do not want to mislead anyone to think that my friend's condition was in any way improving as he spoke of his scientific projects for it seemed, in fact, to worsen. At the moment of telling it was impossible for me to fathom the import of his words, as confused as their delivery had become. This text, then, is in no small part a reconstruction of my experience and thus prone to inaccuracy and oversight. I have very little scientific knowledge at my disposal and do not understand how these things work. If my readers are inclined to wonder why I have not consulted with the specialist on these matters, the answer is, quite simply: fear. Fear that I might be deemed as insane as my friend for even considering such ideas or worse yet, that they might, in fact, have a rational explanation.

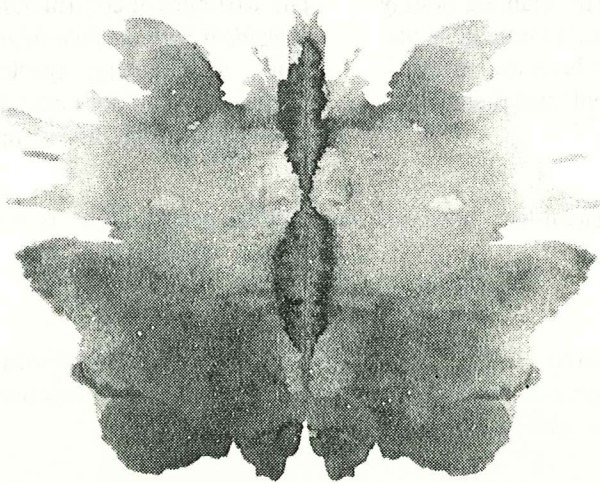
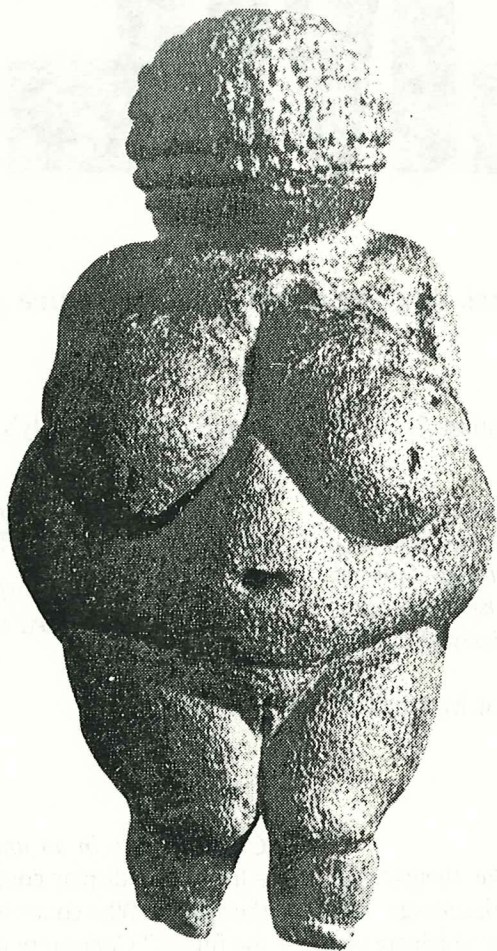
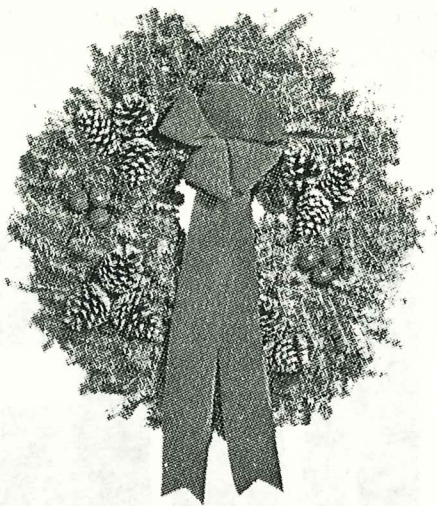
Indeed, I barely listened to my friend because I had by then become engrossed in the transformation which was occurring on his desk-top. The pages of his manuscript which once bore elegantly scripted notations and precise illustrations of natural forms executed with a single-hair brush, seemed to be sprouting greenish, moss-like growths. The fluid which had spilled unto them was congealing in the most remarkable manner. My friend, too, stared down in horror, but not surprise as if this phenomenon were something entirely predictable and inevitable. "Yes," he whispered, an awful grimace appearing on his face. "She has been released."

I was uncertain as to whether I should have been more terrified over the changes on the desk-top or my friend's countenance for he seemed at that instant almost fiendish. Abruptly he got up and motioned for me to follow him into the hallway. He lead me to a small closet from which he produced the painting that had formerly adorned his wall. I recognized the frame instantly, it was composed of a repeated wreath motif carved out of wood coated with a layer of gold foil. The image, however, had been considerably transformed. The dreary autumnal landscape which had been represented there was now covered over with a luxurious vegetation: flowers, trees, grass; real in every respect save the diminutive scale. As I held the painting in my hands, I felt it tremble to a subtle pulse, the surface emitted a warm, foul-smelling mist that formed into tiny clouds which hung inches above it. Nothing I had every experienced before prepared me for this sight which held me transfixed in a state composed in equal parts of horror and curiosity, and yet, the ultimate shock was yet to come. As I peered in deeper, I observed that the growths were not exclusively vegetable in nature. Indeed, here and there I perceived matter resembling flesh with miniature hairs and blood-vessels, almost recognizable as human organs and, impossible as it may be to believe, all of this was vigorously pumping with life!

I looked up and realized that my friend had disappeared. From the studio came a sound of breaking glass. I threw aside the painting and ran to meet him. My friend, by now completely insane, was

emptying his shelves with an outstretched arm; sending jar upon jar of paint cascading to the ground. "Oh yes," he shrieked. "I knew it could come to this. It was she that planted this desire inside of me and now she can see it blossom." He reached for a last jar that remained on the shelf, tore off the cap and emptied its contents into his throat. "Understand that for ages I had been dissatisfied with my pictures; that I had despaired over their artificial quality; that in all of my efforts to portray life, I had succeeded only in depicting death." I tried to interrupt and to convince him that I had always considered his paintings to be remarkably life-like, but he would not hear of it. "Life-like, life-like...That is precisely why I hate them. Is there anything more ridiculous in the world than the practice of painting? To look around oneself and immediately be tempted to make some scribbles, some mark?"

Mitchell Syrop



*This work first appeared in #41 of the JOURNAL of the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (Spring 1985).
It has been slightly revised for this presentation.*

DEMENST

"You don't tell patients it's experimental. You say it's in the investigative phase." —Dr. Denton Cooley

Part 1: MUTATION

Mutation is a process. Anomaly is its manifestation. Monotype or prototype are anomaly's potentials. The intellectual analog of the biological mutation is the mistake.

"...Embittered toward Allah now, he decided as revenge, to create upon the earth a devil race...to upset the law of nature [he] conceived the idea of employing what we today know as recessive gene structure...the humans resulting, he knew would be, as they became lighter, and weaker progressively also more susceptible to wickedness and evil..."

— The Autobiography of Malcolm X

"The job of the scientist is to create science."

— Dr. Edward Teller, "father" of the hydrogen bomb

Karl Marx invited Charles Darwin to have the first volume of Das Kapital dedicated to him, but Darwin declined.

— recounted in "Charles Darwin" by
Sir Gavin DeBeer

Prayer

Reader

Parents favor children like themselves. Contraceptive practices discourage undesirable offspring. Methods which are not "open to life" presume the manifest destiny of theory into practice. Infanticide is justified. The designated heirs are authenticated. Postdated geneologies then affirm their pedigree.

Recite together:

Disguised and chameleon-like, however, the mutants persist. That is why history is still interesting.

Congregation, in an undertone

All histories display continuity to validate their host. "Who controls the past controls the future." Continuity illustrates control. The attributes of control. *On the Sabbath coincident with the New Moon add:* (similarity, simultaneity, synchronicity and sequentiality) do not miraculously impart continuity. Continuity is manufactured.

In all histories a false appearance of continuity validates present conditions. History's subjectivity is birthed by discourse. The significance of mutation in the discursive process parallels its importance in biological evolution. Mutations in discourse are the result of mistakes, misunderstandings, bias and lies.

MUTATION

Part 2: DISEASE

Pathologies have three primary aspects: physiological, behavioral and sociological. They constantly shuttle between these in search of a cause. When one aspect is perceived as the cause, then the other two will be perceived as consequences.

Development of the Idea of Alcoholism as a Disease

- Phase 1. A behavioral problem causes a physiological problem which results in a sociological problem.
- Phase 2. Social problems cause behavioral problems which result in physiological problems.
- Phase 3. Physiological problems cause behavioral problems which result in a sociological problem.

These examples show the developmental progression of attitudes toward alcoholism. When a problem is thought to have a behavioral cause, then it's the problem of the individual: i.e., moral or psychological weakness. When the cause is believed to be sociological, then it is considered to be a political problem, such as injustice or inequality. Neither case is called a disease. However, when a problem is believed to have a physiological source, like a chemical or metabolic imbalance, then it's called a disease and it takes on medical, rather than political or religious significance.

