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"I always say, as you know, that if my fellow citizens want to go to hell, I will Help them. It's my job." --Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., from a letter to Harold Lasky (1920)

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Kari Dorth, "Flag Football: by request" (2008)
Marker on sketchpaper, PhotoShop

Commercial artist Kari Dorth was educated at Loyola University and at the school of Phish. She lives with her spouse in the Bay area.

Beach, James : Capricorn, 37. Into: camping, cards, chess, history, live music, meditation, philosophy, politics, sports, the theatre, travel. Also: studying literature, noticing art, doing stuff. Scoring is a prerequisite?! Published in little venues, worldwide.

Berge, Carol : Artist-poet, editor, neo-prof, writer. A New Yorker, a day-tripper who in the 1960s bitched to Allen Ginsberg, of "Howl" fame, about how everybody dropping in was disrupting her writing (---his response: Shut Your Door). What more to say? She's archived at universities, in textbooks, online. A new story, "We Are Not Alone," is slated to appear in *Gargoyle 54*. For more info: carolberge.com. RiP.

Carswell, Clare : An interdisciplinary artist and writer. She is based in Oxford UK.

Levinson, Heller : Lives in NYC where he studies animal behavior.

He has published in over a hundred journals and magazines including *Sulfur*, *Hunger*, *Talisman*, *First Intensity*, *Laurel Review*, *The Wandering Hermit*, *Ampersand*, etc. His most recent publication, *SMELLING MARY*, is newly out from Howling Dog Press and has been nominated for both the Pulitzer Prize and the Griffin Prize. Please visit www.hellerlevinson for more information. .

Plumb, David : Plumb's latest book is *A Slight Change in the Weather*, fiction. Other work appears in The Washington Post, The Miami Herald, The Orlando Sentinel, *Beyond the Pleasure Dome*, University of Sheffield, UK; *Homeless Not Helpless*

Anthology, Alimentum, Food Anthology 2006 and St. Martin's Anthology, *Monde James Dean*. He has worked as a paramedic, a cab driver, a cook and tour guide. A long time San Francisco writer, he now lives in South Florida.

Will Rogers said, "Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip." Plumb says, "It depends on the parrot."

Rosenthal, Barbara : Born in New York, she is an artist and writer who has taught photography at Parsons School of Design and writing at the City University of NY. She has published four books of photography and journal-text, *Clues to Myself*, *Sensations*, *Homo Futurus*, and *Soul & Psyche*, which, along with twenty other works, are in the collections of MoMA and The Whitney. She currently writes art criticism for *NYArts* magazine while filing rejections from literary agents who don't think they can sell her novel *Wish For Amnesia*. emedialoft.org.

XeusZenon : Pseudonym noted. For kicks, this gassy god-element puts Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch song lyrics into online language translators; therefore, love wins.

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<hiki: editor note>

"Wood Coin: Help Like Kelp Issue" has a message. There are 2 sides to every story, a heads or tails chance to every flip of the coin. You already know how the world helps itself.

Wood Coin offers leisure in the form of mild mental exercise; contains binary theory (x/o); promises art & lit, endorsed by the pros.

For recyclers or wasters, ages 12 & up. To read, wood coin ascribes to an on our honor system.

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James Beach

“The Chassis Concept”

CLEARING diamond dust from his front teeth with his tongue, the boy lifted a pudgy cheek from the plate. He wheezed in the light dust.

“You trip like a ’tard,” a teammate scolded.

“My grandpa plays better’n you,” scoffed another.

The boy remained on the plate, elbows akimbo, a peasant in their kingdom. If he were a prince he would be a stellar ballplayer—movies all showed poised, agile princes playing ball. Peasants watched sports on satellite. His dad, acting as co-coach, was busy with other boys. Advice to simply ignore the taunts and jeers of teammates—

“Just ignore ’em?” the boy had had to ask his dad, incredulous.

“That’ll really get their goads,” his dad had assured.

“Their goats? What are we, peasants?”

“They want to be all-stars just as much as you, Son. All of us, playing the great game, our souls sparkling underneath. God leant us each a chip off the heaven block. It’s up to us alone to polish the diamond inside ourselves, to shine like we mean business.”

—the advice was maybe wrong.

Tasting dirt, the boy wobbled to his feet, swept the puckered knees of his orange-white striped uniform with his blood-crusty palms. He tucked his cap in his hip pocket.

He watched his dad swing his jaw suddenly toward left field, as if following a pop fly. The scrimmage continued. Somebody hit a grounder—the clank of leather on aluminum made the air teem with breeze-distortions of shouts and whistles.

By now the boy had left the diamond. As he trudged up the grass hillock he thought about how he and his dad played catch; about the sour endings, with Dad displaying a rare scowl, and Son working up his sulk. A disconnect, a misfiring, their games.

“Snack time, lard-o?” a teammate yelled.

“This game ain’t over,” sang another.

“Wuss.”

Their words rang elliptically until the boy cleared the mowed tip of the park basin with a triumphant wheeze. When he glanced back, he could see his dad at first base, coaching stellar player Ty Sneeth. Ty Sneeth was a sworn enemy since Grade 2.

