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# SHORline 5

SHORELINE 5, begun too late I'm afraid, on May 24, 1979, by Jeanne Gomoll of 2018 Jenifer Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53704 U.S.A. (608+241-8445) for C/Rapa. Contents, written and if by chance drawn is © copyright, Jeanne Gomoll, 1979. Hi. Warning: This zine is being printed first draft.

It's been some time since I received the last issue of C/Rapa in the mail, but I clearly recall reading it over and at one point, grinning and shouting AH-HAH! as I read Jerry's STALEY PLUMP BUCK MULLIGAN #2... And because I know I might very quickly get short on time, and I want to return to those moments of glory, I think I'll start there with this getting-to-be-traditional group mailing comment on the subject of art.

(First though a station identification. I'm typing at another new job (the Instrumentation systems center at the University of Wisconsin, Madison on the office typewriter. My boss his the director of the center and his secretary gets the "best"...a Mag card typewriter. Unfortunately if you don't know how to use the mag card part, you have to use it as a regular typewriter and there are disadvantages to that, like not being able to figure out how to change the margins, having to shift the paper around on the role instead, and there not being an erase key. That's my situation, so the layout of this zine is an attempt to deal aesthetically with those limitations.)

Now back to the regularly scheduled program.

My initial AH-HAH! reaction to your statements on art, Jerry, still stands because I think I've figured out where the point of disagreement between myself and many of you concerning that "view through the window" lies. But now that I read it over again I think we're less divided in opinion than I originally thought. But to start--

Commenting to Eli, you say: "Computers don't write poetry. They string words together in facsimile of poetry. The human reading the words after the computer strings them together is the poet, because the human is putting the meaning in." Computers also create what -- through the perceptions of people who look at it -- is called computer art, random step programs, etc. The thing, the piece of computer poetry or of computer art is what I would put in that circle on my chart in OBSESSIONS 3. And I totally agree with you, it is NOT art in itself. No more than a view through a window is.

You say "I would make a distinction between my reactions to a painting of a view and the view itself. The view itself is chance" (like a computer random walk) "the painting is a conscious or instinctive choice of a human about how to present that view to me. I think it takes a person to make art." (My emphasis and also, my opinion too.) What I tried to convey with that last mailing, and evidently I just wasn't making myself clear enough, was that it is the interaction of human

with something that makes art, that the process in total, the connection made in the mind of the viewer/dreamer/thinker/sculpter/writer/musician/programmer/singer/orator/mathematician/reader/dancer/cook/whatever, is the essential thing. That indeed, it takes a person to make art. When I made the comparison of what happens in the mind of the viewer as they walk past a window and then past a framed piece of art, I wasn't trying to suggest the making of the painting and the existence of the landscape outside the window are essentially the same. I was suggesting, instead, that what goes on in the mind of the viewer can be essentially the same process and that process can become one of the creation of art. I think the viewer walking past the framed painting, should they fail to think about the painting, fail to consider the thing on the wall beyond the fact that it is several layers of colored acrylics arranged upon a canvas, or perhaps (the viewer being the nightwatcher, more interested in the security of the building than contemplating the aesthetics of the museum's newest acquisition) consider the painting in no different a manner than the water fountain attached to the wall further down the corridor -- demonstrates a process that is not art, in spite of the surroundings that we normally have associated that word with. The viewing of Michaelangelo's DAVID may not inspire the creation of art in the mind of a viewer. The peculiar slanting of setting sun's rays through the branches of a birch tree may inspire a series of images or words or melody in the mind of a witness.

Now the artist who painted the work that the sleepy nightwatcher walked past in my hypothetical museum also went through a process of perception and connection and committed their inspiration to canvas, and, depending upon your feelings about non-representational painting (in case this artist utilized that mode), I think we'd all agree that the process or at least the product of that process is "art." What I believe though, is that art is not some thing produced and displayed like a water fountain on the wall of an art museum. It is a process that continues to happen over and over again, quite differently every time another individual participates in the process. The painting will mean different things for every person who comes upon it, and the art created every time someone makes connections in their own mind on seeing it will be different and unique. We build museums and hang art on their walls, we schedule symphony orchestra performances, we go out to extravagantly produced gourmet dinners, we buy the records of inspired singers and musicians, etc., because we recognize certain artists as being able to most successfully encourage our own creative processes (of appreciation/criticism). Where does the process of one artist's influence of another artist's process end - and the second artist's begin? Wagner's Thus Spake Zarathustra and Nieche's Man and Superman; The poetry of Baudelaire and the many painters influenced in the late 1800's by his misogynistic images of women who created the "Femme Fétale" portraits of the time; the work of today's mathematicians and contemporary composers and writers, like Thomas Pynchon; the list could go on and on: the process of art creation is much more complex than merely discrete works of art, things on walls, scores on paper, recipes. In connection to this, I think of Borges' story of the rewriting of DON QUIXOTE. It is a humorous story of an artist who decides to re-write DON QUIXOTE...word for word...and sign his name to it because "it's all different now! It means something entirely different today!"

Now as to the question of skill. Sorry, Jerry, you are right. My paragraph in that mailing was really confused, and I can't figure out what I was trying to say there. I am not trying to downgrade the skill of an artist who presents percep-



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tions in concrete form. Certainly the work of certain people has become more influential, and is more powerful for the quality of their skills with which they are able to communicate their inspiration. And if communication is important to an artist, as it almost always is, then skill is a powerful determining factor in their "success" as artists. I would say that though skill is not the central element in art (the inspiration, or original connections are that), it is indispensable for its communication, and perhaps too, for the ability to extend and refine one's art.

