

THE ARCHIVE

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# LESLIE/LOHMAN

## GAY ART FOUNDATION



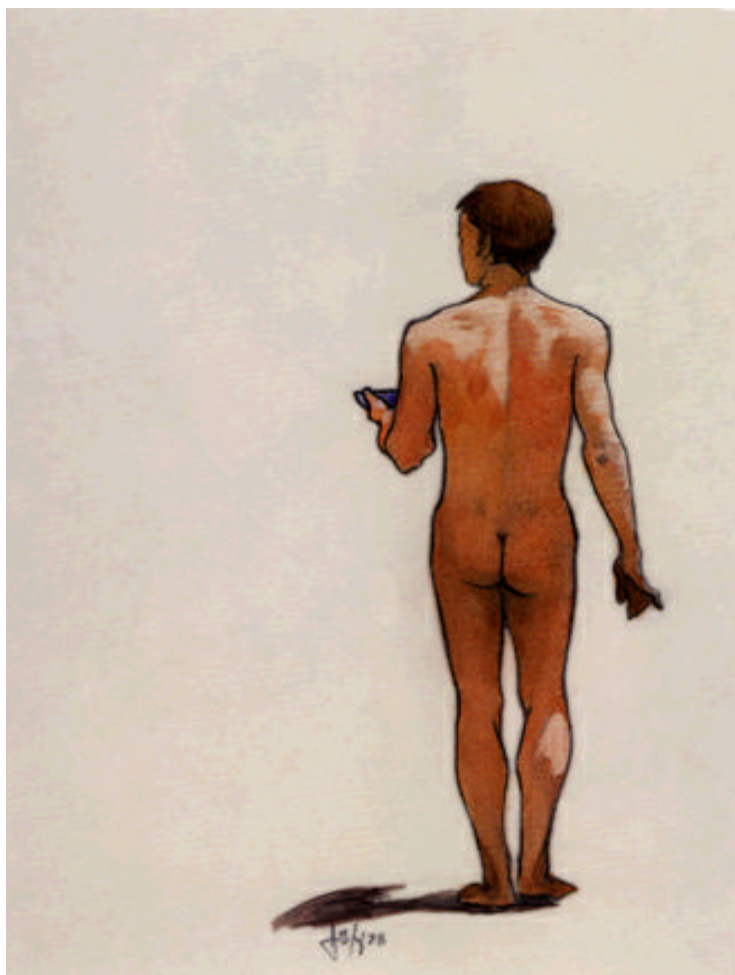
Leslie Lohman



Sculpture at Foro Italico's Stadio dei Marmi, Rome. Top Left: Aroldo Bellini, Boxer, 1932, donated by the province of Chieti. Top Right: Silvio Canevari, Hercules, 1931, donated by the province of Rome. Bottom Left and Right: Unidentified. Photographs by Walter Ernst. See the article about the Leslie/Lohman tour of Italy by Walter Ernst on page 18



J.B. Harter,  
*Cup Bearer*, 1978  
 Acrylic on paper, 17" x 14",  
 Collection J.B. Harter Charitable Trust



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Cover  
 George Quaintance, *Glenn Bishop*, 1957, Oil on canvas, 37" x 30",  
 Collection LLGAF; Gift of Nibert Sinski



Edwin F. Townsend, *George Quaintance*, NYC, ca1940, Matte photographic print (signed), 7.5" x 9.5",  
Collection Finter-Salvino Archive, Luray, VA

# GEORGE QUAINANCE: ARTIST AND PIONEER

BY KEN FURTADO AND JOHN WAYBRIGHT

**T**he name George Quaintance was familiar in the secretive, insular world of gay society in the 1950s. But his fame faded, his reputation confined to a few ardent collectors of male physique art of that period. New interest in this unique and talented man blossomed in the 1980s and 90s with a resurgence of 50s “beefcake” art and photography in print and on the Internet. Today, Quaintance’s influence on the American cultural landscape and gay art and history is long overdue for renewed recognition.

In his 55 years, Quaintance had as many careers as a cat has lives. He painted portraits of Washington diplomats, society wives, and his friends; he led a successful vaudeville troupe; he was a highly sought-after women’s hairstylist in the 1930s, with such illustrious clients as Marlene Dietrich, Jeanette MacDonald, Lynne Fontanne, and Helen Hayes; he was a sculptor; and he was among the vanguard of artists of the bodybuilding movement of the 1940s and 1950s, illustrating covers and writing health and fitness articles for *Physique Pictorial*, *Your Physique*, *Body Beautiful*, and nearly every male-targeted periodical of the day.

Quaintance was also a professionally trained dancer who performed everything from classic ballet to tap and tango; he wrote and produced plays and talent shows in his native Page County, Virginia; and he capped his career with an astonishing collection of “male physique paintings,” as he called them, in which he distilled the essence of masculine beauty into images of nude or partially clad youths of many races, brimming with bonhomie and languid eroticism.

Quaintance eroticized Levi’s long before they became an icon of American fashion or a badge of gay sexuality. He also fetishized the cowboy look, affecting it himself, as if in anticipation of the cowboy’s later assimilation into



George Quaintance, *Baths of Ancient Rome*, 1956, Oil on canvas, 40" x30"

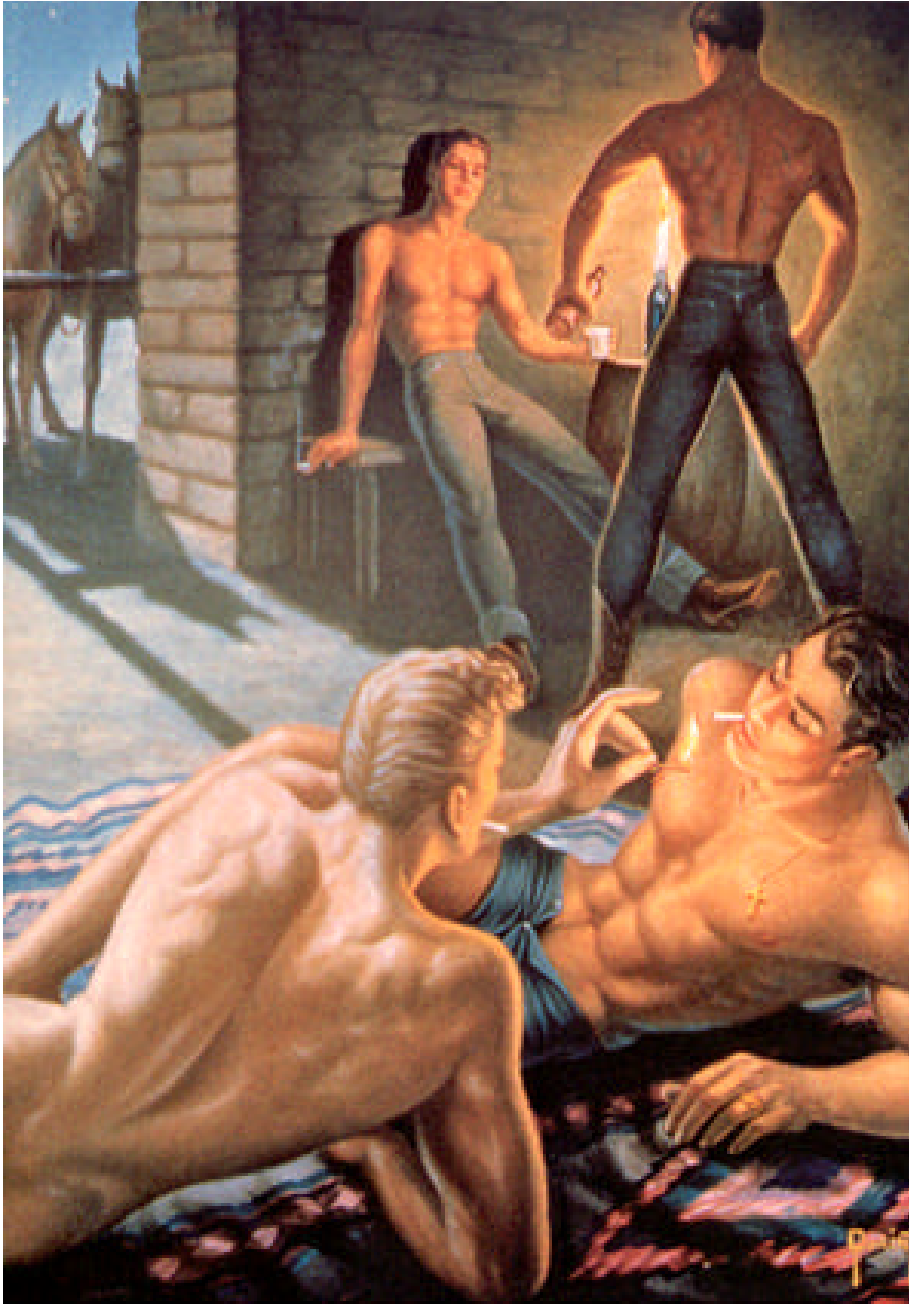
Here is another example of the multi-racial themes often seen in Quaintance’s work. In *Baths of Ancient Rome*, a Nubian slave is towel-drying a gleaming white soldier with an anachronistic ducktail hairdo, while other men of various skin hues cavort in and around a pool, under a statue of a leaping nude god. Bob Spahn was the principal model for this painting and a companion painting. In *Spartan Soldiers Bathing*, the blond and the brunet, although ostensibly towel-drying off, have assumed poses characteristic of bodybuilding competitions. This pair of paintings was also offered as a set of 11x14-inch color lithographs for \$3.50 each or \$5.00 the pair. Black and white photographs do not do justice to the delicate reflections and shadows.

gay culture. And before politics learned how to be correct, Quaintance embraced Mexican, Native American, and Central American peoples and images.