Fontana was littered with SUVs from the scrimmage. Across it the boy could go off-road into a huge summer-dry, reedy lot where he and Henry Mosley built a lean-to last year that nobody else found. They did a lot of stuff together until Henry's mom had had to move again.

The lean-to was still there—in parts. A hand-painted chipboard campaign sign from the town crazy's property (what sense was a Green Party?) gave shelter to a frenzied mess of solar-blind silvery bugs; they re-tucked themselves below the damp, pale grass. When he climbed on a sun-bleached vinyl floater, a musty stink discharged as he sank his girth.

Under a clump of leaves was stashed their palm-size electronic gamer in a styrofoam cooler buried up to its rim. Henry had sworn it would last the winter in the plastic bag—a something had got in and chewed a hole in the bag and let in snow or rain, or whatever.

“This supposed to be a fort?”

The boy quit messing with the dead game-player and looked up to see a wiry kid, about his height, holding a bright green dune buggy and its box remote. He wore a faded “Star Wars” shirt with stiff baggy jeans and sloppy shoes. His grown-out crew-cut sat a shade lighter than his uni-brow.

“What if it is?”

“Not much of a fort,” the new kid said. Big lips muffled his crackly voice. A sketchy moustache and a smattering of tiny pimples told the boy the kid was probably already in junior high.

“It was a lean-to, last summer,” the boy told the teen, stepping in the damp gray silhouette of the sign/roof. The 2 x 6 that had supported an edge of the campaign ad was weathered, unbowed, rough. He kicked at it, knew it was half buried in the ground, at Henry's insistence—it vibrated.

“You tryin' to demo' it?”

“Dunno,” the boy said.

The new kid parked his green dune buggy on a dirt mound to join in the battery on the 2 x 6. Before long the board splintered, came apart. It left a raggedy stump jutting out of the ground.

“Only idiots love baseball,” the teen said, studying the boy beneath the uniform.

“Yeah?” the boy challenged, pulling the baseball cap from his hip pocket in a show of contempt. “I just quit.” He picked up some of the 2 x 6, jammed it through the

adjustable back of the cap, and chucked the thing into the reeds. He never wanted to play ball again; he wanted to strip off his uniform.

They stared awhile at where the orange cap disappeared in the reeds.

“Bet my buggy can jump it,” the teen asked next, indicating the stump.

“Bet it can’t,” the boy answered.

“Bet it can,” the teen said. He retrieved his toy and paced about a yard from the stump before positioning it at the obstacle.

“Let me drive,” said the boy.

“C’m on.”

“Hold on.”

“Can I ever play with it?”

“Sure, later. Only if I jump it, you owe me something.”

“kay.”

The teen surveyed the ground, adjusted some levers on his remote, punched a button that pitched the dune buggy forward.

Surprised at the poise and agility of the vehicle—at the accuracy of the remote signals—the boy watched the buggy go up and over the toothy stump with little more than a wobble.

“How’d you do that?” he asked, admiring the operator.

“You owe me. That was the deal.”

“So how? That buggy doesn’t look like much.”

“Looks matter for squat! This chassis, see here? now that’s where the money’s at.”

The boy sighed. The chassis looked like a squared-off little skateboard—a dented, plain metal rectangle surrounded by big rubber wheels. He touched it, felt its cool with his fingers.

The teen grinned, showing off clear plastic dental-work. “It’s all in the chassis,” he explained, tongue working expertly despite the braces.

“The body’s got nothing to do with it? I get it.”

The teen retrieved the buggy and flipped it over, showing the boy its scratched, slab-like undercarriage. “This top here, this hot little dune buggy design frame? is nothing. It’s junk. You could put almost any thing on this and it’d run the exact same.

“See,” the teen continued, “this is a universal idea, to copy the exact same chassis and put different bodies on top. That way, any race is fair. It’s all in how you drive. Everybody’s got the same chances of winning.”

The boy did catch the thrust of the teen’s concept. “We’re going to see all these cars—dune buggy, pick-up, moving van, a ’vette—and they’ll all look different, but they’re all the same underneath.”

“Exactly,” the teen said, grinning as before. “And it’s bigger than this toy, much bigger. It’s hitting the auto industry.”

The boy nodded, grabbed for the box remote. It had a steering wheel and buttons for forward, reverse, thrust, off. He turned the chassis in his mind awhile. The idea reminded him of what his dad had said, about everybody being an all-star.

“Nah,” the boy declared, “Life is never fair like that.”

“Come again?”

“Think of how each of us are so different,” the boy said. “We all buy cars and trucks that factories put together different. It’s American busyness. Henry Mosley and me already had this conversation, like, last year.”

The teen stooped to swipe at several silver bugs crawling up the cuff of his jeans. “Who’s Henry Mosley?”

“Maybe I’m wrong,” the boy eventually said. He missed his friend. Maybe his dad was right. Maybe Henry Mosley’s old mom had just had to move. And maybe he was too fat. Maybe he did play like Ty’s grandpa.

“This is a universal idea,” the teen reiterated.

“kay.”

“Nobody’s looking at things from the same angle in ‘America’. People don’t or won’t or can’t see the whole picture. They’re lazy thinkers, they follow the crowd.”