When pathology is called disease and its genesis is located in physiology it indicates three possible origins:

1. Degeneration: disease results from the body's inability to respond to wear or damage.
2. Contamination: disease is caused by the presence of foreign substances or organisms.
3. Mutation: disease is caused by an anomalous response of the body to its situation. When mutations are considered undesirable they are called diseases.

Mutation as Disease: Sickle Cell Anemia

Sickle cell anemia, dreaded by African-Americans, actually began in East Africa as a beneficially adaptive mutation. The sickle cell trait evolved as a defensive response to deadly malaria-bearing mosquitos in the region. However, when people from that area were transplanted to a new environment where the mosquitos were not present, the sickle cell trait acted against the system of its host rather than the intruder.

The sickle cell trait is widely recognized as a disease — one that has its origin in a physical mutation. It can be concluded from this that disease can be precipitated by mutation. If a mutation was capable of producing physical symptoms, couldn't it also cause behavioral ones, as in the case of alcoholism? Recent investigations into functioning of the brain indicate the possibility that behavioral pathologies may have psychochemical origins and that, conversely, psychochemical pathologies may have behavioral origins.

Can it be inferred from this that some mutations may be essentially behavioral? Could instinctual behavior be the result of a mutation? If so, can't behavioral mutations be considered diseases and be investigated as such?

Disease is a flexible term. Designating a pathology as a disease neutralizes the problem of locating responsibility or blame for its genesis. Articulating the flexibility of the terms "mutation" and "disease," can demonstrate and enhance their usefulness in identifying analogous situations.

Part 3: DEMENSTRUATION

In attempting to control and acquire women's functions, men have developed institutions that symbolize, analogize, and otherwise recapitulate them. It is typical and ironic that these institutions perform the dual functions of control and simulation. The most notable examples of this behavior are found in religious rituals, the legal system of property ownership, and the adulation of technological prosthesis. All these denial-driven activities express the will for domination over nature.

Exemplifying the male obsession with women's reproductive capabilities are ideas like "women's intuition." The ascription of intuitive and clairvoyant powers to women is rooted in their ability to give birth. In earlier times pregnancy, like weather, was easily recognized as the primary delivery system of one's fate. Births were forecast by changes in the menstrual cycle.

Among the early attempts to usurp these predictive abilities was the "reading" of entrails by the priests of ancient civilizations. This attempt to replicate an apparently supernatural ability ironically incorporated a bizarre inversion of the phenomenon's original significance. Attempts to foretell the beginnings of new life were performed at the expense of slaughtered animals.

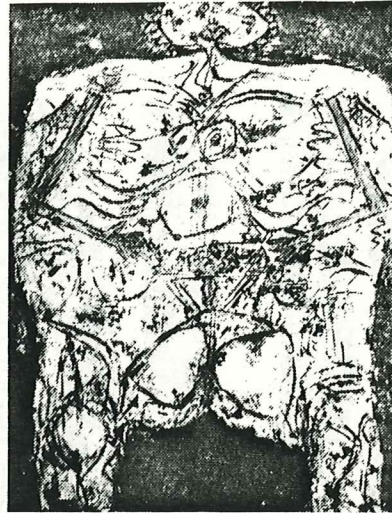
The realization of the close relationship between blood and life is a short step from the conclusion that blood is life. From that idea flows tributary beliefs including blood sacrifices and covenants, vampirism, cannibalism and their symbolic surrogates. Those things that have characteristics in common with blood take on its imagined magical or supernatural powers. The color red, red wine and red nail polish all draw psychic power from blood. Symbolically these corollaries define blood as a vehicle in which its owner's spirit or essence is held in suspension. It may be an elixir of life (good) or it may contain their toxins (evil/death).

The association of menstrual blood with birth, sex, and death is so powerful that a fortress of denial in the form of taboos has been erected against it. A simultaneous attraction and repulsion to menstrual blood is expressed repeatedly by these taboos that prohibit it and by rituals that reenact it.

Freud's explanation of menstrual taboos and circumcision rituals identified them as vestigial reenactments within a sequence of mythical, primeval events that established the origins of patriarchal social organization. He hypothesized that menstrual taboos were created to protect men from confronting the suppressed rage that surfaces in women during menstruation. This was due to castration anxiety resulting from penis envy. The taboos were also supposed to spare men from the reminder of their own primordial castration anxiety, which would be evoked at the sight of genital bleeding.

The object of a taboo, however, must first appear desirable, Freud believed, in order to create the need for it. While he proposed to explain the repulsion from menstrual blood, he never hypothesized on its attraction.

Later writers like Ashley Montagu and Bruno Bettelheim explain the menstrual taboos quite differently. They interpret

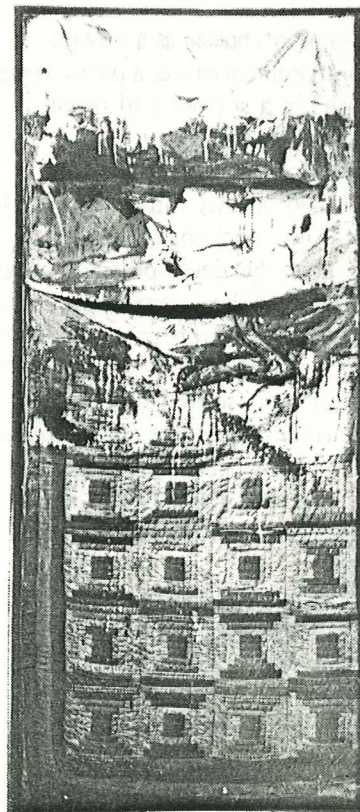


Jean Dubuffet, *Corps de Dame*.

Q: Why can't you trust a woman?

A: How can you trust anything that bleeds for five days and doesn't die?

— A joke



Robert Rauschenberg, *Bed*.

circumcision and the related practice of subincision, as simulations of menstruation. Both practices cause blood to flow from the genitals and symbolically bestow the reproductive powers of women on men.

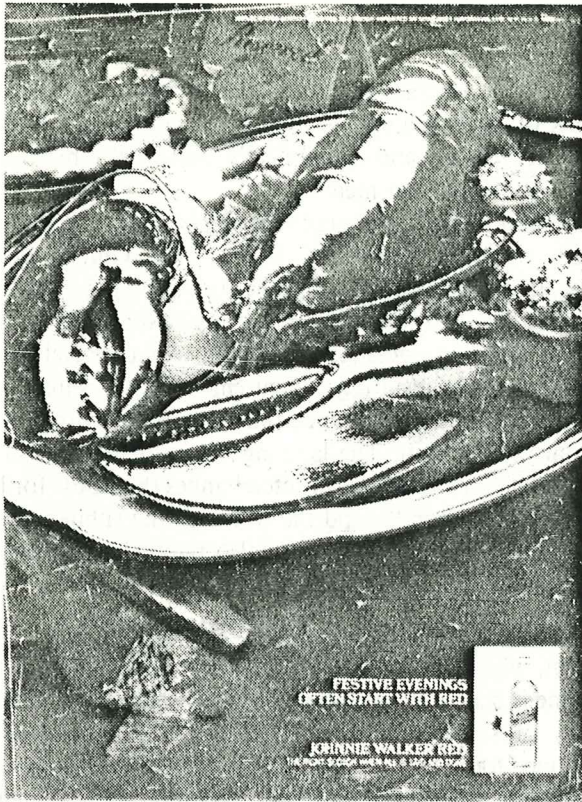
The mimicry of menstruation by subincision (a ritual among certain tribes in Australia, Africa, New Guinea and the Philippines) demonstrates this idea even more graphically than circumcision. In subincision the penis is slit open along the urethra. Often the practice is repeated to successively enlarge the incision. The resulting disfigurement of the penis causes a feminization of its appearance and necessitates urination from a squatting position. The language used in subincision ceremonies frequently equates or interchanges the words for blood with women and milk, and the word for the subincised penis with vagina or creek. There are also parallel names for subincision blood and menstrual blood.

Opening the body is the oldest disease. The acting out of bleeding by men, whether under conditions of warfare, ritual, surgery, or crime is behavior which persists historically under an endless variety of situations. It may be sublimated into a socially sanctioned form such as surgery, or it may seek an unsanctioned outlet such as ceremonial murder. Bloodletting is a persistent and irrepressible expression of a ritualized mutation that represents menstruation. Like sickle cell anemia, it originates from a mutation the significance of which has been ironically and destructively inverted in a new application. Like alcoholism it endures countless changes in both the conditions surrounding it and the perceptions of it. Yet it remains essentially the same. Like the migrations of animals it is behavioral but not psychological. The mutation is instinctual.