While others prated about the love that dared not speak its name, Quaintance quietly revealed its face, and showed it to be simple, masculine, and brave. His work always implied more than it showed, leaving it to the beholder to decide what meaning to ascribe to, say, two handsome, naked youths, one asleep, bathed in moonlight in a cowboys’ bunkhouse.

Quaintance was a canny publicist for his own work, carefully cultivating the images he wished

to project. Cursed with thin hair, he wore lavish wigs of his own design. He lied about his age. He presented his Mexican boyfriend, Edwardo, as an Apache because, as he told one paramour, it was “more glamorous.” And the fabled Arizona studio he called “Rancho Siesta”—claiming it was an estate in Paradise Valley populated with models, staffers, lovers, and a coterie of admirers who were always young, handsome, built like gods and clad in little more than 501s and boots—was sheer marketing panache. In reality, Quaintance’s Arizona studio/residence was a modest 1950s ranch home in east central Phoenix.



George Quaintance, *Night in the Desert*, 1951, Oil on canvas, 38" x 34"

The year 1951, during which Quaintance produced eight original oil paintings, was the first year in which he began to work seriously on his male physique paintings. He would produce 39 more paintings over the next six years. At the fabled "Rancho Siesta," we check in on the cowboys after a day's work in *Night in the Desert* for which Bill Bredlau, George Coberly and Bill Boes modeled. This painting introduces the signature themes of Quaintance's "Rancho Siesta" works: muscled, broad-shouldered studs basking in soft light wearing tight Levi's (or nothing at all) and enjoying quiet moments of homoerotic reverie. The light itself is voluptuous and the mood is almost tender. Note the clever way in which the composition avoids showing the feet of the unclothed men in the foreground. Quaintance made no secret of his abhorrence for feet (an odd quirk for a trained dancer). When he painted them, he gave them short shrift and if he could avoid painting them, so much the better. The whereabouts of the original is not known.

Quaintance was a bridge between two generations of gay sensibility, an embodiment of what writer Douglass Shand-Tucci, in his book *The Crimson Letter*, calls "The Warrior Archetype." This archetype, of which American poet Walt Whitman is the prototype, conflates masculinity and eros into an esthetic of manliness that may include gay sex but does not reduce to gay sex. Historical paral-

els would be the Japanese Samurai and the warrior-lovers of ancient Greece. The scenarios of Quaintance's paintings hearken back to a time now lost in our culture, when men could associate unselfconsciously, expressing affection and physical comfort without incurring suspicion or stigma.

Literary critic Roger Austen writes, in *Playing the Game*, "In the nineteenth century males could

kiss each other but not disrobe; in the twentieth century they could undress together but not kiss." Quaintance captures a fleeting moment between these poles, where you feel the models could both kiss and disrobe. His male physique paintings are the apotheosis of this 20th century sea-change, in which casual nudity among men becomes so expressive and so connotative—with never a penis to be seen—as to assume a potency previously associated only with pornography.

That would soon change radically. Within a year of Quaintance's death, a new force emerged on the erotic landscape: Tom of Finland. Tom—who cites Quaintance as one of his influences—drew images so exaggerated and so sexually explicit they made Quaintance seem, well, quaint by comparison.

Before Quaintance, erotic masculine images were hardly to be found except in the art of ancient Greece and Rome, in underground images from Europe, and in the works of a few bold painters and photographers such as Wilhelm von Gloeden, F. Holland Day, Paul Cadmus, and Thomas Eakins. Soon afterwards, there was hardcore porn, the VCR and the DVD.

In this narrow window of time and opportunity, Quaintance found a niche that earned him fame, wealth, and recognition, even if within only a narrow sphere of influence. His paintings today are scarce and highly desired; they pass from collector to eager collector, rarely being offered on the market. His sculptures are even harder to find. And the photographs he mass-produced and sold for \$1.00 each through his mail-order business now fetch astonishingly high prices.

So why has no definitive, authoritative, and factually correct biography of George Quaintance ever been published?

In 1989, German publisher Janssen-Verlag ([www.janssen-books.co.za](http://www.janssen-books.co.za)) printed *The Art of George Quaintance*, an 80-page paperback with black and white illustrations of many Quaintance works. It included a brief biography written by publisher Volker Janssen. The book has been reprinted twice and is widely available at bookstores or online. It is the only work about Quaintance ever published, and it contains many errors and inaccuracies.

In 2002, *Beefcake: The Muscle Magazines of America 1950-1970*



by F. Valentine Hooven was a popular seller for German publisher Taschen ([www.taschen.com](http://www.taschen.com)). The 166-page large format paperback featured Quaintance's painting *Point Loma* on its cover and included numerous depictions of his art and photography.

Interest in Quaintance took a quantum jump in 1996, when Richard Hawkins, a Los Angeles artist, created a Web site partly devoted to Quaintance. The site incorporated personal re-search, along with archival information from the Tom of Finland Foundation. Hawkins expressed his hope to write an authoritative biography, but the subsequent loss of much of his material in a computer crash and a change of personal interests led to Hawkins abandoning plans for a biography.

Hawkins was not the first to undertake a biography of Quaintance. In the early 1980s, a San Francisco writer named Ted Smith founded a nonprofit organization called the National Gay Art Archives, with Quaintance foremost among the artists whose works they hoped to preserve. Smith contributed articles—also full of misinformation—to many gay periodicals of the time. He also intended to write a biography, but his life was allegedly cut short by AIDS and today there is no vestige of the National Gay Art Archives.

In 1998, retired newspaper editor John Waybright, who lives in Quaintance's birthplace county in Virginia, found the Hawkins material online while attempting to identify the creator of two drawings he owned that were signed by Quaintance. Waybright and Hawkins corresponded by email and Waybright began a concerted search for information.

In Arizona, at the same time, Ken Furtado, a long-time admirer of Quaintance, also discovered Hawkins's Web site. Furtado traveled to Los Angeles to meet Hawkins, and upon learning of the planned biography, offered re-search assistance in Phoenix, the locale of Quaintance's fabled "Rancho Siesta," the artist's residence during most of the final six years of his life. Hawkins demurred on the offer.

Later, in 2002, Furtado purchased a collection of Quaintance photographs at an estate sale and wondered what had become of the biography. An Internet search led him to Waybright, and once the two confirmed that Hawkins had



George Quaintance, *Moonlight*, 1953, Oil on canvas, 40" x 32"  
This is the first of eight paintings from 1953, which is considered to be the year of Quaintance's best work. It is perhaps the most lyrical and romantic of all his paintings. The full-color version of *Moonlight* is featured on the back cover of the 3rd edition (2003) of Janssen Verlag's *The Art of George Quaintance*. Publisher Volker Janssen himself owns the original, along with the original *Sunrise*. This composition is Quaintance's most homoerotically daring to date. Only once before had he shown two male models completely nude and undraped (*Orpheus in Hades*, 1952) but never in such a boldly provocative or sexually suggestive setting. Quaintance "recycled" poses he particularly liked, or ones that best displayed the male physique. Here, the model on the floor is almost the mirror image of one of the dying natives in *Sacrifice*. Quaintance loved the look of broad shoulders with well-developed deltoids contrasted with a waist of not more than 30 inches (two of his four "focal points of good male body structure") and this composition shows two perfect examples. The models are Bill Bredlau and Harry Hamby.

abandoned the project, Furtado and Waybright quickly agreed to pick up the gauntlet and collaborate on a definitive biography. Look for it to be published in 2008.

*The comments accompanying the images in this article are copyrighted and used by permission. They were written by Ken Furtado for the forthcoming biog-*

*raphy Quaintance: The Short Life of an American Art Pioneer by Ken Furtado and John Waybright.*

*The scheduled LLGAF exhibition of the art of George Quaintance had to be canceled. The Foundation apologizes to our members and public.*

# RECENT ACQUISITIONS AND DONATIONS

BY WAYNE SNELLEN

**T**he Foundation wishes to take this opportunity to thank the following donors for their generosity.

Bequest of Richard Titlebaum

13 paintings

180 digital collages

Dr. James Leach donated

5 bronze sculptures

by Richard MacDonald

1 bronze sculpture

by Martin Eichinger

1 bronze sculpture

by Toni Hamara

1 bronze sculpture

by Jay Hall Carpenter

1 bronze sculpture

by Karl Jensen

5 oil paintings

by Li Ming Shun

2 oil paintings and 1 pastel

by Damon Denys

Plus, 3 wood pedestals

Joan E. Biren (JEB) donated

2 books and a catalog

William Fetterman donated

3 drawings

by Robert W. Richards

48 b/w photographs

by Dave Martin.