“Peasants, on the baseball diamond of life.”

“Watching baseball on satellite, kings of their stupid lot of remote controls. But by the time I hit college, cars—kid, they’re gonna be...”

“Out of this world?”

“Out of this world. Hydrogen, hydrogen’s fuel for the future; its emission is pure H₂O.”

The dipping sun silhouetted Ty Sneeth as he sprang from the reeds, swinging the jettisoned splinter of 2 x 6. After a malicious chuckle he spat, “Hydrogen’s for suckers,” and plucked the baseball cap off the end. He swung the board like a switch-hitter then tossed up the cap and slugged it into the fat boy’s stomach.

Then he set his elbow atop the 2 x 6 and leaned his lithe, princely body into it, as if the wood were supporting his weight.

“Did my dad tell you to fetch me?” said the boy, sounding tinny as he clenched his chubby fists. He glanced down at the cap at his feet.

“I volunteered.”

“Hah!”

“Did.”

The teen stood tall and gangly in his faded “Star Wars” shirt. “Hydrogen energy,” he said, lips flapping round his plastic braces, “will save the people of this planet.”

“My daddy says we’ve got enough oil in the Caspian Sea to feed every necessary motorized vehicle for a 100 years.”

“Your daddy’s missing the whole idea,” asserted the teen.

“Hydrogen emissions? Squirting out water?”

“You get it yet?”

“We’ll turn the planet into a new Venus in no time flat.”

“You’re a brain’s washed stupid, jock-o.”

“Jock zero,” added the boy.

Sneeth gave a sudden aggressive growl, wielding the 2 x 6. He dug in with his cleats and played a violent riff with the board on the dune buggy’s body, which fractured and split away from the chassis like a reptilian eggshell.

“Now you’ve done it,” the fat boy huffed, sounding less tinny, more robust. He felt what he thought might be that bit of heaven sparkling inside.

“Done what,” Ty Sneeth shouted. He tossed the board before fleeing into the reeds. Stumbling, his cap falling away, he replaced it, back forward, as he tore the right sleeve of his uniform on a prickly bush.

The boy laughed out loud, nudging his new pal.

“Look at that,” the teen marveled. His fingers quivered on the remote as he deftly spun the motorized vehicle out of its body. “What did I tell you, huh? What did you say? Out of this world! This universal design will change everything.”

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Carol Bergé

“A Collage of Changes”

“OH, I see...”

There was an elegant greedy young woman, of good but ordinary tastes and a well-concealed ethnic background which enabled her to move in any environment she chose. Like everyone else, she'd been married and divorced. She wrote for the movies. One night at the usual party she met a man who saw her through and through and wanted her anyhow. She told him her apartment wasn't big enough for two and that she could never consider living in his place, as it was in a bad neighborhood. Instead, she went home to her pleasant place and wrote a filmscript of what it all might have been.

“Glad to meet you—”

Here we have the greedy young man from the Midwest. Son of a meat-dealer, he learned his father's trade, grew accustomed to the abattoir, the mallet, the shock-wand, the cleaver. As would be expected. It did affect his relationships with women; he had the ill-fortune to be a romantic. But why waste all that good training. He joined an existential band of modern gypsies and became the Geek. He met many young women, though none of them would stay with him. When it was no longer exciting to the crowd to see him devouring live chickens &c., he reached into the crowd itself. They loved it.

“How about that!”

The young actress was the envy of her peer-group. She was truly golden: used her special gifts to godlike advantage. But she had a low self-image. She thought everyone around her would succeed her, and she feared each credit that the other actresses earned on the way up. Each credit earned by them was a credit less for her! She began to allow this paranoia to come forth in her roles, until it took over; instead of golden, she was mud and slinging mud. And, as she was a very good actress, after awhile instead of seeing her as golden, everyone saw her as mud. She had made a great deal of money in her early days, and people began to associate with her because they liked her money; then they began to identify with her anger and her self-put-down, so she continued to be rich. Two of her colleague actresses committed suicide, and the by-

then middle-aged actress thought correctly that she would gain the public that they had lost. A young, aspiring actor married her. In a while he became known as her consort, and gave up acting.

“Why don't you pay attention?”

There was a bright young man, plain, short and thin, who sought company by writing poems. He found love through the friends he met while reading his poems in public. Then he began publishing the poems of these friends, and some of his own. He became known in many cities. His friends loved him, his lady loved him, his colleagues respected him, but the city he was born in didn't reciprocate, because he wanted to change the city, and everyone knows it takes a long time to change a city. In despair, the young man shot himself. After his death, many of the friends wrote poems or articles or fabliaux like this one about him. Not many of them had bothered to read the young man's poems. In which he wrote about futility and death as a religion.

“It occurred to me...”

An adventurous couple drove uptown to find a friend's house, to visit. It appeared that their hosts were out. No lights on, so they went on in, used the bathroom (including the shower) and decided to cook a dinner of the fish they caught at a nearby lake.

Meanwhile the wife-friend was indeed in the house; a shy person, she was cringing in the basement, where she'd gone to fetch a bottle of preserved plums. Unable to appear or to object, as they talked about her or her husband in minute detail. They were discussing the idea of making a filmstrip of her awkwardness and then showing it to her husband. The wife considered for the first time how she might appear to others. To her husband, who did seem to love her. The adventurous couple were laughing, washing the dishes and putting them back. They then left.

