

# works & CONVERSATIONS

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HIDDEN  
DIMENSIONS



LUCIDITY  
A CONVERSATION  
WITH IRENE PIJOAN

Photo: Craig Nagasawa

*This interview took place in August of 2004. For reasons not quite clear, I have not wanted to publish it until now. The delay is not important in terms of the content, as will be apparent to readers. I met Irene Pijoan at her home for the first time on the day of our interview. It had been explained that she did not have long to live and I'd felt anxious about doing the interview under the circumstances. But a respected mutual friend had urged me to do the interview, and my brief conversations with Pijoan by phone quickly persuaded me to carry through. Pijoan had been a member of the art faculty at The San Francisco Art Institute for some twenty years. She and her work had become well known in the Bay Area. The few examples of her work shown here fall far short of anything like a representative sampling.*

*Our conversation took place in two parts one afternoon, an experience I will not forget. Pijoan spoke with startling clarity. But what isn't possible to convey in text alone is the quality of her presence and her unique and often unexpected intonation, so eloquent and, at times, so fiercely ironic. I suddenly felt bereft as I left her home that afternoon. Eight days after our interview, Pijoan died.*

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**Richard Whittaker:** With most artists, I'd think there are certain deep connections out of which the work comes. What are the deep roots?

**Irene Pijoan:** I think in my case there are several initial motivations, or roots. It's interesting that you mentioned your marbles. I was raised in houses, environments, that happened to be extraordinarily beautiful, something beyond the normal beauty of a house or a garden. They were not fancy; they were not luxurious at all, but I remember that as a small child, I spent a lot of time alone.

The first place where we lived until I was six was set off by itself in this gigantic garden. There were some very large trees in the garden; a ginkgo was outside my window that was 250 years old. In the front part of the yard there was a stone fountain which had been there for 200 years. The house was roughly 250 years old. The fountain was covered with moss, and a

trickle of water was coming out of it and oozing down onto the ground. There were little flowers overhanging and I would just spend hours, it seemed, looking at this; dipping my hands in it, putting a little bit of water over the edge, not really doing much with it, but realizing that this was strange and special.

What it really was, was a nineteenth-century fervor for antiquity that had appeared at a certain point in the culture in Switzerland. There was also a Roman column in the backyard, a real one. It had just been schlepped in from a Roman temple not very far away. About fifteen years ago, they gave it back—much to my grief. But it was probably the right thing to do.

There were other things like that, mysterious things, an orangerie, which was a place in the colder climates where people grew oranges in pots. That was tucked away in the hillside which nobody had seen for years until I thrashed my way through the thickets and discovered these rooms. It was really the most beautiful, mysterious, strange, hidden, magical thing.

So that just gives you an example. This was up until I was six.

Then we moved to the mountains in a little Alpine village. You see, all this was in Switzerland. We lived in a rented apartment in a large chalet in the midst of that little village of only two or three hundred people. Across the way, a huge valley, there was a view. On the other side were big mountains. These big mountains didn't really seem all that far off. They were beautiful, and yet I was unhappy being there.

I really didn't want to be in this landscape, but I just had to say, Damn! this is beautiful! I don't even like it, but it really is beautiful! I had to recognize the difference there.

**RW:** That's interesting, being aware of that.

**IP:** My father was a very prominent art historian, a major figure of his time—Spanish. So maybe now I will enter the Freudian part of it; I was born when he was seventy-five years old. My mother was forty-four. They met, they conceived this child out of some sort of passionate love, and my father then went on to continue with his work. Men like that never cease working.

He had no propensity toward fathering. He was old and he was sick; he had diabetes and he needed constant tending. So mother tended to him, and there was a woman who came by when we lived in the first house who would cook and clean and take care of me. She was sort of the real mother in a way, but she

did not move to the mountains with us. So I was bereft, and very isolated, very lonely.