Ralph Modica donated

his photograph,

*Adam with Gloves.*

Marion Pinto donated

2 drawings of male nudes

Victor Trivero donated

1 drawing of a male nude

by Marion Pinto

Larry Collins donated

1 drawing of a male nude—

executed during a

Provincetown drawing session

(Courtesy of David Jarrett)

Christopher Sousa donated

1 drawing of a male nude with  
rifle (courtesy of David Jarrett)

Christiaan Diedericks donated

5 large prints

Earl Carlile donated

8 drawings by George Gozum

(purchased from Dirty Little

Drawings, 2007)

Michael Souter donated

1 mixed media work, *Tom.*

Felix Lance-Falkon donated

2 male nude drawings

by his own hand.

Charles Leslie purchased for the  
Foundation

1 mixed media work, *Narcissist*,  
by Michael Souter

2 untitled watercolor paintings

by George Towne

1 color photograph, *Hard Stairs*,

by Kim Hanson

1 photograph, *Sperm Engine*,

by Tony DiMarco

1 silkscreen monoprint, *Orfiro's*

*Erotica*, by Miguel Reyes

1 painting

by Beau

2 photographs

by Ray Dragon

1 ceramic tea set (1 tea pot and

6 tea bowls) by Hinrich Kroger

1 drawing, *Portrait of Edison*

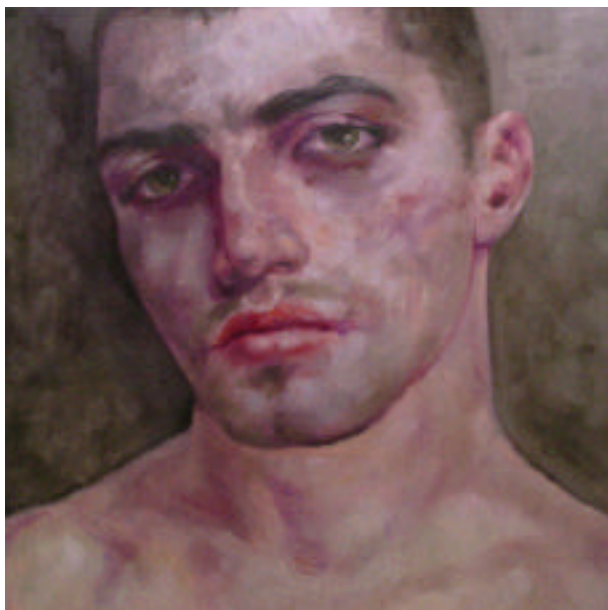
*Londono* by Guersain Muriel,

1 painting, *Boxer I*

by Michael Tsakountakis.

All of these works add depth and  
vitality to the collection and from  
time to time will be exhibited.

Top: Richard Titlebaum, *Charles in Chaps*, 1994,  
Acrylic on board, 48" x 24", Collection LLGAF,  
Bequest of the artist  
Bottom: Michael Tsakountakis, *Boxer I*, n.d., Oil  
on canvas, 36" x 36", Collection LLGAF,  
Founders' Purchase





# THEATRICAL MAGICIANS

## GENERATIONS OF GAY ARTISTS

### ILLUMINATE THE STAGE

BY DAVID NOH

**T**he house lights dim, the curtain goes up and we, in the audience, are always prepared to be astonished by the first thing we see—the set and costumes. The men and women responsible for this all-important initial impression have traditionally been given rather short shrift when it comes to credit. Actors, directors, and writer—often in that particular order of importance—receive all the acclaim, while my critical brethren, many of whom can be said to be seriously visually challenged, usually give the design factor the most cursory of descriptions, with little idea of the exact degree of, say, period authenticity, or even the sheer ingenuity and artistry which go into it. I remember once asking an editor about a production he'd seen of "Pride and Prejudice," which he enjoyed. "And how were the costumes? Were they Empire in style?" I asked. "Oh, I don't know about that stuff," he responded, with a blithe ignorance all too typical of so many would-be pundits.

The upcoming exhibit, *Stage Struck: the Magic of Theatre Design*, (opening on November 13) endeavors to right that slight and here we have a veritable feast of talent, all of whom happen to be gay, working on projects that were also either written, choreographed or composed by gays. When I and my co-curator, Peter Harvey—himself the designer of the original productions of "Boys in the Band" and "Dames at Sea," and George Balanchine's ballet, "Jewels"—first mentioned this project to people, we'd often get an amused reaction along the lines of, "Aren't all designers gay?" That's somewhat of a clichéd urban myth, like saying the same about hairdressers. There are, indeed, quite a number of gifted heterosexual designers, but, given Leslie-Lohman's particular mission, we are thrilled to celebrate the lasting genius of our own, toiling in the theatrical vineyards of backstage, often under less-than-ideal conditions of heavy

pressure, limited budgets, time constraints, and managerial ignorance. The magic they have indefatigably managed to produce, therefore, seems all the more astounding and, quite simply, nobody does it better.

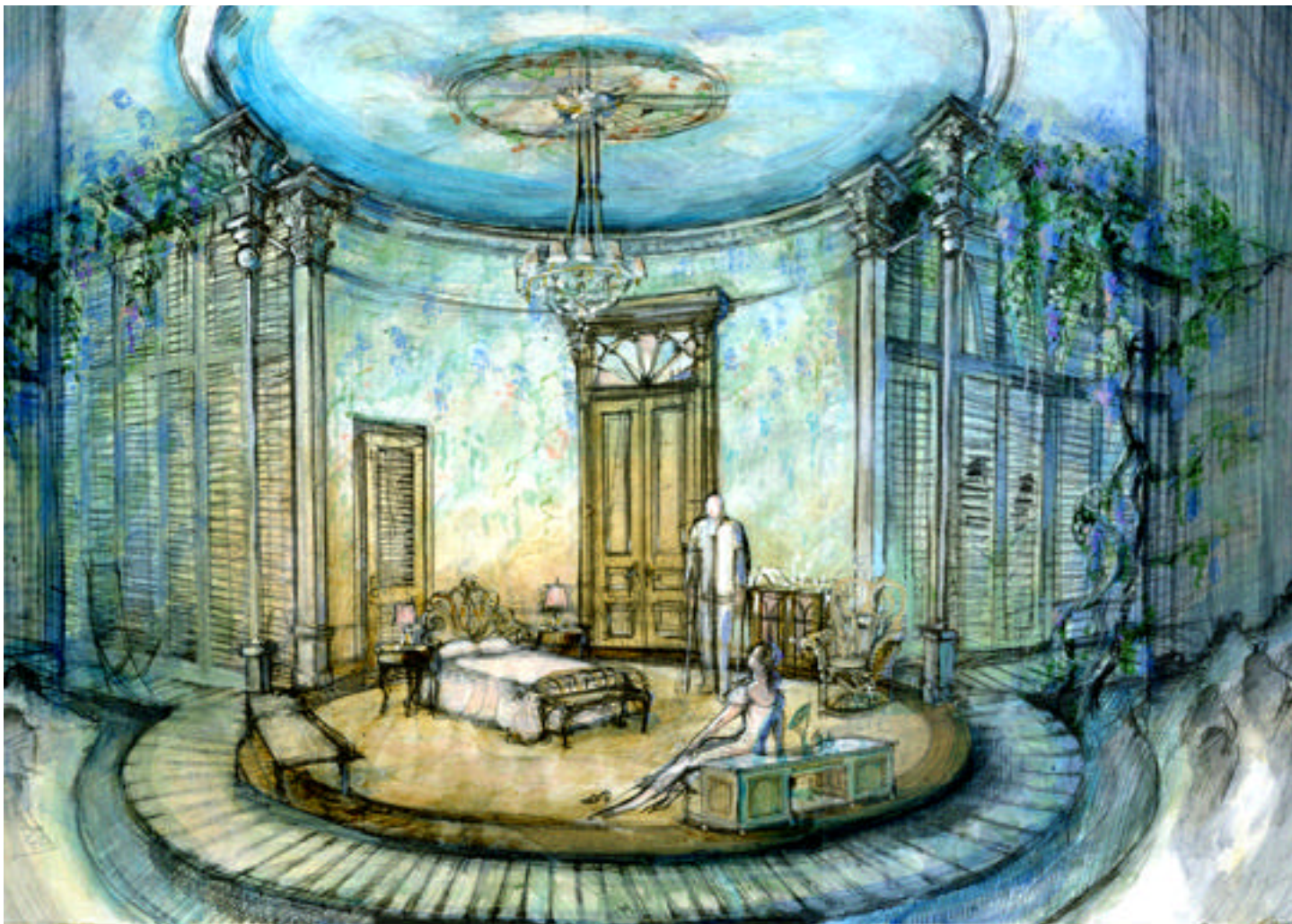
Peter and I had the extraordinary pleasure of visiting a number of living designers in their various lairs—ranging from poshly restored Victorian townhouses to cluttered, no-nonsense studios—and each occasion was both delightful and insightful. What struck me about all of them was just how damned charming all of them were, not to mention whip-smart and completely down-to-earth. There can be no bullshit in their chosen field, which is to serve the project at hand with complete objectivity and lack of ego, and these qualities evinced themselves in their manner and conversation. And, on a more personal note, I found so many of them every bit as attractive as many of the actors they've worked with. It was as if all these adorably cute boys came to town and, instead, of opting for, say, a sugar daddy-sponsored life of ease, drugged-out debauchery in Gotham's various sin-holes, or mundane nine-to-fives, they used their talent, along with their considerable charm, to apply themselves to a far greater glory and make their own dreams—and, subsequently, ours—come true.