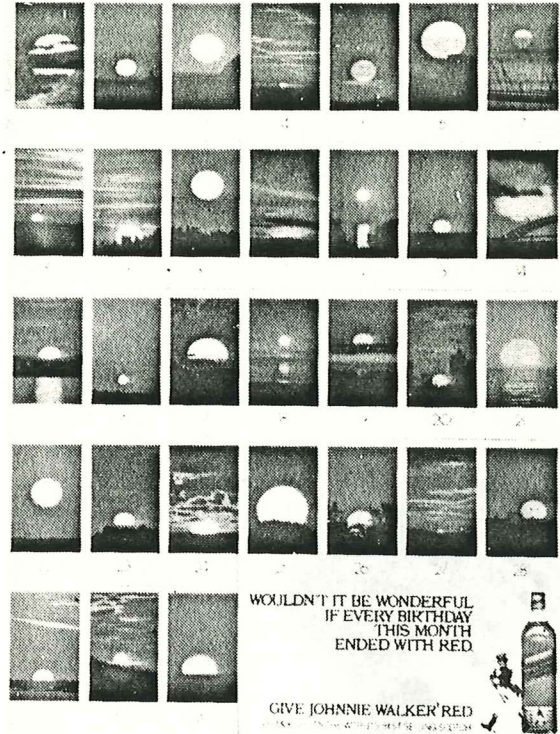
Various advertisements.





"Festive evenings often start with red."

Above: magazine advertisements for "Johnnie Walker Red" scotch.
Below: Dry cleaning advertisements.



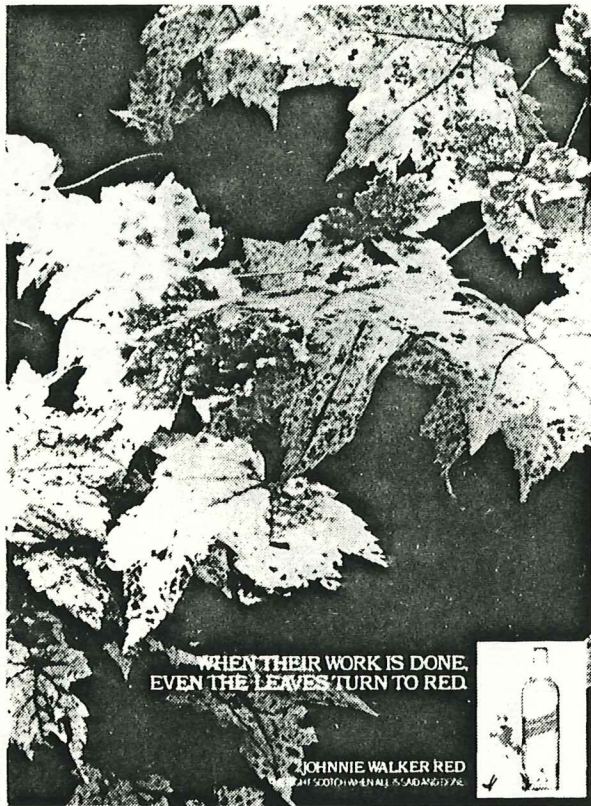
"Wouldn't it be wonderful if every day this month ended with red."

The Easter Spot

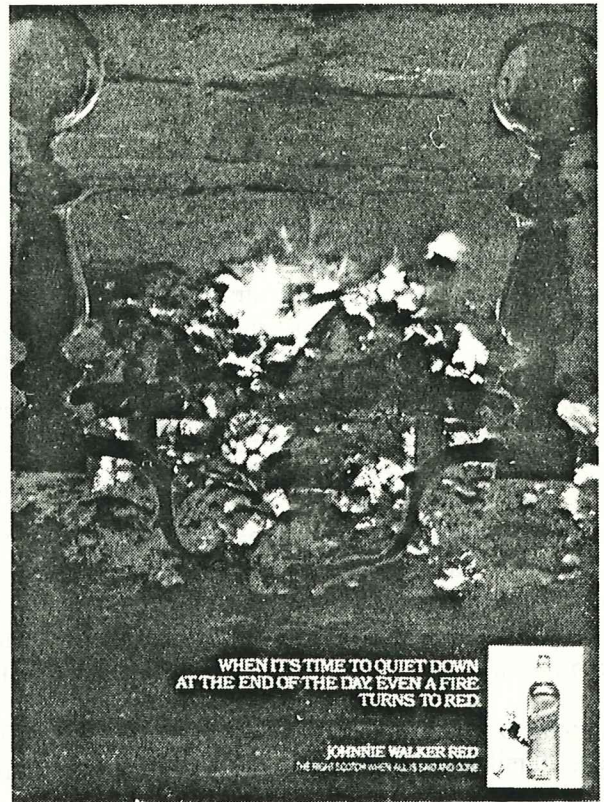


The Wedding Spot





"When their work is done, even the leaves turn to red."



"When it's time to quiet down at the end of the day, even a fire turns to red."

The Parking Lot Spot



The Grandfather spot.



Part 4: THE ETERNAL WOUND

"They drew first blood." — Sylvester Stallone as Rambo

The following are excerpts from "The Random Killers," *Time Magazine*, 11/26/84; *Mortal Lessons: Notes On The Art Of Surgery* by Richard Selzer; *Mal(e) Practice: How Doctors Manipulate Women* by Robert S. Mendelsohn, M.D.; "Benign Violence" by Mark Kramer, *The Atlantic Monthly*, 1983.

What is it, then, this thing, the knife, whose shape is virtually the same as it was three thousand years ago. . . Did man invent it or did it precede him. . . lying in wait to be discovered, picked up, used?

— Selzer

"I study a crime scene the way others look at a painting," says [FBI] profiler Robert Ressler. "To understand the mind of the artist, you have to be totally familiar with his work." — *Time*

It is the quietude of resolve layered over fear, and it is this resolve that lowers us, my knife and me, deeper and deeper into the person beneath. . . deeper still. . . For the first time we can see into the abdomen. Such a primitive place. One expects to find buffalo on the walls. . .

— Selzer

The number of operations performed in America. . . now exceeds 20 million a year.

— Mendelsohn

The Justice Department hesitates to call the bloodletting an epidemic, but the volume of cases has brought more attention to the phenomenon.

— *Time*

In 1976, a congressional committee. . . studied the problem of unnecessary surgery in the United States. It reported that in 1974, doctors performed nearly 2.4 million unnecessary operations. . . About 12,000 patients paid with their lives. . . In 1974, knives were the instrument of 15,000 absolutely unnecessary deaths in the United States. Three thousand of them were used by murderers. In the other 12,000 cases a surgeon held the knife!

— Mendelsohn

The unguarded knife is like the unbridled war horse. . . The hand of the surgeon must tame this savage thing. . . So close is the joining of knife and surgeon that they are like the centaur. . .

— Selzer

Dr. John Bunker, a Stanford University researcher [said], "Not more than 20% of surgery is done to prevent death or to prolong life. The rest is done to improve the quality of life and we have no systematic data on the value of the results."

— Mendelsohn

By adulthood most serial killers have perfected what Dr. John Liebert, a Bellvue, Washington, psychiatrist calls "the mask of sanity," enabling them to be functioning members of the community. Serial killers are likely to be intelligent, better-than-average looking, and glib and charming.

— *Time*

"They are not very reflective and have little tolerance for ambiguity," are authoritarian, are stubborn, believe in the need for controlling dealings with patients. . . They don't place a high value on rapport with patients or on "the psychological aspects of medicine," and feel "less bound by traditional roles of conduct" than other doctors do.

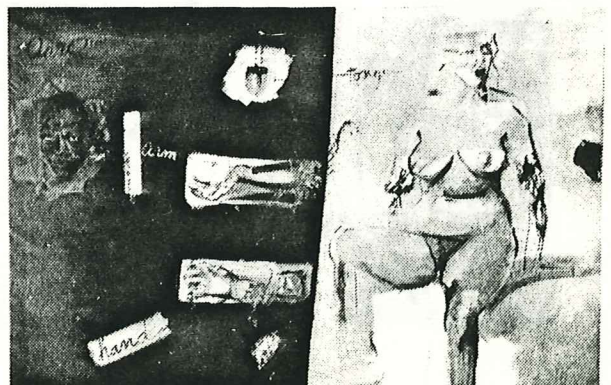


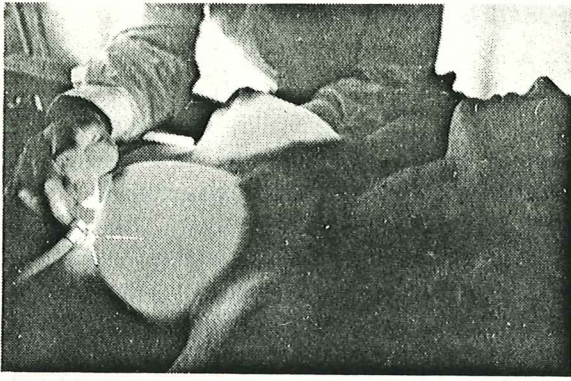
Rembrandt, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*.

View of operating room through glass dining room wall in a plastic surgeon's office, *Geo*.



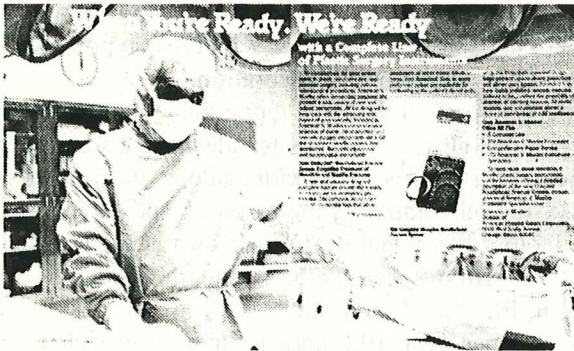
Larry Rivers, *Celebrating Shakespeare's 400th Birthday (Titus Andronicus)*..