“Sure, but—”

The older couple had it all figured out. Being Americans of European descent who travelled, they didn't want to retire to a Sun City; they were people of good taste and good sense, and sybarites. So they bought land in a grove of trees outside a colonial Mexican silvermining town which had been restored from ruins. The elder couple moved into one of the expertly restored houses, bringing with them their treasures, collected from all of the lands where they had travelled. The month after they moved into the lovely house, they both contracted spinal meningitis and died within a day of each other.

“Hey — wait a minute!”

The wealthy young woman from the suburbs was skinny and slept a lot. At the finishing-school she attended, she had all she could do to stay awake more than a few hours at a time: sleep tasted so good. The sleep, thick and rich, was better than the life. Then the young woman left school and met a young man who'd always been an insomniac. The nightmares were more dangerous than the life he led. Tanned and sturdy, he spent a lot of time outdoors, playing tennis, jogging, playing four-wall handball, hoping to find a dreamless sleep at the end of each day. The insomniac and the sleep-addict married, in order to change secrets. They had a child and everything changed.

“Why not?”

The quiet suburban family. Before the war, he'd been a Park Ranger; he was stubborn. After he returned from the war, she said, —I think it's going to be a little stranger! She'd met him many years before the war and would love him forever, no matter what. He was now badly damaged but he did return to her. She was staunch. Those parts of him were intact. She, by now, weighed 200 lbs. Now, with the difference in him, most of the work he could do was simple manual labor. He was treated deferentially by the townfolk: he'd grown up here. The daughter was born and fit right into their lifestyle. Each of them keeps busy, not finding much to complain about. As a family, they're close. The daughter is about ten now; she knits sweaters for them all and tends her father's wounds, and helps her mother around the house with things unreachable.

“As a matter of fact...”

There was a lovely but not beautiful woman who dabbled at analysis and was very avidly into poetry writing, trying to find herself. She decided that art and life required a serious approach and that she would participate to the fullest. She let her hair grow natural, sold her expensive clothes and furniture, and moved into a downtown artists' loft. She ate as much as she wanted and left off her bra, smoked a lot of grass. As she grew more creative and her poetry began to be published she grew ambitious, finding herself with many friends. One day the woman did more than the usual amount of acid and went walking down a stream in the country. She was never really seen again. Two months later, someone got a postcard from her, saying she felt marvelous and had discovered everything.

“If you'd only—”

Now we see the woman who was raised to marry for money. She was sent to a very expensive singles resort, and one day at lunch there was a telephone page for a doctor, so she watched who rose from the table, and she went for him. Though she soon discovered he was a dentist, she also discovered he had a fair amount of money back of him, so they might indeed marry. What she did not know is that he'd seen her driving a brand new red Cadillac convertible around the resort, and thus assumed she came from a lot of money. He'd had his mom page him on the telephone at lunchtime. Ah. The parents loved the marriage. The parents played bridge and golf together. The men went to Masonic meetings together. The women went to gardening club together. Meantime, back in the ranch-house, the young woman noticed she had married a man who was a lush, a rock-collector, skier, a sports-car racer, a hangnail biter and a snorer. And who would really rather do any of these things than make love, at which he did not excel. So the young woman planned her escape. She booked into the singles resort down the road from the one where she'd met the husband-dentist, and told everyone at home she was visiting a friend for the weekend. At the resort, she met the tennis pro. He seemed like a knockout and was also smitten. With money given to her as a consolation prize by her parents, she bought a divorce from the dentist to marry to tennis pro. Who would never be able to make a decent living, but who did like to make love. To just about anything around, as it turned out.

“It doesn't really matter.”

The man with a harelip met a girl with a harelip; they became lovers and, as lovers do, they kissed, often. They produced the sign of the double-cross, which is considered a most fortunate omen in some lands. They'd met at a bazaar for the handicapped but they didn't consider themselves anything but fortunate. They understood eating problems and each others' speech perfectly. It doesn't matter in which country this happened. It was their country.

“May I help You?”

A woman of about thirty married a much older man. She had respect for his grey hair and then she found that it had the weight and the sonority of metal. He brought many children to the marriage; some of them are older than she, in fact appear to be almost as old as he. They have all been raised as nudists and walk around the house with their genitals tightly moving to and fro like so many papery packets of seeds from a garden. No one is self-conscious. Her old man is strong and gives her a dry, kindly kiss, as he walks about tanned and naked like a statue of life itself. With tree-shaped veins along his arms and the backs of his hands that match those beginning to show through the tender skin back of her knees. She thinks of him as a

ventriloquist, of his iron-grey hair as antennae, of his ageless aged children as wooden dolls, carven, one dimension thick. She has known that he is a sculptor, and she is avoiding speculation on the project after the stone-grey statue on which he is now working. It resembles her. The model is of balsa-wood; she is fully clothed and there is a distressed expression in the set of the head, the arms tilted at an angle of defense. But the mouth is portrayed smiling. Green moss spreads from the pubic area of the wood model. The stone on which he has begun the sculpture has bits and flecks of metal ore in it. He's told her that this statue is of how she will look, but he has not told her when.