Debbie, you mentioned feeling that that perhaps the dividing line between some of our definitions has to do with whether we call ourselves creative artists or not. I don't know...a lot of what I have been talking about comes from my perception of myself as what you would call a critic. That is, I am recalling my feelings as I read a book and was making critical judgements on its structure, thematic patterns, author's philosophy, etc., and would drift into my own thoughts connecting what I'd read to other things I'd read or heard or seen, ...and somehow come out with an idea for a drawing. The distinction between "critic" and "artist" is very vague for me: I tend to think of a critic as ideally being another sort of artist.

And then there is the general complaint from many of you (Debbie, David, Denys) is that my definition of art is too wide, too general. (Debbie:) "...if you call all connections with the outside world art, you lose the value of the word." (Denys:) "My most frequent reaction...is to wonder if there is any distinction in your mind between this "art" and the general thought process of sentience, of self-consciousness." ...Well, I'd certainly agree that my definition is a little broader than most people's. I wonder if this doesn't hook into what you were reaching for, Debbie, in talking about the difference between people who define themselves as creative artists and those who do not. Many times I've noticed that persons with very strong orientations toward certain political, philosophical or ideological positions, tend to define their lives and in fact the patterns of existence in terms of their orientation. A feminist view of the world holds that the basic motives in all contemporary cultures is the sexist relationship of human beings. Marxist analysis of everything. Ecological diagrams of climax forests, urban jungles and corporate ladders. Reducing existence to words, numbers, animal instincts, religious purpose...wherever the bias of conception happens to lie in one's own life. Perhaps that's what I am doing. Seeing the process of creating art to be so basic to my own life, I tend to translate it into the essence of being human, the basis of (as you wondered, Denys) self-consciousness. I do understand it as being an extremely general phenomenon...but I don't feel that recognizing art's potential to do that necessarily causes any devaluation. On the contrary, I think it's pretty exciting to think of art as a basic human capacity.

Much of the stuff I've just written (thinking as I typed, so please excuse wanderings and incoherencies) comparing the view from the window to computer art/exercises (and as I said in SHORELINE 3, comparing the viewer's reaction to the two, not the painting to the view) is directed at Eli too...I just forgot to mention it at the time. Eli: I think rather than using the term "universal" to make value judgements, I'd rather go back to what I was talking about before, the potential for new ideas/ new art to be sparked by good communicated art. The more ways art touches and touches off an audience, the better it is, I'd say. Maybe that's what you meant by universal? But this would only have bearing on whether or not I thought it was good art or not, It

would have nothing to do with whether I thought that it was art or not.

DEBBIE (PSYCHOBABBLE): Hmmm, yes, TITAN! wonderful book. At ArmadilloCon, and earlier, at at WisCon I got to hear parts of the next book in the Trilogy, MAGICIAN. It is sooo good. And, heh heh heh, Herb has agreed to let us (JANUS) have a copy of the manuscript later this year when he's done so we can pre-review it. Neat?!///Weird how you brought up Joyce's comments on the negative aspects of Catholicism in connection to Christine's comments, and I told my Joyce/Catholic grade school story in the same issue of the apa.///I like your explanation of why you have taken on the title "fuzzy minded" for your own. May I join you?///Your comment to David about young children taking a dislike to people for strange or arbitrary reasons reminds me of when my little sister (now age 16) was about 3 or 4 and was absolutely terrified of the egg lady who delivered every Saturday afternoon. Julie never actually met the egg lady...She was just repulsed and frightened by the idea, apparently, of what an "egg lady" must be. Words strike kids oddly sometime. Like my little brother's conviction that he was a hitch (with a long I)... because he sat in a hitch chair!/// I hope I see you in San Francisco in July. I want to make WesterCon but I don't know if I'll make it. Money you know.

Christine (SPECTACLES): Thanks so much for the excellent in-depth reviews of Horner's and McNeill's books, and thank you Eli (MOSS ON THE NORTH SIDE) for the clipping on computer art. While I was in Austin last week (which since I won't have time for a report here, let me say was fine and lots of fun. Being FGOH makes going to a convention even where you don't know anyone there an incredible lot of fun.) I met someone who designs computer graphics hardware and he gave me a few things, one of which I'm using in Ctein's computer article in the next JANUS. Which is coming out soon. It's to press as I write this. I'd be very interested to find out more, expecially how I could try out some things on or with a computer. Like, what does Jo Schmoie on the street do if they want to play with the graphics end of a computer with minimal background in computer knowledge?

Denys (PELLEROPHON'S RAGE): You asked whether I thought it would be possible to judge the correctness or incorrectness of the photographers' exhibit that was vandalized. I really don't know Denys. I thought about it a long long time after the incident. It hit me hard because I knew the women artists involved on both sides, was very enthusiastic and drawn to the photos, and understood the criticisms of the women who vandalized the exhibit, and I still thought the photos made a valid, important statement after understanding their objections... I just couldn't make a judgement about who was right and who was wrong, and assume there will be all sorts of situations like that for me in the future./// I enjoyed the fanzine reviews and the con report. Thanks.

And thanks to you, Robert for the continuing account of your China trip in IF TODAY IS TUESDAY...; it's really fascinating to read. But printing this zine is going to actually cost me money this time. No free xerox, so this has to be the last page. I'm sorry I can't make more comments. Michael, Elinor, Neil, and Paul I read your zines and enjoyed them (Neil, I love your writing). David the first part of this zine was of course partially to you anyhow and Doug, I'd really like to learn more about sound poetry and be able to join into this discussion. I know absolutely nothing about it; have never been to a reading of the type, I don't think. Basic explanation please, or reference please?? Also,

*Deanne*

must say I thought the cover was great, David as were the graphics in your zine (esp. p. 1 & 6).  
Beautiful work.