Checking breast implants, "The Kindest Cuts," *Geo*, 4/80.

Advertisement, *Journal of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*.



Richard Hamilton, *Fashion Plate (a) self portrait*.

Advertisement, *Vogue*.



...Surgeons seem so often to embody an aggregate type to other hospital workers that the term "surgeon's personality" commonly communicates something akin to the findings — an egotistical, emotionally cold, and skillful technician.

— Kramer

"They are untreatable, unrehabilitable and uncontrollable," says psychiatrist Morrison. But that doesn't mean they can't put on a good act.

— *Time*

...experts agree that the sex drives and aggressions of serial murderers — virtually without exception male — are inextricable. "Sex and aggression get fused early in life and they can't differentiate them by the time they are adults," says Donald T. Lunde, a Stanford University Psychiatrist.

— *Time*

I love the solid heft of men as much as I adore the heated capaciousness of women — women in whose penitentialia is found the repository of existence... It is their bodies that tell of the frailty of men... Both are exuberant bloody growths.

— Selzer

In 1977, five of the ten most commonly performed procedures, and more than half of the total operations included in this group, were obstetrical-gynecological.

— Mendelsohn

"The idea is penetration, but they are only able to put a knife or a bullet into a woman," says Dr. David Abrahamsen, who analyzed "Son of Sam" David Berkowitz.

— *Time*

One enters the body in surgery as in love...daring uncharted darkness to reach home.

— Selzer

American surgeons performed about 690,000 hysterectomies in 1979. It is doubtful that more than one in five of them could be justified on the basis of life-threatening medical needs.

— Mendelsohn

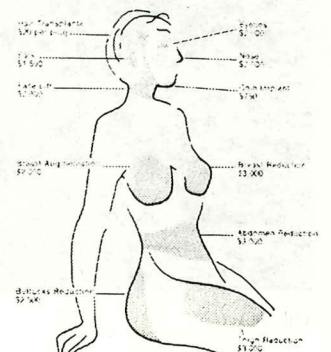
In 1979, 546,000 Cesarean sections were performed in the U.S., or approximately 15% of all births. By 1984 the rate had increased to 20%. Cesarean sections should be necessary in only three to five percent of all births.

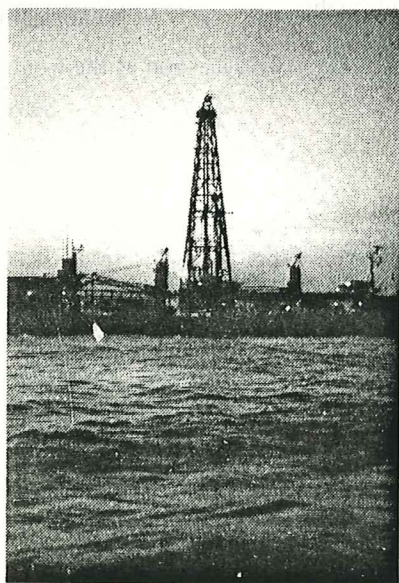
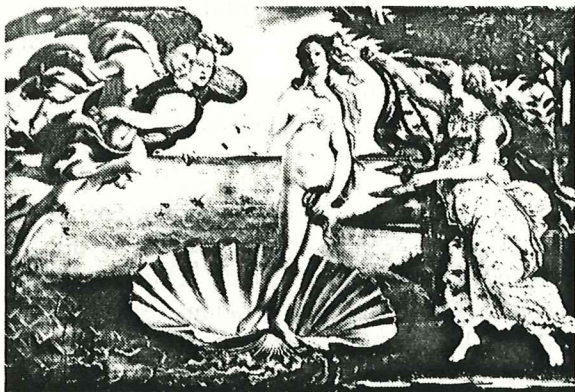
— Mendelsohn

How often it seems that the glory leaves as soon as the wound is healed.

— Selzer

Left: Noted plastic surgeon with his favorite patient — his wife, *Geo*; Right: cosmetic surgery cost chart.





Oil well.

Symbolic representations of the phallus among the logotypes of large corporations are conspicuous by their absence. An interesting example of this phenomena exists among the "seven sisters," as the big oil companies are known. All of these companies employ stylized or symbolic representations of femininity. The symbol of the Shell Oil Company is one commonly associated with "female" qualities. ARCO is represented by an abstract depiction of the female perineum. The ARCO logo supersedes Sinclair Oil's brontosaurus silhouette, which it engulfed in a 1977 merger. Comparisons between the brontosaurus and fertility images like the Venus of Willendorf, as well as stages of fetal development, are possible.

"Gulf" Oil has positioned its name between the lips of two red-orange labias. "Union" oil company impregnates a rotating red globe with its "spirit," the number seventy-six typographically composed in a yin-yang configuration.

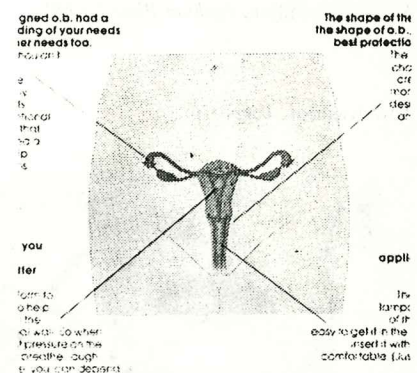
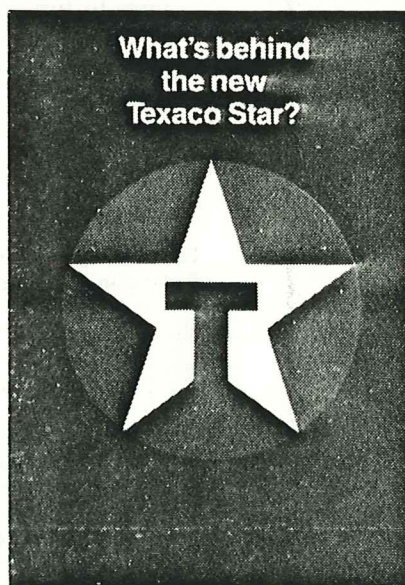
The "double cross" of Exxon's typographic composition could depict intercourse or perhaps female chromosomes.

The road to prosthesis is paved with analogy. Purposefully or otherwise, the oil companies logos restate and extend the primordial mother/earth analogy to their own ends. Texaco's coat of arms illustrates the symbolic equation/analogy of women, earth, life, blood, and oil:

A red T-shaped cavity (the uterus) empties from a cleft at the bottom of a white five pointed star (woman's body) and fills the circular field (earth) containing it.

It is a typically male inversion of menstrual symbolism because the uterine T-shape actually represents Texaco's oil wells that do not in fact flow into and fertilize the earth. They do something more aptly depicted by a mosquito.

The blood=oil component of this analogy resolves the conflict between blood as a positive symbol of life or a negative symbol of death by linking it to the redemptive process of oil's



Tampon advertisement.

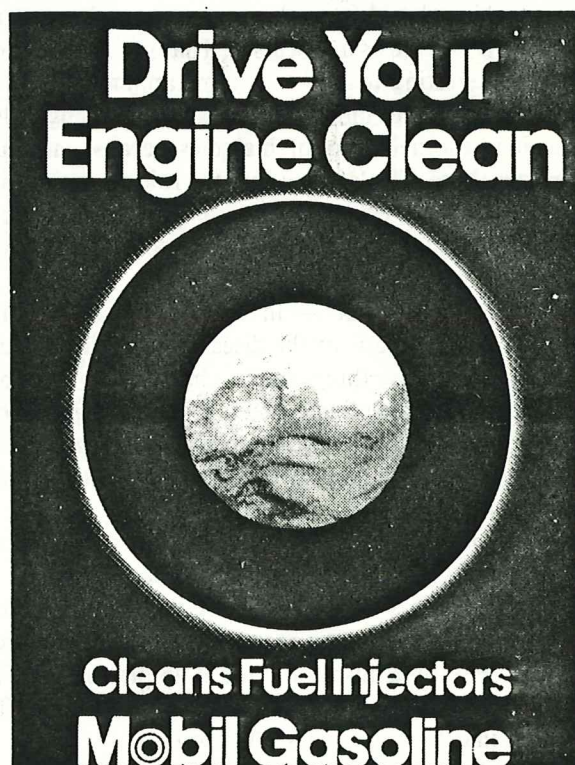
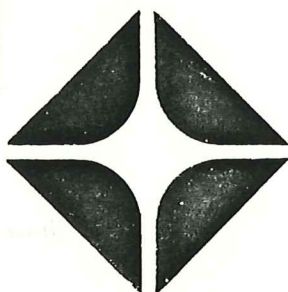
refinement from its "crude" state of putrefaction.

Red is prominent in many corporate logos and often used in combination with blue. The significance of this pairing has roots in the barber pole. The barber pole once represented the surgeon, earlier the bleeder, and originally the midwife. The spiraling red and blue lines on the pole represented the venial and arterial blood lines visible on the placenta and umbilical cord at birth.