“See you later...”

The ordinary woman lived alone in the tower of one of the buildings at the Catskill hotel.

–Hey, sure, come in, I wasn't doing much anyway. She was cooking the parts of the animal which others discard. Once, she'd been making it with a college boy who lived in a cellar. He loved money more than romance, so he went to Hollywood, where he now writes screenplays; he writes to her occasionally, mostly about his life among the celebrities of Malibu Beach. She calls her tower –Malibu Beach. From a window, she counts all the other towers.

2009 Wood Coin: Help Like Kelp Issue: Bergé, “(Selections from) A Collage of Changes”

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Clare Carswell

“Q&A Interview

with Barbara Rosenthal”

June 13, 2008, Berlin

Clare Carswell: What are you doing in Berlin?

Barbara Rosenthal: Presenting Existential Interact, a series of live and video street performances involving interactions with passersby, utilizing elements from a case I drag with me, about battery-powered videos, ventriloquism, button pins, artists' books, spontaneous caricatures, slogan cards, logo images, handouts and free money.

I'm on the sidewalk in front of Kunst-Werke, Berlin's premier space for avant-garde art, and where the Berlin Biennale happens to be on exhibit now.

Some of the pieces that I'm showing on a laptop strapped to a garbage can are:

Barbara Rosenthal Contemplates Suicide
How Much Does The Monkey Count
How Much Does The Monkey Remember
I've Got The World In The Palm Of My Hand
Words Come Out Backwards
Nonsense Conversation
I'm A Dog You're A Dog.

Some days I hand out Provocation Cards that say things like:

- Time Plays Tricks
- Put It In Writing
- Are You Jewish
- Don't Try It Again
- Don't Ask
- You Are Participating In Live Performance Art and
- God Is The Idol Of Science / God Is The Icon Of Science .

Every day I wear about a dozen of my Button Pins, like:

- I Am Not Myself Today
- Bird Hands
- World in Palm and
- Brain Scan. Some are visual, some are text.

CC: Why?

BR: I guess I want to make people realize what I realize: that identity can't be pinned down easily, and that the universe is a big place with lots of room.

CC: Why are you outside Kunst-Werke rather than in it?

BR: How can I do sidewalk performances if I'm not on the sidewalk? Anyway, it's a lot easier for anyone inside to come out, than it is for anyone outside to get in.

CC: Why do you make so much stuff?

BR: The stuff makes me make it.

CC: What can you tell me about the puppets?

BR: There's a monkey, an alien and an artist. The Monkey is a large hand puppet that wraps around me. He has appeared in several videos and live performances. The Alien and The Artist are relatively new marionettes who haven't learned to behave.

The monkey puppet was originally a toy that my brother had bought for my first child. The marionettes I'd originally bought for my grandchildren; there were no grandchildren at the time, but I figured that some day there would be and that they'd be as complicit in my work as my daughters had been. Many, many of my ideas came while playing with [my kids] and their toys, and the kids themselves are in some pieces, too.

CC: Who do you want your audience to be?

BR: I don't know if I can answer this easily. I make work with the idea that God (which I mean metaphorically) is watching.

I studied art-making formally ... since I was 14. But the epiphany of what it's all about came one day in Boston, looking at a roomful of Mark Rothko paintings, when I was about 20. I was completely transformed, lifted into heaven. I want my audience to be people I can transport to heaven – I don't care who or what they were before they entered my sanctuary.

CC: Who is your audience?

BR: Anyone swimming by who stops to tread water and look up.

CC: Why are you presenting this project as part of the New Life Berlin festival?

BR: I'd originally planned this independently. But when I tried to find out if I needed a street-use permit from the city of Berlin, a German diplomat in New York familiar with both art scenes, Johannes Scharlau, of Goethe House, proposed my project to the festival sponsor, Wooloo, which is an artist-run organization I'd... been a member of anyway. When the festival's press contact here, Katrine Dyrebye Clause n, e-mailed me to please include the name of Wooloo in the display ad that eMediaLoft New York ran for it in Flash Art International, I understood this to mean that Existential Interact [my show here] would be adopted by the festival. That was okay with me as long as no one would try to interfere with my project, and no one did. The director, Martin Rosengaard, even provided me with housing. As for why Berlin itself, I wanted to be in Berlin this year because of its art dynamic.

Abroad, I do a different one-month project in each city. This is the first live performance series. Last year in Moscow I showed Existential Cartoons at the L-

Gallery. In 2006 in Beijing, I hung Self-Devolution: huge mylar prints of my logo-images, distorted and roped up, from the 22-foot ceilings of the Pickled Art Center. And wherever I am, of course, I show video, which I've been making since 1976. [I'm a] disciple of Bill Creston, a performative video pioneer so original and irreverent he's too hard to categorize for curators to have given him the reputation he deserves.

CC: Are you making Performance Art?