There was Desmond Heely, the only winner of both Best Set Design and Costume Tonys in the same year for "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead" in 1968, magisterially handsome, like a Shakespearean character he is oft-compared to, and incredibly modest, far more excited to talk about the work of designers Oliver Messel and Rex Whistler, who have been his lifelong inspirations. A true raconteur, Heeley was particularly enlightening about the exact processes with which he achieved certain unforgettable effects, many of which leapt the



Martin Pakledinaz, Costume Design for "The Hard Nut" (France danced by Joe Bowie), Choreographed by Mark Morris, Music by Peter Tchaikovsky, 1991

boundaries of pure design to become integral parts of the actual stage action. "And, of course, the directors always get and take full credit for it," he sighed. There was the blindingly talented Martin Pakledinaz, busy with the upcoming "Grease," who works fast and confessed he hated coloring in his sketches. Randy Gardell, in a room decorated with life masks of George Clooney, Nicole Kidman, Arnold Schwarzenegger and the rest of the cast he worked with on "Batman," gave fresh insight into working in theatre and film on the West Coast. Tony Straiges showed us original sketches for "Into the Woods," even the roughest of which displayed his extraordinary



John Lee Beatty, *Set Design for "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof"*, by Tennessee Williams, 1983

draftsmanship and talent for animal likenesses. I was also mightily impressed by the delightful Ed Wittstein's gorgeous conceptions for the immortal "The Fantasticks," and also his utter honesty when he confessed that he maybe would have gotten further career-wise if he'd been more tactful and less fun-minded. The set models of Allen Moyer ("Grey Gardens") were little miracles of craftsmanship and ingenuity, and, for those of you who don't know, these are done entirely by hand—no shopping at miniature stores for furniture goes on here.

The exhibit will feature numerous sketches, as well as models, by these and a plethora of other designers like super-successful Tony Award-winner William Ivey Long ("Grey Gardens") and Anna Louizos, an out and proud lesbian working in the field, currently represented by "Curtains" and "In the Heights". And, of course, we are paying homage to those design titans who came before and are no

longer with us: the towering Rouben Ter-Arutunian ("All Over"), whose amassed work at the Lincoln Center Library of the Performing Arts is jaw-dropping in its complexity and detail; the legendary Irene Sharaff ("West Side Story")—oh yeah, she was gay; master colorist Raoul Pène DuBois ("Gypsy"); that opium-smoking, searingly influential Parisian giant, Christian Berard (Jean Cocteau's "Beauty and the Beast"); magical Oliver Messel (the 1936 film of "Romeo & Juliet," Frederick Ashton's "Sleeping Beauty"), and Cecil Beaton, whose "My Fair Lady" probably inspired more generations of kids to become designers than any other single work.

The young Jean Cocteau famously once asked theatrical impresario Serge Diaghilev what he could do for him and Diaghilev responded, "Astonish me!" It is fully our intention to do just that for anyone who comes to see this exhibit.

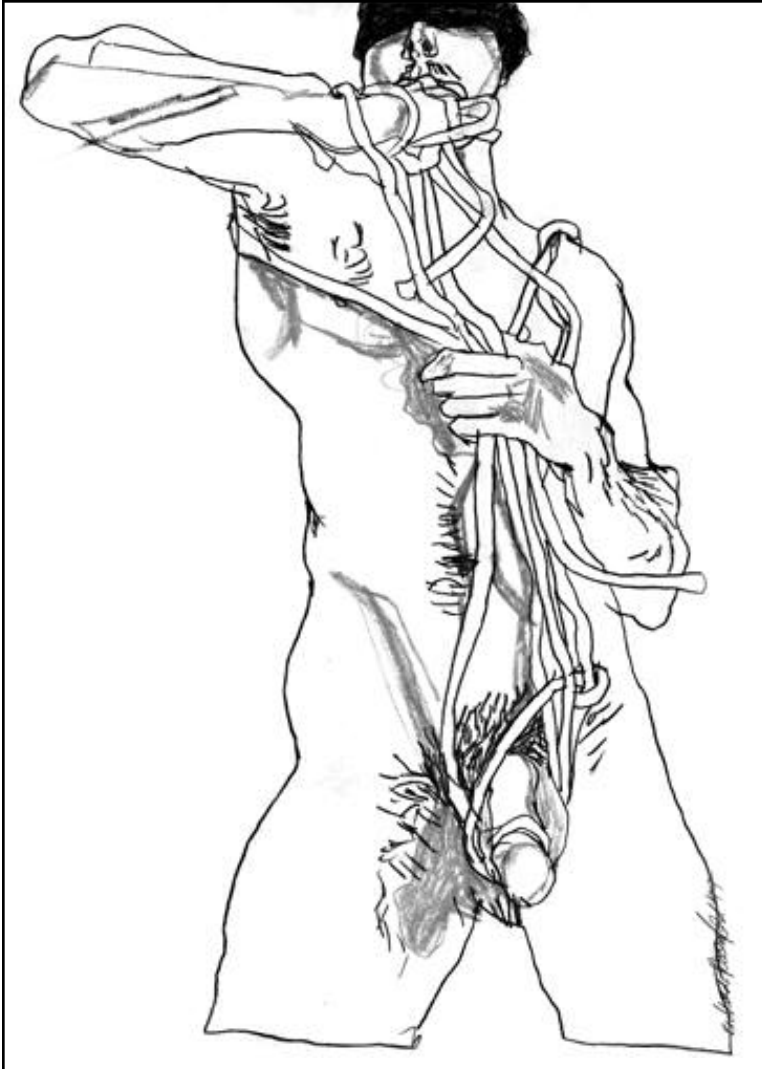
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*David Noh was born in Hawaii, but the lure of Broadway and the arts drew him to Manhattan, where he labors as a freelance journalist. He has a regular arts column in Gay City News, reviews movies Film Journal International, and has written for Opera News and other publications. (inthenoh@aol.com)*

# A ROMANTIC AT HEART

## RICHARD ROSENFELD AND HIS ART

BY ROB HUGH ROSEN



Richard Rosenfeld, *Dennis, Roped*, 1977, Pencil on paper, 24" x 18"

**T**wenty-five years ago I first became aware of the art of Richard Rosenfeld. My brother, who was a women's wear designer working on Seventh Avenue, dropped by my apartment one day. He picked up one of my magazines and thumbed through it; most likely it was a copy of *Mandate*, *Honcho*, or *Torso*. He flipped quickly past the photo spreads, but put the breaks on to admire a layout of artwork—beautiful homoerotic illustrations. He got

excited when he noticed the sprawling, decisive signature, "Rosenfeld...This guy does illustrations for *Women's Wear Daily*!" he declared, almost exultantly. Since my brother already knew and admired Rosenfeld's work as a fashion illustrator, this new discovery was an exciting and relevant one for him. Years later I met Richard when he came to the Queer Men's Erotic Art Workshop. When I mentioned this to him, he was nonchalant about having been

out as a gay man, at least 30 or more years ago. "My work was never explicit," he said simply. He felt that the world of Seventh Avenue was so gay that no harm could come to his career by his acknowledgment of his sexuality. Nevertheless, my brother had thought him brave, as well as having been impressed by his artistic versatility.

Richard recalled that it was some time around 1977, when he put a portfolio of drawings together and made an appointment to meet with an art director who worked for several gay skin magazines. The director didn't hesitate to agree to publish his work. A simple arrangement was made; Rosenfeld was to bring him a few new drawings each month, and the art director would create a spread based on the work. Rosenfeld was never asked to illustrate fiction; instead, the fiction was inspired by Rosenfeld's artwork.

For the next several years Rosenfeld would hire models to pose for him privately, and he would sketch them in various states of dress and undress. They would bring their own clothes and accessories; Rosenfeld never put them into costumes of his own creation. He recognizes that one's attire can represent an extension of one's personality; and the model's personality was important to him. A romantic at heart, Rosenfeld was never promiscuous. This included his relationships with his models, which were maintained as strict business arrangements. He always paid them, never offered drawings in lieu of payment, never had sex with them, and preferred to continually work with the same few models and to get to know them, rather than keep searching for new men. The resulting drawings were an expression of longing, desire, and feelings of love, rather than explicit sexuality. In the mid 1980s Rosenfeld stopped working for the gay magazines. He believes that as the AIDS crisis progressed, and





Top: Richard Rosenfeld, *John Kelly*, 1981, Pencil on paper, 18" x 24" Left: Richard Rosenfeld, *Michael Nude*, 2007, Pencil and watercolor on paper, 17.5" x 8.5"

the lifestyles of gay men changed and became more cautious, the magazines, in turn, got "raunchier." This new direction of the magazines and the romantic nature of Rosenfeld's work were no longer compatible.