Mobil Oil's narrative and literal symbols illustrate this point well. The full image is of the winged horse Pegasus from Greek mythology flying over the word "Mobil." The horse and the letter "o" are in red. The rest of the word is blue.

According to the myth, Pegasus emerged from drops of blood sinking into the earth from Medusa's decapitated head. The horse was then tamed by the goddess Minerva and given to the Muses. Hippocrene, the fountain of poetic inspiration, on the Muse's mount Helicon was opened by a kick from Pegasus' hoof. The symbolism of the myth is remarkable on its own. As the heraldry of an oil company it is uncanny.

To recapitulate: drops of blood (the red "o") from a dead female monster (dinosaur), buried in the earth are transformed into a miraculous red horse (oil) which is tamed (refined) by the goddess of health, learning and wisdom. Her gift, the horse (corporate philanthropy), opens the springs of creativity. If this seems too self-congratulatory, don't worry; the story has an unpleasant moralistic, prophetic ending. The horse is stung by a bee (labor) and throws its overconfident rider, who is then plagued to his death with misfortune. That part hasn't happened yet.



Part 6: A CONVERSATION

L: You seem to be jumping back and forth between the idea of mutation and disease on one hand and bloodletting and menstruation on the other. Where do you see the connection?

M: Bloodletting is a ritual enactment of menstruation. First I must establish how it represents bloodletting and then how it mimics it. That is represents it is an analytical point. That it mimics it is a behavioral or pathological point. If one can prove a behavioral similarity it becomes easier to deduce a motivational similarity. What I am doing is establishing parallel relationships: a ratio and proportion. What mutation is to disease, bloodletting is to menstruation.

The example of sickle cell anemia illustrated how the effects of a mutation can change depending on the situation in which it occurs. The example of alcoholism showed how the situation in which a condition occurs can determine how it is defined and understood. The examples of sickle cell anemia and alcoholism stress parallels between the way real situations, ideas and language develop. They illustrate the potential for metamorphosis, analogy, and irony in all of them.

L: I still don't understand two things. First, why there's a parallel and second, what interests you about mutation and disease? I mean, I know you're not particularly interested in talking about science.

M: Science is just another religion. You're really asking me what this has to do with art... Ritual and symbolic behavior is what I'm concerned with. Mutation affects those things. It involves something being transmitted or communicated. That's also what culture is about. Ideas are like genes. They can be passed on intact or they can be altered. It can be a random process or it can be deliberate. Abstractions are conversions that occur during the transmission of something from one form to another. When something is transmitted it is altered in a variety of ways, and in cultural terms that amounts to reinterpretation, which is what culture as a process is. That's why the biological process is interesting to me — as a metaphor.

We've already determined that calling something a disease elevates it in the hierarchy of maladies because, although it quarantines those effected by it into the role of victims, it also absolves them and everyone else of responsibility for the situation. That cools off the emotional aspect of the problem and makes it graspable.

What remains unclear — in the case of alcoholism for example — is the genesis of the disease. It didn't just become a disease. The only thing that's changed is how people understand it. My contention is that if you are going to recognize something as a disease, then you also have to accept within that flexible definition the baggage of mutation being a possible source of that disease.

It should be recognized that the nature of mutations can be very subtle and the areas they effect can be very broad. They may encompass areas whose causes are ascribed to be instinctual, psychological, etc. The most insidious are primordial.

L: What makes it a mutation, then, if it's primordial? There's no mutation if it's something that's always been there. That's like saying that two legs are a mutation.



Cologne advertisement, "Habit Rouge means hunting coat--- think about that for a moment."

Willem De Kooning, *Woman*.



"To cut is to cure." — medical aphorism



The Curse

An in-instinct seems be-havioral / in its mani-fes-tation. It appears psycho-logical / in its moti-yation.

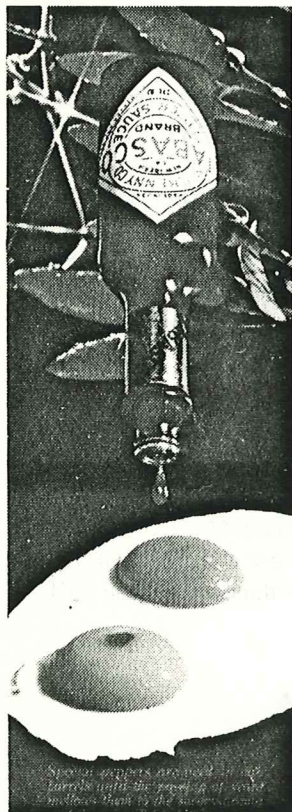
The real source, how-ever / defies organ-ization. The cause of the syn-drome / is random muta-tion.

I Believe In The Soft Touch.
Sometimes.



Touchy situations
demand delicate handling. Develop

Jewelry advertisement, "I believe in the soft touch. Sometimes.
Touchy situations demand delicate handling."



M: Well, at some point I guess they are. Everything is a mutation at some point in its history. The other reason that I'm stressing the idea of behavior as mutation is that behavior is perceived as something that can be controlled by the intellect, something that exists within a social system, a historical context, and something that can be reasoned with. If a mutation can induce a physical change, why can't it induce a behavioral change: behavior that is a mutation.

L: So what? What does it mean?

M: Well, it enables me to stretch the metaphor and say that bloodletting, killing, maiming, disfiguring and refiguring are all manifestations of a particular type of behavior which rather than putting it in a sociopolitical, intellectual or moral context, we are now going to put in a biological and evolutionary context, which is deterministic. In a simultaneous parallel to that, I discuss it as a phenomenon that ironically recapitulates the characteristics of another phenomenon: menstruation.

L: I don't think that anybody would argue with you that disease is a flexible or fashionable term, but I'm still unclear about what your interest is in this. Is it just to say that bloodletting is a mutation?

M: Yes, the reason I want to do that is not to let it off the hook, but rather to show how much more ubiquitous it is than it appears. Otherwise it could be assumed that all I'm talking about is crime, like the Manson case or Juan Corona. But what I mean to communicate is that those examples are just overt expressions of a syndrome that can also include surgery, ritual scarification, gore films and even being carnivorous. These other expressions of the mutation just subliminate the activity into something more socially acceptable.

Some of Coca Cola's recent slogans:
"It's the real thing." "Coke adds life."
"Signs of life." "Coke is it."





Part 7: **BLOOD ISLAND DREAM**

I awaken in the dream. The entire scene is saturated in deep, blood-red tones. My mood is tranquil, sensual, intoxicated, almost euphoric. Everything is the same color. Everything is the same temperature: body temperature.

I am lying naked on smooth, warm rocks that resemble gnarled fingers or roots. They spread from the base of a high rock cliff, slope gently downward, and then drop into the lapping blood red sea. Embedded or eroded into the walls of the cliff are ruins that recall a combination of Mesa Verde and the Ca d'Oro in Venice.

The cliffs and the small stone beach form a small protective cove that looks out toward a small, archetypal desert island. The island emerges like a pubic mound from the bloody sea.

The maroon water sparkles with reflections of the crimson sky. I am in the water, below the surface, swimming toward the island. I have no thoughts, no anxiety, only a mindless sense of purpose. The island is hollow. It can only be entered through an underwater tunnel. The tunnel has an air pocket and I can breathe by swimming along the surface after I enter it. I am apprehensive as I swim toward a chamber at the end of the tunnel. A white picket fence, half submerged, runs the length of the tunnel, the points of its posts protruding from the bloody water. Suddenly a vicious water rat appears on the other side

of the fence. My heart is seized with terror. Surges of adrenaline accelerate me through veils of panic and slow motion sensations of dread. The rat hisses and squeals furiously as he pursues me from the other side of the fence. His snout sometimes jabs out between the fence posts and his jaws snap as he tries to reach me through the fence. The fence ends where the tunnel enters the chamber, but I manage to climb out of the water and onto a ledge just ahead of the rat. It abruptly stops, turns and then sullenly retreats as it recognizes defeat. I notice the quiet echoing of slowly dripping water in the cavern.

I emerge on the surface of the island but it bears no resemblance to its appearance from the shore of the cove. It is a lush, rolling, green table like the moors but it is punctuated by huge scooped out sand kettles like those on Cape Cod. I don't realize it, but I am actually on the plateau above the cliffs that I started from. The cliffs and kettles are caused by enormous tidal waves that occasionally break inland above the cliffs.



Amy Gerstler

HERE AND NOW

Perhaps someone with expert knowledge of the human brain will one day, through research, come to understand my plight. The source of the darkness in my mind and the problems I have in life will only be revealed if I die a mysterious, colorful death, and in doing so attract the attention of medical experts. Otherwise, there's nothing special to be learned from me, though I glean worlds from every complex molecule that flies my way. Unless I end up so destitute that I volunteer to be an experimental animal, I cannot hope to attract any clamor with my passing, scientific or otherwise. My death will be celebrated with considerably less hoopla than were my first, second and third birthdays, from which I emerged rosy and triumphant, my chubby face smeared with chocolate frosting. I accept my insignificance with an almost quiet heart.