BR: That's what I sometimes say. But it's easy to take issue with. It depends on whether you define performance as-an-act, or whether you believe that whatever an artist does in public deliberately, (or maybe even not deliberately, and maybe not just artists, and maybe even not just publicly,) is performance. I say anything is what the artist says it is, but maybe it's not, if the critic says it's not. The practitioners of these separate fields define their own territory and say what can grow there and what can't. I realize that that concept, because of the words –can and –can't, would take a lot more words for me to parse adequately.

Roselee Goldberg invented a wonderful new idea, Visual Art Performance, and developed the Performa Bienials based on it... I fit into her stated concept so well that I volunteered to do street performances called Taboo or Not Taboo during the first one. "Volunteered means I wasn't asked, I did them anyway, you know, like crashing— Milton Fletcher marvelously dissected some thoughts about this in his review of it in NY Arts.

Anyway, something can be and can't be the same thing at the same time, in my universe... My work has roots in Allan Kaprow's wonderful concept of –Happenings ; I staged my first Happening in my parents' basement when I was 16, in 1964, as soon as I read about Kaprow in The Village Voice.

CC: Where are your energies right now?

BR: In progress and being shopped around are the following:

a) Installation, Unfashionable Art, using my clothing, saved since the 1960s. [A] wall-work which just went up recently for auction at White Box Bowery.

b) A novel, Wish For Amnesia, which has a trunkfull of nearly three decades of drafts. It's about the son of Holocaust survivors. I've reworked it again, and I'm now again trolling for a new literary agent. There had been a wonderful agent in the 1990s, Gunther Stuhlmann, the editor of Anais Nin's Diaries, who unfortunately passed away before getting it to a publisher.

c) Two short stories. One is "Haunted House," about a mother on pot, and daughter on science and literature, who have a car accident in the countryside around Princeton. The other is [untitled]. It's about an American woman in late middle-age, who travels to China on business and has an affair with a 23-year-old Chinese soldier.

d) Landscapes On The Horizon, a series of 3' x 5' color and BW digital prints from 35mm photographs, in the tipped style of my piece Five Houses On The Horizon, from the early 1990s.

e) A review or profile of the sensational artist Alexandra Dimentieva, who makes funny, and technologically brilliant, interactive video installations.

f) A half-dozen video shorts.

g) Books of journal-text and photographs, including Performance and Persona and Cold Turkey at the Dog Run.

h) Circulation of my father's Outsider Art, watercolors of Americana. My dad was Leon Rosenthal, a prominent mid-century architect in private practice on Long Island.

i) Editing and circulating my father's Wartime Diaries and his Memoirs.

j) And... I have to find a new art dealer. My beloved Monique Goldstrom died unexpectedly of a stroke about three years ago. I haven't done much about seeking one, though. Art makes me make it, and completes itself when I do.

CC: Where do you most need your artwork to be?

BR: Most of my work that's been purchased is in museums or public collections. Much in private collections has been sold through Printed Matter, the artists' bookstore in Chelsea and online. But most in private hands I've given free, and most of that in trade for artworks or health services. You see how life and art are, in reality, if not inseparable, truly intermixed and interdependent.

2009 Wood Coin: Help Like Kelp Issue: Carswell, "Q&A Interview"

© 2008

Heller Levinson

"Mermaids"

"Mermaid #1"

Finning The Mesmeric Mermaid Wake

She springs from palatial calcareous open-shelled boudoir

 wrapped in nacreous rash of nubile mythology

 (breeze of prince's robes

mercurial Karsavina

tresses spun from conjugating spirogyra laze ambulant

 shift in a reed-sway stream-sinewing hypnotic

miraculously coined

her hips slickened with newly minted scales

 splash raga showers of a gold-spattering sun-crystalling micro-cymbalology

artfully toileted dagger decorated mirror approved

a form tucked and marmoreal

flush with flex

quivering in a suppling bloom

as a leather whip coils restlessly upon the wall

she rudders a property

merciless with sting

“Mermaid #2”

Mermaid Like Recalcitrant Thrush

oblong belonging genus barefisted siren song sling branchfinning trance spun

postal clocks leaf the forest

transportation is the song's rebuttal

the horizon in capsized
eggshelling architect's with caprice
what is architecture but the endeavor to formulate form with
bump as anterior extenuation as device that falters
& urges that primitive early zone the zone eliding time's approval
where fin was capital & crown
slithering through sects of withholding
dispatching black patches
for vision

"Mermaid #3"

with

mermaid, ... finning
the suppling mesmeric
liquidity wake
smelling electrically leviathan tails silhouette the shoreline
platters of merriment guise taper-whip
follow Mermaid Tail is to be encouraged
to sink
sweet submergence
something there is that loves a tail
sprite, flippy, ... whim-si-Cal-ity
trawling hirsute bloomfields calibrate
suction sweet zone whorl swirl spiflicated lungy crucifixions
torso pliant, manageable, ... squishy

below, tegular crystal, -- capable, rebuke-Able, launch-Able, Dar-ing, a slapping
slippery seductress

In Frederick Leighton's "The Fisherman and the Syren," the fisherman is hooked. He is morsel, he is tail-tied, gripped by the tender sirloin he will undergo unprepared-for excruciations, ... he will be swallowed ... absorbed.