Loneliness is a part of my fundamental, what?... temperament, trauma, or whatever you want to call it, because my father didn't know how to take care of me; he had no interest really. My mother was busy with him. She was loving, but she was putting out all that she could already. My father was broadly considered to be, quote, a genius. Out in the living room, as you can see, the extent of his oeuvre is staggering.

So here was this guy who was supposed to be a genius, and when it came time for me to develop, I was skipped over. I dropped out of school at sixteen and spent four years on the street, mainlining drugs—that's a whole story in itself—feeling completely overwhelmed, like I could never, ever compete, and naturally wanting to equal his achievement somehow. That weighed on me tremendously in my development as an artist. In anything I wanted to do, that would have been held up as a point of comparison; and that was unmatched.

So under all of this abandonment, sorrow, heavy-duty rebellious teen-age response, when it came to patching myself back together, I realized this fucking weight is there, and how am I going to proceed?

I think that, as a result, I started making art—a lot out of fear, out of pain and sorrow, out of anguish. It dovetailed very much with the Abstract Expressionist kind of *stürm und drang* of the time. You know, “go within and dig out this stuff.”

**RW:** You were still living in the house looking across at the mountains when you were in high school?

**IP:** We moved out from the mountains after my dad died. You see, we were supposed to have been there for his health. So we moved down briefly to an apartment in Lausanne, and it was just a horrible scene being there alone with my mom. I was just starting what you're calling “high school.” In Switzerland you start when you're ten. When you're ten, they examine you and they track you. There is a sense that it's for life. If you screw up this examination, that's it! You're going to push a broom somewhere.

The constrictions and conformism of that society were overwhelming to me. I just could not deal with feeling like I was on tracks. I was a girl from, on my mother's side, a high bourgeois family. There were expectations; I was considered “bright.” I was supposed to be a doctor or something, you know.

“I don't consider myself a Christian. I have had a Buddhist practice for twenty-some years, and that's been much more fruitful for me. But just the utter sense of spirituality that's in these cathedrals! Or even in the little churches, little country churches, Romanesque, with a ceiling painted with stars; those things are amazing!”

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**RW:** Right. So it was a very difficult time and somewhere you got involved in drugs.

**IP:** I started when I was twelve. I was just out there. My mom and I fought every day, and that's all we did. I fought against the school. I wanted to demarcate myself from that society. It was the sixties. It was the time, anyway, to do that. It felt like I was in a cark, in a prison of expectations. School was very rigorous: French, Latin, a little English, a lot of German, math. I mean, this was not messing around. When you graduated, you were at the level of two years of college here in the U.S.

I fought it every day, and I looked for the baddest people in town. They could be found in bars, and I just hung with them, much to my mother's despair. Then one thing led to another. But this is more the story of my life, than of my art...

**RW:** Yes. You said that you turned to art out of fear, and as a way to help yourself, but had you had any experience with drawing or painting, or looking at art that might have been an antecedent? Of course, your



*CHURCH AND STATE* 1985, DETAIL, 64" X 70" PASTEL, DISTEMPER ON WOOD

father was an art historian.

**IP:** Yes. So images were around the house all the time. We had an El Greco for awhile that hung around. In the living room, you may have seen it, there's a little portrait that's basically two thousand years old. It's beautiful, very moving; and I think that thing influenced me a lot. It's why I absolutely insisted to have it later on.

**RW:** You looked at that a lot as a child?

**IP:** I looked at it. It fell into my eyes, and into my heart. It was so mysterious; the big eyes looking back at me. I didn't really have the conception of time, that the thing had come from Greco-Roman Egypt. The Faiyum portrait somehow stayed in the family.

**RW:** So that portrait, it was from Egypt?

**IP:** Yes. Greco-Roman Egypt. It came from that period when the Romans invaded Egypt. The Romans came and brought along this whole multi-cultural crowd of workmen they had helping them. There were Greek painters among them who had been trained in the Greek style of encaustic painting with wax.