There's a good deal of talk now about the cosmos and outer space--that our earth is just a tiny particle of this infinite universe. I think adults are comforted and children terrified when they close their eyes and try to picture the earth's smallness and mankind's unimportance. My son used to wake up in the middle of the night when he was little, crying. I'd go into his room to comfort him. I'd touch his face with one finger, feeling his damp, peach-fuzzy cheek, and ask "What's wrong?" "Papa," he'd say, "I'm afraid the sun will go out". But he was an unusual boy. Normally, people don't give such uncomfortable topics a thought. They anticipate their dinners, watch the clock, find themselves fascinated by the antics of housecats, and are angered by traffic jams or the occasional insane person who

shouts obscenities at them. Their minds are occupied with the here and now.

This morning, I went downstairs to buy the Times, as I do every day. I was reaching for my wallet when a filthy twitching man cut in front of me. He was small and catlike, with darting green eyes and dusky skin which would probably have been several shades lighter if someone hosed him off. His clothes were so tattered they flapped around him when he moved. His bare feet were cracked and encrusted. Between rapidfire insults he seemed unable to control, he insisted the cashier show him a pair of full length evening gloves "at once!" One of the growing numbers of victims of the talking and cursing disease I have encountered recently. I don't know whether the incidence of this malady has increased, or whether hard times are simply forcing more of these individuals out into the streets. I'm afraid it's the latter. The man had an exaggerated lisp. He tried to swish his hips when he walked, like a woman. The contrast between his mincing manner and his physical disrepair was almost funny. He made me think of a shipwrecked ballerina. The cashier was patient. I didn't mind waiting. Having been told the newsstand carried no gloves, the poor man demanded to try on a ball gown. "Like that purple one there!" he cried loudly, jabbing his finger to indicate a corner of the shop where erotic magazines are displayed. Two other customers who had come in together, a tall robust-looking woman on crutches with a mane of black hair, and a small blond began to giggle behind their hands and whisper to each other. A man in the back of the store who was wearing a grey raincoat and reading

USA Today began slowly shaking his head. Thwarted in his attempt to procure gloves or gown, the reeking man rushed out of the newstand and into the bakery next door. Through the thin wall, I heard him order the clerk there to sell him a lace slip, "At once!".

It's depressing, having to start all over to make sense out of the world, because a shadow has fallen across you. The vagrant who wanted to adorn himself in women's clothes and I have some common problems. The difference between us is simply a matter of the degree to which we acknowledge the state we are in and its degenerative nature. He's unaware that there's a discrepancy between his perceptions and those of healthy people. I, on the other hand, am painfully cognizant of the fact that something has gone awry or burnt out in my head. People wave at me from across the street. But they may as well be the stone figures that decorate the facade of the church I attend, stepping out of their niches to greet me. I don't recognize them, though they hail me by name. I wave back to be polite, and to congratulate these statues for having learned to shift their weight. Everything outside the soul is individual, and must be paid attention to. The extraordinary variations wrought by light alone. The choreography of a bee. A dog turd in the gutter, (or is it human?), wrapped in a fancy white paper napkin.

Flawed as I am, I remain an appreciator, an audience for the world. I applaud its emphasis, its convulsions. I sift what it gives me. I have not given up hope. At times my hand trembles so badly the apple juice spills from the glass I'm trying to drink from. My voice shakes. I can't remember what I just said.

There is this steady exodus of hair from my head. Scalp hairs lie like scattered parenthesis all over my pastel pillowcases. Fascinated with the machinations of disease, I wonder why I am ill, and more specifically, why it's me who's sick in this particular way. My infirmity gives me a dull glow, as though I was kin to some of those holy folks who crowd stiffly into religious paintings. Men and women who resemble each other almost exactly, halos stuck to the backs of their heads like gold dinner plates. Those figures in old paintings have fingers as long as monkeys' and heads like under-inflated balloons. I remember how dizzy my wife and I got blowing up scores of balloons for one of our son's birthday parties. He died young.

Occasionally, a tremendous strength rises up in me. I'm not sure where it comes from. I open my eyes some mornings and my gaze is acute. My grip on the glass of now-dusty, three day old water stationed by my bedside is steady. I feel a balanced, but thunderous intensity; a power coursing in my veins unlike anything I ever felt in the vigor of youth. Lying on my back, propped up on my elbows, I look at my bare, old feet sticking out from under the covers at the end of the bed (I am as tall as Don Quixote) and I see they are well-modeled, reasonable feet. The veins in them map a network of firm, intelligent convictions. I continue my personal inventory in the mirror on the dresser opposite the bed, where I can get a good view of myself without moving a muscle. The growth of the beard is overnight evidence of the passionate continuance of nature, even during sleep. We are all straw men, constructed to be continually knocked down; to

exhibit, however briefly, magical wounds. To live as the clock ticks. The moment is utterly lovely, no matter what it contains.

-Amy Gerstler

Richard Hawkins



We're in the garage, the weight-room. He's pestering me about why I should lift weights. I flip him off. I'm more than half drunk because I'd had already two beers and 5 cigarettes so I'm not ready to put up with some of his shit.

He asks me to come over there and try to lift this. I say no. He says something about 90 pound weaklings in comic books. I grab my dick and screw up my face. He tells me that the way I'm built, my muscles and all, that I could be He-man in no time. I make my voice sound like a deaf mute and say "He-man in no time".

He talks about the euphoria of weight-training, except he doesn't know the word "euphoria". Some words I know that he doesn't know, but he can pronounce things I can't because of my lisp or whatever. He says a word that's not "euphoria" but somewhere between ambrosia and eucalyptus. "Eucabrosia" or something.

I tell him he means "euphoria" and he asks what did he say. I tell him he named two flowers at once, "eucabrosia".

"Eucabrosia", he says, real slow.

I tell him euphoria is that thing that retards get when Kool-aid and cookies are served. We have to go to school, we don't get euphoria.

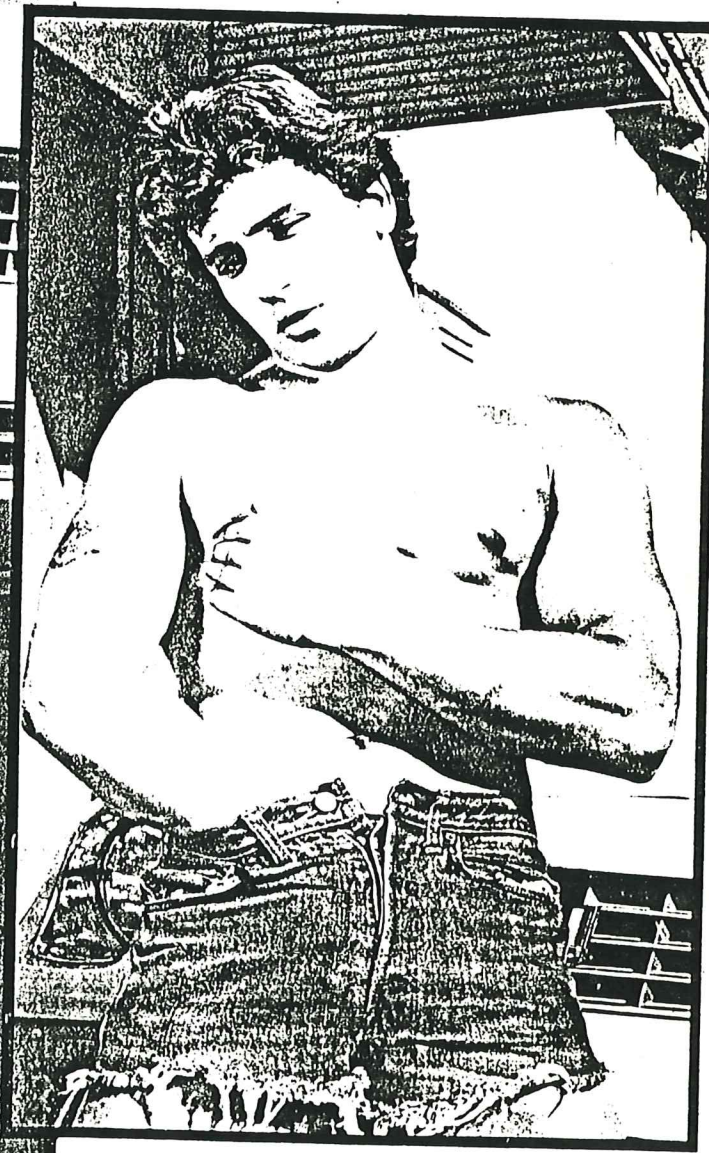
He pulls down his shorts and slaps his butt and asks me what I would do with a big eucabrosia like this one (meaning his butt).

I say it would be nice if his brain was as deep as his asshole and tell him to grow up and call him a butt-brain.

He pins me down and sticks his naked butt into my face and says to kiss his Tony Dow butt. He finally learned Wally Cleaver's real name and decided that he was like him, athletic and stuff with a stupid kid brother. I just think that a name like Tony Dow is just an easy enough name for him to remember.

I tell him that kids who are athletic and stuff will always look like Tony Dow or Marlon Brando when they get older, just old and just fat. While weaslings like me grow up to be Basil Rathbones and Vincent Prices (which completely goes right over his head).

He sits on my head and makes me say "Squeaky kisses Butch's butt", which is one of those things I can't say too well. I also can't say "Pip-squeak kisses Bo's bo-bo" but he always pins me down and makes me say that into his naked butt when he's mad at me. He really likes that word "bo-bo".