Hybridity pedals transference. Property interminglements. Disclosures race. The hybrid in its eco-clash, its torsionanl topo-skin, -- rashes — an inexplicable electro-marvel charged with animistic colli(u)sions. Human & animal in homomorphic concert.

slickly the succubi pool invitations

the road

to slick road urge to glide splurge with slide ride runners giddy sled merrily
merrily chide the chary

she excites

she invites

she slurps

she issues in-sin-u'Ation

"Mermaid #4"

from mermaid this tail

bespook bedazzling jewell

ing jewelled

token to epidermis & calligraphy

cartography & pulse testimonial

terse lore trove trophy froth

in the bed of sapience a spear

probing penetrative

pierce

2009 Wood Coin: Help Like Kelp Issue: Levinson, "Mermaids"

© 2007

David Plumb

"PARADISE"

"It's been said that some people come to South Florida because it's flat and there are no hills where anybody can get a good shot at them." DP

Paradise? Gators in the water, gators by the road, gators in uniform, gators playing golf, liars dice and poker. Don't feed them. Once fed by humans, they're deadly; when they chomp your hand, they'll keep right on eating.

Paradise? When the train whistle blows at 3.04 am, I know it's the Hopeland Express to this flatland for the lost, the taken, the about to be taken, this home of the down, the drifty, the dreamer, where Hialeah flamingos fly on cue, gangsters push baby carriages in front of cameras and Snowbirds migrate south with TVs under their arms. As the retired airlines stewardess said, –They come to play or get planted.

Paradise? Imagine not -so-long-ago Pompano Beach string bean farmers saying prayers to honor their forefathers. Imagine forests of string beans. Imagine miles of Dania's succulent red tomatoes?

Paradise? Listen to the saw grass rustle, the sweet pine sway. Listen to the light on the heron's legs. Smell the osprey's great fishy feathers, hear those brown pelican beaks slice and splash, the scratch of tiny crabs on mangrove trees. Hear Florida squawk dawn with a thousand parrots flying somewhere. Drive East with the sun at YOUR back. WATCH THE amazing crackling lightning RIP THE DARK PINK HORIZON bigger than Imax, wider than time.

Paradise? Beautiful sculpted women writhe and dance, pose and romance, in a dazzle of maybe shank and circumstance, hope and nightmare, rolled down an endless strip of store-bought sand and nightclubs where wannabes stand in line.

You, you and you, come on IN! Not you! Hey you! Who do you think you are? Are you, you? You! Come on IN!

Paradise? South Florida promises love, escape in a boat, a dance, a song, a hot day on the beach, a big fish. Promises hurricanes, oil spills, low wages, a way out and the largest per capita cellular phone sales in the country. Sometimes South Florida still shows up at the party wearing an armful of stolen watches, so how do we keep a firm hand on truth. What matters? What's real?

On the map, Key West appears like the fangs of the snake, but in Key West, you can get out of your car and walk around. Paradise? Imagine WALKING? Florida GET OUT OF YOUR CAR!

In this land of hock-it-to-me baby nights, monkey snatchers, kidnappers, gem smugglers, marlin swipers, panther eaters, Boca bee bashers, murderers, dope peddlers, neo -new age carnival hawkers, we kill a millennium of fresh water with the single drop of a cigarette butt. Here gray squirrels dash between car horns and bulldozers. Here the opossum noses its heavy life along our back fences, the alligator grows smaller, and the otter's eye blinks good bye, the tree frogs breath feels so tiny and the burrowing owl's pale ch-who-ch-who-who whimpers at dusk. Here, the great loggerhead turtle climbs from her midnight sea to lay eggs. How can she be so sure? Where does she find this strength? How can she go on?

How might I go on? It's flat. It's crazy. Irascible. Mysterious. But I must KEEP TALKING to my South Florida.

My red mangrove grandmother

May I sooth your dried eyes with clear water

May I brush your hair with pink fresh air

May I stroke your bony hands and your flat endless skin with sure fingers

May I hold you forever delicately, just a little bit longer.

© 1984, 2008

Barbara Rosenthal

“Three Bottles”

A package was delivered to my house today, and in it were three bottles. The first contained clear water, distilled and immaculate. I drank it and became clean and purified. The second contained clear air, an ozonized mixture of lively vapors. The third bottle contained blood from the breast of a small, singing bird. Its death could not have been prevented. Its blood was all that was preserved.

With this blood I doused my body, greasing my skin evenly and smoothly. When I went out of doors debris from the city stuck to me: cast-off skin cells and eyelashes and mucous, small bits of brick and tar and slivers of glass and tin, sticky plastic wrappers and decaying food and dog hairs. Immediately, I got into my car and drove to the country. The debris fell away; the blood on my body gleamed fresh and shiny in the sun. I stood under a clear waterfall and swam in a crystal pond.

All day I played and danced in the country, and at twilight I lay on the ground and fell peacefully to sleep.

In the middle of the night I awoke. My eyelids were stuck together and wouldn't open. I panicked in my enforced darkness, and ran about pulling at my face, stumbling, crashing into trees and bushes, frightened, breathless, lost. Soon I discovered the doorstep of a small, wooden house. When I knocked on the door a musical voice answered, and a delicate, feminine hand led me to a sweet, fresh bed and caressed me back to sleep. Some time later I awoke again, and my eyelids opened. The air was buoyant and bright. I was adrift and alone, afloat in a soundless, planetless atmosphere.