At that time in Egypt there were also some Jews, some Copts, people from all over the place. So it was a very interesting time there. The Egyptian art had always been extremely stylized, but what the Romans brought was the naturalistic style. They would paint these people from life, just their faces on little wooden tablets like that. They would bury them in Egyptian sarcophagi, these very hieratic boxes, and on them,

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they placed the portrait. It’s very recognizable; I mean, they’re real people. It’s just staggering.

RW: That reminds me of Etruscan art.

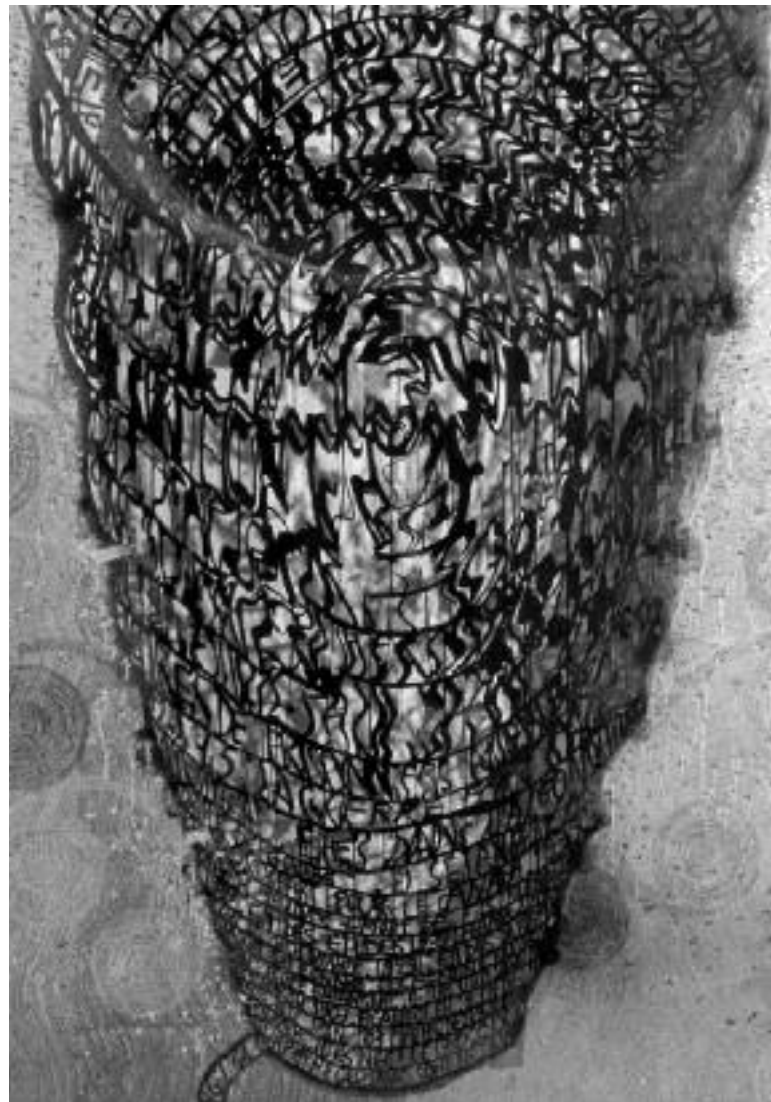
IP: Yes. The Etruscan is a little more stylized, but the Etruscan has some similar feeling of that. It’s intense.

I don’t know if I ever thought about it when I was a little kid. I met this little portrait going up the stairs everyday. It was hanging in the outside hallway, if you can imagine. It just looked back at me, and it was just mysterious—again, mysterious and powerful.

I saw a man one time when I was coming back from school. I was five or six. He was stepping out of a bakery, with the bread under his arm, and he turned back to look at the baker. He had the loveliest look, and it was just like the Roman portrait! I went, holy shit! I was so excited by this! I ran home, but there was nothing to say. What could I say? I felt like I had seen an apparition.

RW: Seeing a stranger’s face so many years ago and this is with you today! There’s something sort of extraordinary about that, isn’t there? Art, what is it? There’s another world that art history can’t address.