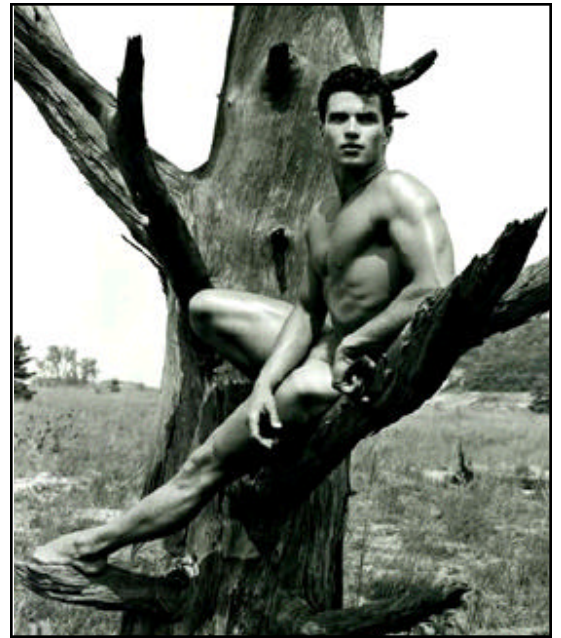
I've watched Richard work. He applies rapid, determined staccato-like strokes with a minimum of embellishment. In just a few minutes the page is composed, the figure is there, a psychological moment is captured, and an element of mystery is expressed. The figures always exist in space, with mass and volume, this despite the amazing fact that Rosenfeld has no depth perception; he was born blind in one eye! He actually attributes this misfortune to assisting in his artistic development; having no depth perception, participating in sports was difficult, if not impossible, for him. When he demonstrated an interest in art, his parents encouraged him. His father, who designed and produced nurse uniforms, would travel on business and return with gifts for Richard: glamorous fashion magazines!

He attended the High School of Music and Art, went on to study at the Rhode Island School of Design, graduated from Parsons, and joined the staff of *Women's Wear Daily*. It was 1969, a golden age for fashion illustration; Rosenfeld was in the company of other great artists of the day, including Steven Stipelman and Kenneth Paul Block. In 1978, Charles Leslie and Fritz Lohman curated Rosenfeld's first one man exhibition at Leslie Lohman Gallery. And in 1981 the Leslie/Lohman Gay Art Foundation hosted a second one man exhibition. Through the years Rosenfeld has been included in at least seven Leslie/Lohman group shows, the latest one having been *Dark Ride*, in May of 2007. Today he teaches fashion design drawing full time at Parsons and FIT, and continues to draw constantly for the love of it. And for the romance of it.

*Rob Hugh Rosen is an artist, he is Associate Director of the Leslie/Lohman Gay Art Foundation, and is co-director of the Queer Men's Erotic Art Workshop and a frequent contributor to The Archive.*



Top: Richard Rosenfeld, *Tim and Mike*, 2007, Pencil and watercolor on paper, 18" x 24"  
Bottom: Richard Rosenfeld, *Bondage Couple*, 2004, Pencil on paper, 18" x 18"



Bob Demonteque, *Glenn Bishop (Detail)*, Silver gelatin print, ca. 1954, 13.5" x 10.5" (from 4" x 5" negative), Collection Reed Massengill

## PHYSIQUE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE TIME OF QUAINANCE

Painters have worked from photographs since their inception. Credible evidence supports the theory that the 17th-century Dutch painter Vermeer used the camera obscura (predecessor to the earliest camera) as an aid to his painting. Once chemical photography was invented in the late 1820s, its increasing use by painters became a fact, and among the many examples include the gay 19th-century American master, Thomas Eakins, who composed paintings from his own photographs.

George Quaintance must have worked from live models, but he also took photographs and used them as references for his paintings. Glenn Bishop, Quaintance's painting in the Leslie/Lohman collection, was clearly based on a photograph, but not one of his own. Bishop was a famous model in the gay world of the 1950s, and the image reproduced here was one of many taken by Bob Delmonteque in that particular setting.

Delmonteque's photographs of beautiful men populated the little physique magazines of the 50s when repressive laws punished possession of works deemed obscene, and the depiction of genitalia was considered a crime. Risking arrest photographers circulated their work in secret. In published photography, genitals were concealed; Quaintance, the painter, strategically painted "fig" leaves on the photographs of his friend, Lon of New York, to make them publishable.

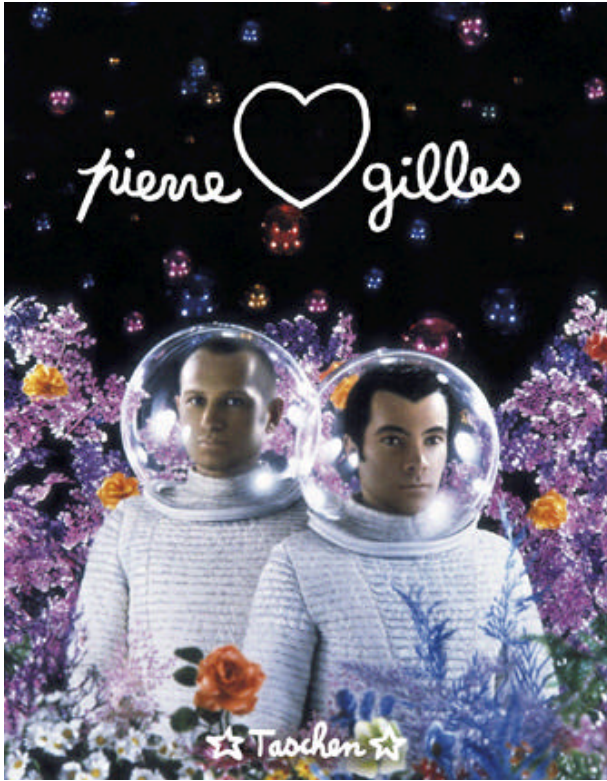
The physique magazines exalted the virile, athletic man. Quaintance's photography in the 1950s expresses this, and in its day implied a reservoir of sexuality hidden behind the idealization of such muscular beauty.



# FAERIES IN THE GARDEN

## PIERRE ET GILLES AT THE JEU DE PAUME

BY DOUGLAS BLAIR TURNBAUGH



*Pierre et Gilles—double je* (1976-2007)  
With text by Paul Ardenne and Jeff Koons  
Taschen 2007  
ISBN 978-3-8228-4650-6  
\$ 49.99

*Pierre et Gilles: Sailors & Sea*  
Introduction by Eric Troncy  
Taschen 2005  
ISBN 978-3-8228-3859-4  
\$ 9.99

**P**ierre et Gilles must be the sexiest gayest couple in the art world, maybe in the whole world. Yes, Gilbert and George are rich and famous, but they are nerdy looking and wear dismal little suits and ties and seem to be making some kind of statement that it's cold and it's damp in prissy Britain. Pierre (b. 1949) and Gilles (b. 1953) appear to have been born ithyphallic fauns, who have flaunted their vibrant sexuality from day one. They have been making pictures together, glorifying themselves and their



*Pierre et Gilles, David et Jonathan, Jean-Yves et Moussa*, 2005, Color photograph  
© Taschen, 2008

ilk, for nearly thirty years, in over-the-top images of objects of desire from every nook and cranny of the complete catalogue of erotic fetishism. Viewers can trust their concoctions, which, like the recipes of Julia Child, one knows have been rigorously tested through hands-on experience.

As Eric Troncy calls it, their "serenely immutable technique" is a team effort: Pierre, the dark haired one, takes the photographs on which Gilles, the blond, paints. As with glamour photography and advertising, reality is superseded by wonderfully unreal or surreal perfection, but here in their art it is disconcertingly placed, and framed, in the midst of high kitsch.

The boys feature themselves and other gorgeous creatures as objects of desire in directly narrative and figurative tableaux, dripping with beauty, stars twinkling, glitter sparkling, pearly tears rolling down a cheek, blood—shiny red as a tart's fingernail polish—trickling from a saint's wound. It would not surprise us to find Bambi there. Desire, sentimentality, melodrama, religious ecstasy radiate from settings which animate the kitsch, rather than merely appropriating it as in Jeff Koon's banal produce.

Our own James Bidgood's (b. 1933) photography and filmmaking preceded Pierre and Gilles in this genre. Bidgood used the color and





Pierre et Gilles, *Dans le port du Havre*, Frederic Lenfant, 1998, Color Photograph, ©Taschen, 2008

the vulgar associations of kitsch to create a backdrop for “mediated eroticism—or romantic pornography,” as writer Bruce Benderson has called Bidgood’s work. Like pink lamps in a brothel. And there is no irony in Bidgood’s work, and there is a touching naiveté. He never intended to emphasize the sexual over the aesthetic; the two were melded together in his unique creations. Bidgood made cinema history with his poetic underground film “Pink Narcissus” (1971), the classic masterpiece of romantic pornography (which immortalized *The Most Beautiful Boy in the World*, Bobby Kendall).