2009 Wood Coin: Help Like Kelp Issue: Rosenthal, "Three Bottles"

© 2007

XeusZenon

“screen”

Researchers are using plastic
mats and sandbags
to protect prized
bleach from leaching
damage caused by runoff
from a golf course.

It's been raining at night.

2009 Wood Coin: Help Like Kelp Issue: XeusZenon, "screen"

<h1ki: quotations>

The Small Purple Sea Urchin has been responsible for the demise of large areas of giant kelp forest off the North American coastline. Like most sea urchins, it feeds by scraping away at seaweeds and fixed animals and its favorite food is the giant kelp.

Little creature, formed out of joy and mirth, go love without the help of anything on earth.

At one point, I decided that I was going to work incredibly hard, invest my money, retire at age thirty-five, buy a nice plot of land, and begin adopting children seven years old or above, since that's when their chance for being adopted basically turns to zero.

Obviously, my life has altered since then, but my care for children has not. That love helps renew my commitment to the forests. Even as we're destroying the environment, every day families are bringing new children into this world. What kind of world are they entering? Asthma in children is skyrocketing in cities like Los

Angeles. Birth defects are on the rise as we dump more toxins into the environment. Young children are surrounded by violence, in the media and in real life... It hurts me when parents hit their kids, when children go hungry, when a child has a disease. Anything that hurts a child has always wrenched me apart. That's why children have been one of the driving forces of my activism.

The knowledge: I have a medical diploma from a Swiss university, I must help my patients, I have a wife and five children, I live at 228 Seestrasse in Küsnacht — these were actualities which made demands on me and proved to me again and again that I really existed, that I was not a blank page whirling about in the winds of the spirit...

For all at last returns to the sea — to Oceanus, the ocean river, like the everflowing stream of time, the beginning and the end.

While an attitude of wonder at artistic skill causes people to appreciate artists and their work, it does little to encourage individuals to try to learn to draw; and it doesn't help teachers explain to students the process of drawing. Often people feel that they shouldn't take an art class because they don't already know how to draw. This is like deciding that you shouldn't take a French class because you don't already speak French.

Oh I get by with a little help from my friends/Mmm I get high with a little help from my friends/Mmm gonna try with a little help from my friends.

-Museum of Natural History, *Ocean: The World's Last Wilderness Revealed* (2006)

-William Blake, "The Angel That Presided," *Poems (1807-1809) from Blake's Notebook*

-Julia Butterfly Hill, *The Legacy of Luna: The Story of a Tree, a Woman, and the Struggle to Save the Redwoods* (2000)

-C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961)

-Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962)

-Betty Edwards, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (1979)

-John Lennon and Sir Paul McCartney, "With a Little Help From My Friends," *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967)

<hiki: rising issues>

The Horny Play Boy Bunny (Jackalope) Gets Some Issue.

Myth, legend, tall tale, exaggeration, truth, secret. Sex trumps love, then lore trumps sex, and an adventure begins. Love maybe being that theme. Ambition maybe. A challenge as motivation, maybe. Maybe the trophy lures. All's well when the end justifies a pure means rather than lockerroom fodder. Or whimsy. Or survival of the species. Or wherever motivation comes from...

Is Art in the Heart or is Art Lying Apart from the Love Issue.

Dazzle us with love, or lack thereof. Tragedy and comedy are fine, as genres, rather than art. Ever look up "artwork" in the dictionary? Thinking of a favorite work of art brings about feeling of love, right? Admiration and inferiority for the viewer or reader, right? How did the artist do that, right? Sure, maybe. And then we ask ourselves more questions. Do we love people, objects, ideas, ideals; silence, chatter, music, noisy machines; comfort, luxury, money; hardship, bare-bones, starvation, loss, restriction; gifts, abundance, freedom, more, etc.

A Scratch And Dent Sale Issue.

Show off your tired, your weary, your lonely, your injured, your unwanted, your damaged, your broken, your marred, your ugly, your imperfect, your lame, your wobbly, your creaking, your leaky, your soggy, your skewed, your incomplete, your shrunken, your inflated, your overwritten, your disproportionate, your just plain wrong... Defective pieces only! Remember: for this issue you're giving it up for the fledglings who wanna practice their plagiarism on real writers' works, with impugny.

<hiki: salute>

Mother Earth, or Gaia. She's put up with a lot of debris from Father Sky. She's allowed our species to prosper. She's shared her fruit bounty, helped cover over our

mistakes with her good nature. Maybe it's time for the human race to grow up and flee the nest, give her some peace? We're only as grounded as we feel.

<wood coin history>

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10/2008 : Site debut

11/2008 : [Flag Football Issue](#) [cover art by Kari Dorth]

02/2009 : [Help Like Kelp Issue](#)

02/2009 : [Watch the Star-crack Spread Issue](#)

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ISSN: 1946-4320

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Editor & Publisher: James Beach

Wood Coin Press; 551 W. Cordova Rd., #369; Santa Fe, NM 87505