Bo is named Butch or Bo because Mom couldn't decide. She says that Bo comes from "beau" which means both good and boy. We call him Butch sometimes and sometimes Bo. Me, though, she named Squeaky, after Squeaky Fromme. Squeaky Fromme was an anarchist and killed a movie star. I'm supposed to turn out something like that. Bo gets to be good / boy and I get this.

I'm called Squeaky, Squeak, Pip-squeak and weasling (weasle + weakling). Bo's a famous porn star. Bo Richards + Squeaky Richards. Bo and Squeaky, Squeaky and Bo, both Richards.

Bo Richards

The IDOL



In my first porn movie Bo is naked but I'm not. We're tied together at the waist, at the wrists, at the thighs, at the knees, elbows and ankles. I'm in front of him, he's in back of me. Bo starts doing jumping-jacks, which means we're both doing jumping-jacks and his little rod is tapping at the back of my britches. That movie's called "Siamese Twins".

In my other porn movie I drink lots and lots of beer (like 7) and pass out. Bo is naked and on Mandrex that I slipped in his Evian. He's bawling because downers always make him cry. In the last scene he's crying his eyes out while I'm sprawled on the floor like a marionette with puke on it. He picks me up and ties me to his back. He looks like a cute hunchback with a scrawny hump or a horse in a Western with a deadman draped over it. It's called "Dead to the World" because I look dead. Really hot!

Bo's porn movie bores me. It's just him lifting me over his head for like 20 minutes or so. He takes off his gym-clothes. Then he bench-presses me. He's got that song "Fly like an eagle" playing by Steve Miller Band or ELO or whatever. (I hate that song). He thinks it's a great movie and hasn't decided whether to call it "Lift" or "Bo". Bo's porn movies do not make me hard.

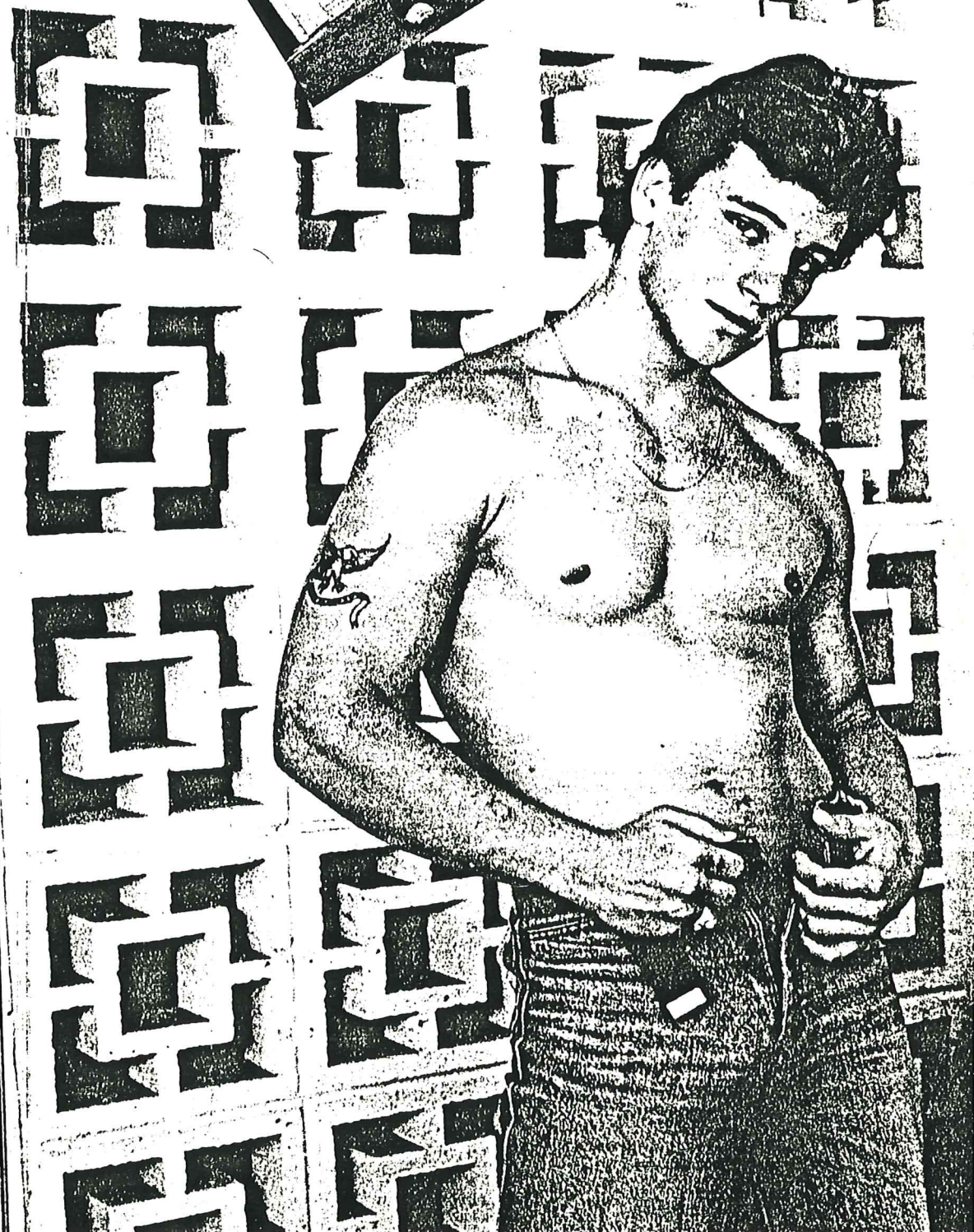


**Bo
Richards**

Bo got an eagle tattoo on his arm. I got AC-DC and Queen (which have to be my two favorite bands because they're both both weird and smart). I told him I did not know why an eagle. He says "magenta", which I take to mean "majestic". I asked did it maybe have anything to do with "spread-eagle" and he said maybe as much as AC-DC and Queen means I go both ways (as if that's gonna bug me). I said maybe, but maybe it means I am "Ba-ack in Bla-ack" (which I think means something sort of profound).