A favorite subject of Pierre et Gilles is Sailors and Sea, which perfectly lends itself to the romantic potential of their aesthetic. Their first work was *Le Marin (The Sailor)* (1977) and over the decades they have drawn from literary sources, Jean Genet’s *Querelle de Brest* and Jules Verne’s *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, for examples. They love to dress up themselves and their models in the classic boat-

neck, striped shirt of the French seaman. Even their little dog Lili has one. She also insouciantly wears a matelot’s ship cap with red pompom, see *Lili à la mer*.

*Le Capitaine et son petit mousse (The Captain and His Little Ship’s Boy)* (1995) will horrify good Americans. The wicked French don’t seem to mind. How times change! In 1937, Americans watched and sniveled appreciatively through the MGM film “Captains Courageous,” and in which Spencer Tracy plays a gruff butch sailorman with whom dainty little Freddy Bartholomew bonds. Of course, this required that Tracy’s character met with watery disaster but actor Tracy won an Academy Award as Best Actor.

Oh those French! I was in France in July, saw the Gay Pride Day gathering in the Place de la Bastille. Police estimated the crowd at about 400,000; organizers counted 800,000. Those police! But an out gay man is now the Mayor of Paris and the city, unlike Sodom, did not implode.

Asked how he thought a gay man as Mayor would affect the city, he replied “Do you mean will I change the police uniforms to pink?” Très Pierre et Gilles! Paris is always fabulous. Glamour, surely a gay word, still has meaning here. I also saw the amazing exhibition of Pierre et Gilles’ work (all reproduced in the new telephone book size publication) in the newly renovated Jeu de Paume. Set in the Jardin des Tuileries, at 1 place de la Concorde, this splendid gallery is on an elevated site facing straight toward the great Obélisque with its newly gilded tip. It can’t be beat. Mr. Mayor will have to issue pink uniforms to make Paris any gayer than it has always been. (NYC may look gayer than it is to French tourists, who fall apart at the sight of our Finest driving around in cars marked NYPD, because PD in French is pronounced pédé, short for pederast.)

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*Douglas Blair Turnbaugh author, filmmaker, and artist is a frequent contributor to The Archive.*

# BRIEF FLURRY—JOHN WYKERT DOCUMENTS GAY LIFE 1943–1955

BY TOM SAETTEL

**H**is medium was pencil on paper, and over a period of about ten years, he was never without his drawing pad. His subjects were the people surrounding him—the gay men he met at parties and in bars; fellow students; colleagues; and his family. John Wykert's drawings span the transition from the heavy suit jackets and broad silk ties to the trim jackets with thin silk ties, and devil-may-care French sailor t-shirts. It was a time of change: the baroque-like 19th century interiors giving way to pole lamps and Eames chairs. When I saw a pole lamp in a drawing, I said, "Ah, the 60s are dawning." Wykert replied, "They came and went." The drawings are like the movies we see from the period—totally modern figures in these heavy interiors. He was documentarian to this transition. There are also drawings done in the bath-houses of the era, reminding us that some things never change.

Born in Vienna in 1927, his family fled Austria in 1938 and settled into his Uncle Siegfried and Aunt Clara's home in Newark. It was a home filled with music as had been his home in Vienna—Classical and Romantic music. He saw this transformed as well from formal to kitsch by one of Clara's star students, Liberace. The eighteen-year-old virtuoso would appear at the door for his lessons in a dazzling white polo coat. Clara suggested he forget classical music and develop a nightclub act. She lived to see just the beginning of his fame.

*Anonymous Trick, Boston* (1943) is a typical drawing from Wykert's life when he was at Tufts University. He entered college at age 16 as a premed student, but soon he was attending evening workshops in printmaking at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He met Max Beckman when he visited the workshop as a guest artist. A rare montage drawing as homage to Beckman dates from 1950, the year of Beckman's death. Wykert changed majors and graduated in 1947 with a degree in history and a minor in art history.



John Wykert, *Bill Robinson*, 1954, Pencil on paper, 13" x 10"

Having already seen the folly of friends who got involved with tricks they picked up in bars and at the baths—"Trottoir, bon soir, boudoir, lavoir, au revoir," as his mother used to say—Wykert preferred getting involved only with men he met though friends or at cultural events.

While in Boston, he met his first lover, Frederick Rice, at the Boston Symphony. In his drawing *Frederick* (1948), we view the robed figure resting in a huge high back carved Victorian armchair.

After college, Wykert moved back to the New York City area and was





fortunate to get a job in the public relations department at MOMA. This was the era of Alfred J. Barr's reign and Marlena Dietrich showing up at openings in fabulous gowns. The PR department was a personal favorite of Nelson Rockefeller, who would never fail to address Wykert by name should they meet on the street. Wykert's dream at MOMA was to become a curator, but some of the attitudes at the museum were not to his liking. He left the museum and took a job in publishing as a production manager.

Several drawings from the baths date from his early days back in New York. *Hot Italian, Newark Turkish Bath* (1952) in blue pencil is an extremely lovely example of these drawings. From here flows a plethora of drawings documenting Wykert moving in the gay network of the early 50s—his friends and lovers, mostly clothed. I find the drawings most intriguing when the subjects are in their environments—our gay brothers alive on the page, out of an opaque past. A favorite of Wykert is of a painter whose name he has forgotten, *Painter from Oregon* (1952). He did a light pencil portrait in a bound journal of his friend, theatrical producer Lawrence "Jimmy" Carr (1950),

complete with sunglasses and a petite signet ring. Wykert was often mistaken for Carr's former business partner, Robert Fryer, when they were seen together in public. He did several portraits of Carr's live-in boy toy, *Michael* (1950). A friend but never a lover was the writer and novelist *David Loovis* (1953) who would go on in the 70s to write *Gay Spirit: A Guide to Becoming a More Sensual Homosexual*. Many portraits and stories exist of his friend and roommate *George George* (1953), who was a graphic designer for CBS. Wykert's lover, *Bill Robinson* (1954), who had also been Garcia Lorca's lover, sat for a portrait in his classic 50s surrounds. And there are several drawings of the man who would later commit suicide, his neighbor *Randall Kenny* (1952).

Over a thousand drawings survive from this brief flurry of drawing and suddenly in the mid 50s he put down his pad. "Why?" I asked. "I found true love, instead."

*John Wykert has been a member and friend of LLGAF for many years. By sheer coincidence the publication date for this article, Sept. 11, 2007, is his eightieth birthday. Tom Saettel is editor of The Archive.*



John Wykert, Top Left: *Michael in Restaurant*, 1952, Pencil on paper, 10" x 6",  
Top Right: *Lawrence "Jimmy" Carr*, 1952, Pencil on paper, 10" x 6"  
Bottom Right: *George George*, 1953, Pencil on paper, 10" x 6",



# ITALY WITH A LESLIE/LOHMAN TWIST

BY WALTER ERNST

Last March, 2007, eight art-loving Leslie/Lohman members and staff—director Wayne Snellen, sculptor Douglas Holtquist, collectors and artists Michi Yamaguchi and Grant Anderson, collectors John Caldwell and Walter Ernst, and fashion consultant Barbara Fushille—embarked on the Leslie/Lohman artists' studio tour of Italy. Planned and led by Italian art expert Anna Canepa, we convened in Rome and proceeded to visit Pisa, Pietrasanta, Liguria, the Consorzio Cinqueterre, and Florence. We visited the requisite historic Italian monuments—the Coliseum, the Pantheon, the Vatican—and works of art, but the thrust of our journey was to visit artists' and artisan studios.

Our first significant Leslie/Lohman inspired destination was Foro Italico's Stadio dei Marmi. The athletic stadium—still in use we were glad to witness—was built by Mussolini in the 1930s. Its design incorporates 60 mostly nude, heroic scale, marble sculptures of male athletes placed around the perimeter of the stadium intended to represent the Fascists' ideal male. It is a thesis in high camp Mussolini Deco. Not to be missed.

That afternoon, we made our first studio visit to photographer Marco Anelli. Besides his dramatically lit, splendid black and

white images of St. Peter's Basilica, taken when he was photographer to the Vatican, he showed us a series of photographs of the Foro Italico sculptures, which he has paired with contemporary athletes echoing the poses; a perfect example of a contemporary artist bringing something out of the past and fast forwarding it into the future.

The second day, a walking tour included the San Luigi dei Francesi church, which is in the French Quarter of Rome, to view the arresting Caravaggio paintings, *The Calling of St Matthew*, *The Inspiration of Saint Matthew*, and *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* (1599-1600). To our eyes the religious context seemed a thin veil to conceal Caravaggio's true interest—the bodies of men and boys interacting in the most dramatic light.