THE EXHIBITION

MODEL BOY PHOTOGRAPHY BY NO



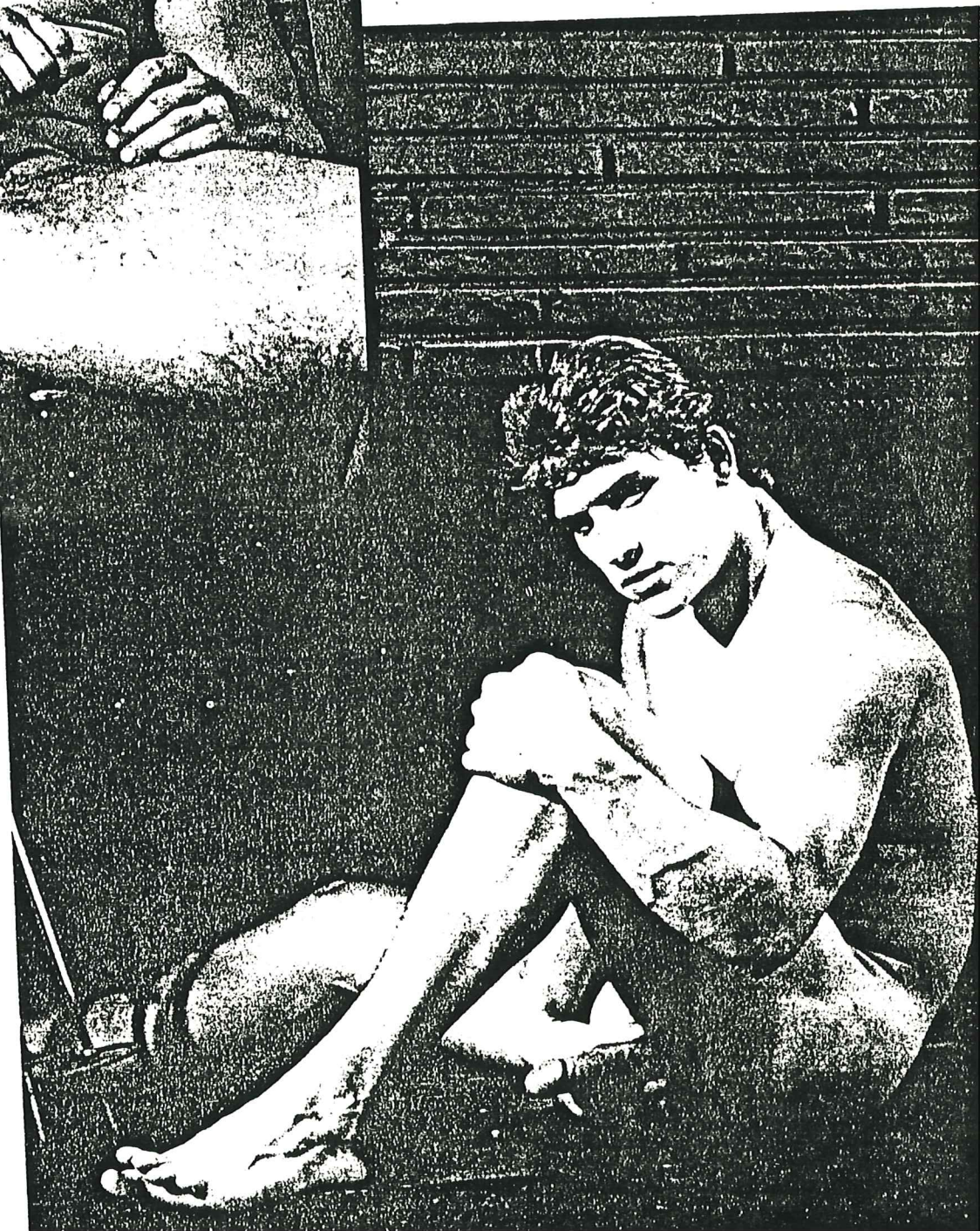
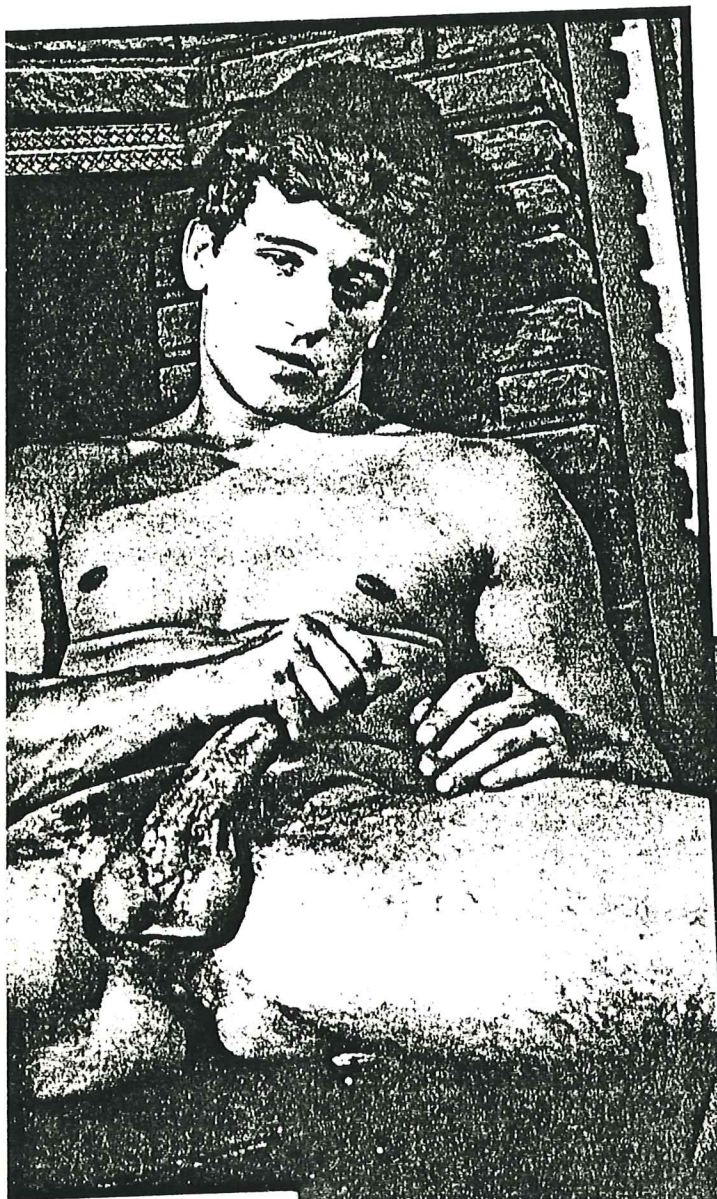
I put on black shoes, black pants, a black shirt and black overcoat and Bo lays out on the table with "blood" all over him. A bunch of flowers that I've made Bo pick are in a vase by the table. This is the funeral parlour game.

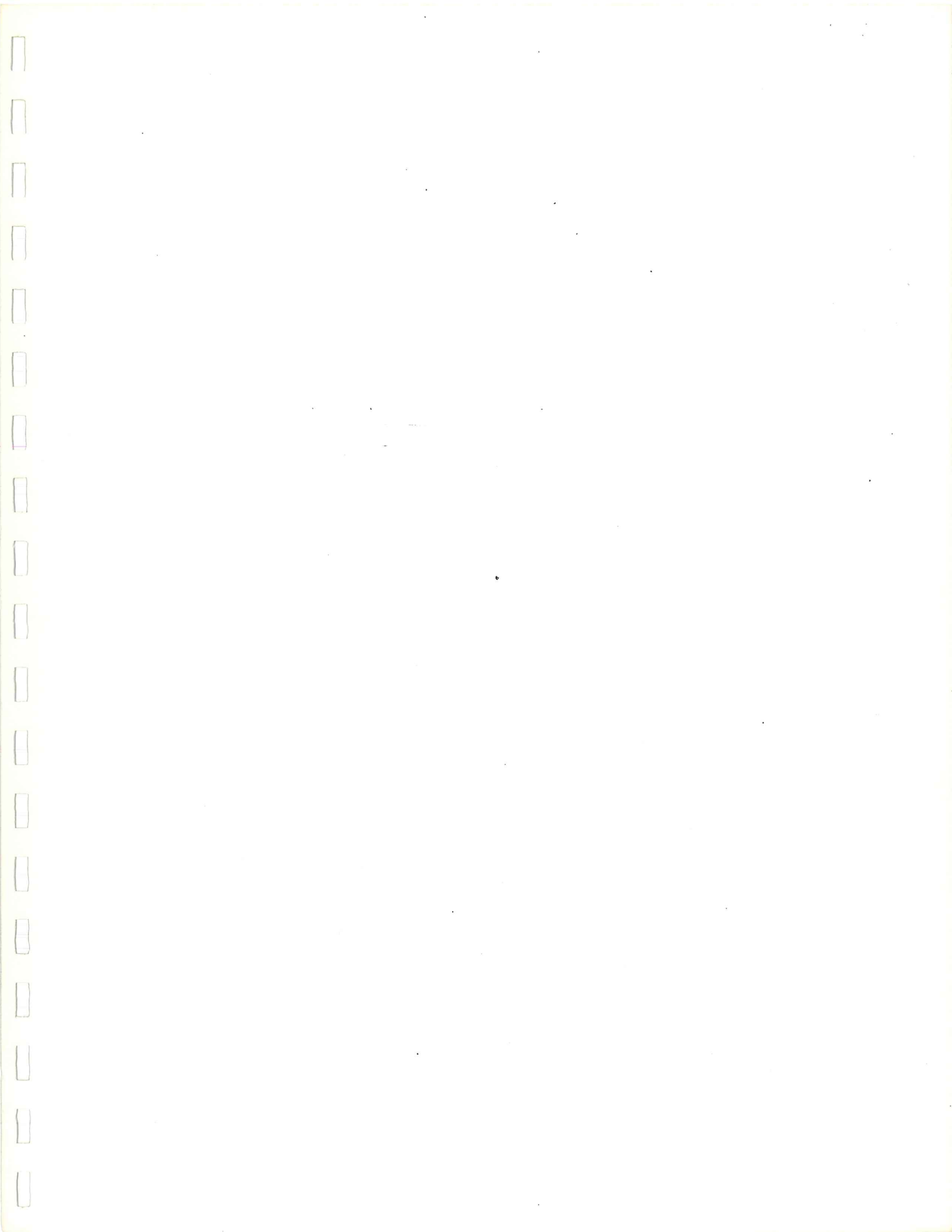
I rip off all of Bo's "bloody" clothes and wipe all the "blood" off his body, squeaky clean. I make him drink lots of water until he pees, stick my finger down his throat until he pukes, jerk him off until he spodies, blow water up his butt through a hose until he shits and cut him with a razor at the insides of elbows. While he's being drained I watch tv. He says he wants to see Wally Cleaver and I tell him to shut up because he's dead.

During a commercial I take a magic-marker and scratch out his eagle tattoo. Then I put "AC-DC" where the eagle was and write "Queen" on his forehead.

I turn off the tv when sports comes on. They always show all these sports shows on Saturday. When the sports come on it means that Bo's all drained and it's time for embalming which I do by taking one flower from the vase and putting it in Bo's mouth. The rest of them I use to load up his butt. Bo giggles a lot during this which pisses me off because it really fucks up my mood. He's supposed to be dead.

Then I dump him in the big hole behind the garage I made him dig before we started. Like Night of the Living Dead he comes back from the grave covered with shit and pee and spodie and puke and blood and mud. Flower petals flutter out from his butt. He makes me chew the rest of the flower petals out of his ass and then chew them out of his mouth. He still has "Queen" written on his forehead. Really hot!





Fred Fehlau
Amy Gerstler
Martha Godfrey
Doug Hammett
Richard Hawkins
Yves Klein
Mara Lonner
Mark Niblock
Belinda Raczka
Charles Ray
Marc Romano
Sarah Seager
Peter Seidler
Mitchell Syrop
Michael Tidmus
Jan Tumlr
Benjamin Weissman
Millie Wilson

Organized by
Jeff Beall and Tony Greene

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