In the evening, we visited the studio of artist Luigi Ontani. Canepa has been a friend of Ontani since the early 70s when he is said to have been stunningly beautiful. The notoriously flamboyant Ontani greeted us in a full-length blue tunic. A big art star of Europe, when he exhibited at Sonnabend in Soho in the 1970s, his outrageous imagery was stiffly met; the more blatantly sexual and gay the farther to the back of the gallery it went. Ontani has traveled the world absorbing cultural



Top: Anna Canepa with Botero sculptures at Foneria Mariani Creazioni Artistiche, Pietrasanta. Bottom: Wayne, Barbara, Michi, Anna, Doug and Walter in Doug Holtquist's studio, Pietrasanta, Photographs by Grant A. Anderson



Walter, Wayne, Anna, John and Douglas with Luigi Ontani, Photograph by Grant A. Anderson



imagery with a special penchant for Asian cultures—Thai, Indian, Tibetan. He has blended what he has absorbed into life-size, ceramic self-portraits. Ontani has described his art as “the adventure I live as a person of art.” As the subject of his art, Ontani is able to live art, create art, and express his love for art. A 2001 retrospective of his sculpture, performance pieces, films, and video at PS1 in New York was toasted by a new generation of critics, artist and art lovers. Ontani showed us his most recent video project, shot in Thailand with young, male, martial-arts students’ acting-out an ancient Thai myth, a work set in a monastery. Not long after our return home Ontani had a major (and successful) show in Chelsea’s Bortolami Gallery.

Traveling northwest via Pisa to Pietrasanta—marble country—our first of several artist visits was to Douglas Holtquist’s studio. Holtquist, a longtime friend of the Foundation who is indeed represented in its collection, showed us the latest in his phallic series—6 inch penis heads, mounted on huge spring bases. I was quite impressed with his recent bronze male torsos in partial undress and two exquisite small bronzes of a male torso doing a pushup.

We began Thursday’s at the Chiaro Foundry where bronze work was underway on the sculpture of Fernando Botero, Sandro Chia,

Julio Larraz, and the American Nall. This was followed by a visit to Dauphne du Barry’s studio where we were shown her maquette in progress of a bust of Prince Ranier of Monaco as well as her finished works of male nude sculptures, beautifully executed by the artisan studios which abound in Pietrasanta.

Friday, an early breakfast facilitated an unplanned visit to the studio of Dutch sculptor Eppe de Haan. I purchased a sculpture from de Haan this year in Amsterdam, and he extended an invitation there to the Leslie/Lohman group. He, like Holquist, du Barry, and countless other artists spend most of their year in Pietrasanta to avail themselves of the world class artisans in the foundries and marble studios which surround them there. De Haan’s very sensual, figurative work, done in bronze and the whitest of marble, are a visual ying and yang. Figures often have a male front and a female back or vise versa.

On to Studio Sem, the original supplier to the world of traditional Roman Catholic sculptures. Vatican II did away with this market, and Sem Ghelardini, the original founder, was astute enough to open up the studio to contemporary artists who wish to come and work with his skilled artisans. Henri Moore and Joan Miro are only two of the countless artists Studio

Sem has worked with since the evolution. In 1980, a young American artist, Keara McMartin, showed up in Pietrasanta, became a friend of Sem, later his manager, and since his death in 1994 has directed the studio in a partnership with Sem’s two sons.

We fittingly ended our tour in Florence on Saturday ogling Michelangelo’s David. But, of course, there was the beauty of Italy, the fine food, the wonderful wines, and the good company of our travelling companions and I’m now looking forward to whatever Leslie/Lohman has in store for us next.

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*Walt Ernst has collected art in a modest way since his early days with the Pennsylvania Railroad in the 1960s where, subject to frequent relocations, he acquired art as a memento of each place he lived. He’s collected figurative art since discovering Paul Cadmus’s work via a print collecting club in the 1980s.*

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*Leslie/Lohman’s next tour, the Northern Italian Lakes, in the late spring of 2008, is in the planning stage. It will explore the largely gay contribution to the amazing villas and horticulture of the area as well as some artist studios. Information will be available on the web by year’s end.*



THE LESLIE/LOHMAN GAY ART FOUNDATION is a non-profit foundation which was established in 1990 to provide an outlet for art work that is unambiguously gay and that is frequently denied access to mainstream venues. The Foundation's gallery mounts exhibitions of work in all media by gay and lesbian artists with an emphasis on subject matter that speaks directly to gay and lesbian sensibilities, including erotic, political, romantic, and social imagery and providing special support for emerging and under-represented artists. Its programs include regularly scheduled exhibitions, artists' and curators' talks, panel discussions, a membership program, a quarterly journal, an archive of artists' data, and a permanent collection of art.

THE JOURNAL OF THE  
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 GAY ART FOUNDATION

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Editor/Design/Production: Tom Saettel

Contributors:

Charles Leslie	Rob Hugh Rosen
Fritz Lohman	Richard Rosenfeld
Grant A. Anderson	Scott Runyon
Jay Boda,	Tom Saettel
Walter Ernst	Nelson Santos
Ken Furtado	Wayne Snellen
Roberto Garcia, Jr.	Taschen
Peter Harvey	Douglas Blair
David Noh	Turnbaugh
Jeanine Oleson	John Waybright
Robert Orme	John Wykert

Please submit articles for consideration for inclusion in The Archive to the editor, Tom Saettel, POB 7785 New York, NY 10116, tomsaettelnyc@yahoo.com

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Phone: 212-431-2609

E-mail: LLDirector@earthlink.net

Website: <http://www.leslielohman.org>

Artists and curators are encouraged to submit slides and proposals to ATTN: The Exhibition Committee at above address. Appointments and studio visits are possible by contacting: Wayne Snellen, Director, at above address/telephone.



# A REDISCOVERED GAY ARTIST

BY ROBERT ORME

*The Foundation recently received a donation—The Dr. Blair Rogers Collection—which included a beautiful small oil painting of boys picking oranges. The painting was unsigned, and we were unable to identify the artist. But then, thanks to a visitor from Britain, Mr. Robert Orme who teaches in London, we have an identification and the great pleasure of rediscovering a fine, nearly forgotten gay artist. Mr. Orme graciously agreed to write a brief re-introduction to Otto Sohn-Rethel for readers of The Archive.*

—Charles W. Leslie

**T**he charming painting of boys picking oranges, which is in the collection of The Leslie/Lohman Gay Art Foundation, is almost certainly a study by Otto Sohn-Rethel for a painting dated 1932 that is in a private collection in Anacapri.

Well known in his time, Sohn-Rethel lived from 1877 to 1949 and came from a family of painters: his mother was the daughter of the German painter Alfred Rethel (1816-1859), and his father, Carl Sohn (1845-1908), had a successful career as an academic and portrait artist—he painted Queen Victoria and John Brown in 1882-83. Sohn-Rethel's brothers, Karli and Alfred, also became painters. Sohn-Rethel trained in Paris and Rome and in 1885-86 at Worpswede, the German artists' colony, with its tradition of nudism and naturalistic paintings of young men and boys swimming. Later in his life, he traveled in India and became an expert on Indian miniatures.

In the early twentieth century, the artist became known for academic symbolist oils in the Munich Secession and his works were exhibited by Alfred Flechtheim in 1913 and often illustrated his avant-garde magazine *Die Querschnitt* during the 1920s. He also exhibited his expressionist paintings with the Junge Rheinland group.

The main theme of his art was always young males, and in 1904 his *Boy with A Sheep* was illustrated in *Kunst Fur Alle*. His later association with Flechtheim was significant. Flechtheim was a well-know promoter of "gay" art (although no such art was officially conceived as such at the time) and his journal *Die Querschnitt* was among the first to promote the work of Marsden Hartley, Sydney Hunt, Erich Godal, and Otto Schoff. In various issues of the journal, he included many Sohn-Rethel drawings of youths swimming, bathing, wrestling, and lounging about together. A photo of the artist painting a nude male model was also published.

From 1904 his wealth allowed him to live more or less permanently in Capri which was notorious for its substantial community of homosexuals. At the fin-de-siecle Capri, along



Otto Sohn-Rethel, Top: *Untitled*, ca.1920, Ink on paper, Bottom: *Portrait of Norman Douglas*, 1931, Oil on canvas



with Taromina in Sicily, was a sort of upper class Fire Island of its time. After the Fredrich Krupp scandal and the publication of A. Sper's *Capri Und Die Homosexuellen* (1903), the island also became a refuge for exiled writers like Count Jacques Fersen. After Fersen's trial in Paris for sexual rites with young males, he lived in Capri at the Villa Lysis with his boyfriend Nino Cesarini, who was painted by Hocker, sculpted by Francesco lerace, and photographed by Wilhelm von Pluschow.

The appeal of Capri was symbolized by Norman Douglas in his novel *South Wind* (1917), as a relentlessly pagan island where strange characters met and whose winds blew away Northern actuality, giving visitors the freedom for friendship.

Many artists came to Capri for the ease of finding young models—the German artist Christian Wilhelm “Willy” Allers (aka W. Andersen) settled in Capri, drawing youths and helping English artists. Artist and writer Dwight Benton, on seeing boys “guiltless of garments playing in the water or sunning themselves,” wrote in an 1879 article in the United States that this is exactly what John Singer Sargent painted in his 1878 Capri beach sketches, which critics praised for their naturalism with nude youths sprawled joyously in play.

Sohn-Rethel's Villa Lina became a center for the expatriate community and intellectuals like his nephew Alfred Sohn-Rethel, the future Marxist economist, who came to stay from 1923 to 1926. In the 1930s, he painted a portrait of *South Wind* author, Douglas.

The quality of his painting does not reside in its stylistic innovation, but in capturing what Matisse called “essential line,” and this feature shows particularly in the Foundation's study, more than in finished work. His drawing shows the line of the central figure's shoulders and neck, and his flickering brushwork, the play of light on the back, while the sharper focus emphasizes the butt and thighs.



Otto Sohn-Rethel, *Untitled (Boys Picking Oranges)*, ca.1928, Oil on canvas, 32" x 18", Collection LLGAF, The Dr. Blair Rogers Collection

The painting is not really naturalistic. Photos, in *Emporium* (1906), show that boys did not really pick oranges naked. Sohn-Rethel's painting resonates with the work of another lover of youthful beauty, Hans von Marees, who decorated the Naples Zoological Station in 1873 with frescoes of fishermen and also of naked men and boys picking oranges. Sohn-Rethel's central figure is directly based on a sketch by Marees. Marees wrote of his pictures as “landscapes of longing,” and his friend and patron, Conrad Fiedler praised how they showed “the unboundedness of natural life...of light and splendor, of ripeness and solemn tranquillity.” Another artist, the

American, Susan Watkins (1875-1913), also painted nude boys picking fruit in Capri in 1906.

Sohn-Rethel's painting is a fantasy of allusions that symbolizes the freshness of the boy's nudity and how natural it is to admire his beauty by the freedom of the brushwork, by the orangeness of his skin, by the rendition of the body's trunk, balanced by the growing trees, and by his young muscles swelling like the ripening fruit.

*Robert Orme was born in England in 1945. He studied history at Cambridge and now teaches art history in London and researches the conscious use of sexual symbolism in art.*

# JEANINE OLESON JUST MIGHT BELIEVE IN BIGFOOT AND MYTHOS OF THE LESBIAN PEOPLES

INTERVIEW BY NELSON SANTOS



Jeanine Oleson and  
Ellen Lesperance,  
*Off the Grid (Winter III)*, 2002,  
C-print, 28" x 30"

**Nelson Santos (NS):** You grew up outside of Astoria, Oregon. What was it like?

**Jeanine Oleson (JO):** It was a small town on the coast. I have a huge extended family and had dogs, cats, horses, and cows as pets. It was pretty cool, though I really wanted out.

**NS:** That is a lot of pets, do you remember some of their names?

**JO:** Yes, dogs: Taffy and Sheba; cats: Knappa, Puffy, Fleo and Twinkle Toes; horses: Smoky Lee, Bun Bun, and Jenny; cow: Calf-Calf.

**NS:** Did you make much art as a kid?

**JO:** Yes, tons of drawings of horses, my ranch, my survivalist hut and I also made forts and tools. The first drawing I remember was a self-portrait painting made in pre-

school that hung on the door. I was wearing blue pants, a yellow shirt, red suspenders, and a black top hat.

**NS:** What was school like in a small town?

**JO:** I went to a tiny country school K-8. It was two grades per teacher and room. I spent years with the same six kids. It was kind of great in one way. We got tons of attention, but it was limited. I also felt like a bit of a weirdo and being in such close quarters doesn't always help, but it developed my coping skills. I doubt I would've felt "normal" anywhere.

**NS:** When did you leave Oregon?

**JO:** I had just turned 17 and graduated from high school. I went to Alaska for the summer and then moved to Chicago to go to the Art Institute thanks to the prodding of

a wise high school art teacher who took good care of me.

**NS:** How would you describe your work to someone you meet at a bar?

**JO:** Well, if it appears to be someone I don't really want to talk to, I just explain the mediums I use. If I like them, I might broach subject matter with comments like "it's about recasting fantastical cultural narratives and art movements from the last 40 years." If it's someone I don't want to deal with, I might have to say something off-putting about a "Matriotic gyno-vision" and "mythos of the Lesbian Peoples."

**NS:** Tell me more about your fantastical cultural narratives. What role does mythology play in your work?

**JO:** I've always zig-zagged between the rational and fantastical. I read tons





Jeanine Oleson,  
*The World's Largest Smudge  
Stick That I know Of...*, 2006,  
Sage and string, 10' x 10'

of Sci-Fi, and in my work, I use fantasy and humor as a way to give viewers access to larger topics at hand. Mythology and stories of fantasy are not often taken seriously outside of a new-age gift shop, and yet they are interesting as cultural dreams for change or caution, and potential for humor.

**NS:** You often reappear in your artwork as a sort of Big Foot character. What's your fascination with this story?

**JO:** I like the idea of a race of big hairy humanoids who we STILL cannot prove—or disprove. On a theoretic level, it seems like a modern myth to remind us of our non-"civilized" origins. A fear of the primordial. I'm curious why we're afraid.

**NS:** What do you think about the resurgence of Feminist artwork?

**JO:** Just a few years ago, everyone was still grossed out by the essential notions of Feminist artwork, but now it's come full circle into the limelight. I think it's great to see people unafraid of the F-word, but sometimes it seems like an almost fetishistic venture. And there seems to be a difficult pull between the older generation and the new judging by all of the recent conferences, panels, and exhibitions. It is a complicated relationship between understanding and respecting history (or in this case, herstory), a

fear of erasure, and hero-worship. Maybe those original tenets of Feminism will make another round in contemporary art. I really identify with the urge to re-assess the Separatist drive, spirituality, a realignment of priorities in our culture—all of these things with a little humor, a mix of criticality and love.

**NS:** What about your work is "queer"?

**JO:** I feel like my work is referential, but it's not the main topical focus, at the same time, it just IS. It's like when I was a kid and my mom would ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up and I'd say, "I'm gonna BE Dolly Parton" and she'd say, "You want to be like her?" and I'd say, "NO, I'm gonna BE her." Pure embodiment of the idea.

**NS:** What is your most recent work about?

**JO:** I'm in the beginning stages of two projects. One is an experimental opera with Juliana Snapper initially situated in people's bathtubs. The other is a film project in collaboration with my family—it's a slow and oblique look at allegorical connections between the landscape and their actions within it.

**NS:** Tell me more about the bathtub opera?!? Are you a closet opera fan?

**JO:** I've always been interested in opera, but also aware of what I do not particularly like about the tradi-

tion. So when Juliana, who is an amazing opera singer, asked me to work with her, I was really excited. I love the epic range of tales and the sheer beauty of the human voice. We are workshoping underwater singing in people's bathtubs to place that tradition in an intimate domestic space. We are talking about ways to create scores with input from each specific host. This is basically about displacing the tradition of opera into an interactive situation. It's still completely experimental.

**NS:** Do you see the direction of your work changing?

**JO:** Yes. I've been getting more into interactions, more interested in making things as a sustaining practice. I hope my work is always changing a bit.

**NS:** Where do you see yourself in 20 years?

**JO:** My childhood fantasy was to have a ranch, but I'd settle for a little farm. Who knows? I have no idea what I'll want then. I hope I feel secure, happy and content in what I'm doing and have done.

*Nelson Santos is an artist, curator, Associate Director for Visual AIDS, and a Pisces. He lives in Brooklyn with his dog and frequent collaborator, Sparky: [www.sparkyandnelson.com](http://www.sparkyandnelson.com)*



Pierre et Gilles, *Mercurie, Enzo Junior*, 2001, Color photograph, ©Taschen, 2008  
See the *Pierre et Gilles: Double Je* book review by Douglas Blair Turnbaugh on page 14.

## UPCOMING

**SEPT. 18–OCT. 20, 2007**

**RECENT ACQUISITIONS AND DONATIONS**

AND

**SELECTED PAINTINGS OF J. B. HARTER**

Opens Tuesday, Sept. 18, 2007 6-8pm

**POETRY READING**

**"COME HEAR" 22 GAY POETS**

Presented by Nathaniel Siegel and Regie Cabico

Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2007 7-9pm

**NOV. 13–DEC. 22, 2007**

**STAGE-STRUCK**

The Magic of Theatre Design

Curated by Peter Harvey and David Noh

Opens Tuesday, Nov. 13, 2007 6-8pm

**DEC. 23, 2007–JAN. 16, 2008**

**GALLERY CLOSED**

**JAN. 15–FEB. 16, 2008**

**THE GREAT GAY PHOTO SHOW**

Opens Tuesday, Jan. 15, 2008 6-8pm

February 22, 2008

**FEB. 22, 2008**

**JASPER JOHNS SYMPOSIUM**

WITH JONATHAN D. KATZ (details to come)

**MAR. 11–APR. 12, 2008**

**ART! ACTUALLY!**

Painting, Drawing Sculpture

Opens Tuesday, Mar. 11, 2008 6-8pm

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26 Wooster Street  
New York, NY 10013-2227  
212-431-2609

LLDirector@earthlink.net

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