IP: Yes, that’s very nice the way you couched that. Of course, with my father an art historian and my mother trying to get us some holidays as she was able—because she had to do everything—she would load us into this old Peugeot, and we would go. We went a couple of times to southern France, to the land of



*COLUMN TO HIVE 1997, DETAIL, 130" X 80"*  
GOUACHE ON PAPER WITH CUT-OUTS

Matisse and Picasso—Picasso who, by the way, was a friend of my father’s. They were the same vintage in Barcelona. There was also Dali and all manner of poets that made a gigantic difference in establishing Catalonia as a real culture—re-establishing it—the language, institutions, all that.

Anyway we went down to southern France; that was one thing, and one time we went down to Brittany. Crossing on the way to Brittany and Switzerland you can go fairly easily to these fields of menhirs...

RW: I don’t know what that is.

IP: Menhir. That’s one of those great big stones dug into the ground.

RW: Like dolmans?

IP: Dolmans are their cousins, the ones with the table-tops on them, kind of. Menhirs are just stones sticking up, eight to ten feet high. There are rows of them planted in lines, and nobody really knows why they are there. My father was endlessly fascinated by these Druidic things and why are they there? They are so powerful and, again, so mysterious.

We would stop at those. We would stop at every cathedral, every castle, every chateau that had some crazy-ass architecture, and at museums. I would just go, "Oh no. Not another one!" But in point of fact, all this dragging around to all these places really did form, if not a sensibility, at least a love for these things. And now, if I'm in Europe and I see a cathedral or a museum, I have to go in. Museums are actually places of solace to me; they're like home, in a way, as are cathedrals, which are places of spiritual experience.

I don't consider myself a Christian. I have had a Buddhist practice for twenty some years, and that's been much more fruitful for me. But just the utter sense of spirituality that's in these cathedrals! Or even in the little churches, little country churches, Romanesque, with a ceiling painted with stars; those things are amazing!

So that was one more art experience that was forced on me, but ended up being very good. Another one was when I was fifteen. I was so out-of-hand, and so loaded with LSD and so forth, that my mom didn't know what to do. Out of desperation, she said, "we're going away this week-end." She lugged a friend with her into the car lest I try to jump out of the car, I suppose. We drove to Venice. It was winter.

I had never seen Venice, and somehow I didn't really know what Venice was. I didn't know what to expect. So we get there. We take the vaporetto. There's a fog over the city because there are all these fumaroles that come off the water there. Buildings are just kind of emerging out of the air. You can't even see the end of the canal, and God! This can't be real! I've dropped acid again! This is just too amazing, too extraordinary!

I don't really remember the museums there, just walking in these empty side streets with the canals, hearing the steps reverberate and being lost. That was unforgettable. It was a vision. And then on the way back we stopped in Padova. Have you been there?

RW: No. I've been to Venice, but not Padova.

IP: Padova is in the Veneto. It's close to Venice. We went there. It's a modest town, although it has, as virtually all northern Italian towns have, just treasures in there. But the only thing that my mother knew about was this Travertine Chapel painted by Giotto. This is a smallish chapel which is, gosh, it's probably about fifty feet long or so. It's in a little park. Outside, it doesn't look like anything fancy, but you walk in and it's painted from floor to ceiling—including all the nave and everything!—with these frescoes by Giotto.

I mean to tell you, the extent of the loving endeavor, the color, the fullness of it, the fact that it was painted directly on a wall; the fact that the paint is the material surface—by the process of lime fresco, the paint has become part of the wall itself.

There was something about it that really hit me. That was like paint at that level of Venice's fog. It was just *whoooo!* Man! Here's somebody who went all out! And look at that!

RW: It was important to your mother that you see these places.

IP: It must have been. I think that she, well, she carried art. She didn't write about it like my father did, but she was an artist at heart. She painted and drew, but was really trained as a musician and a bit of a dancer, and she taught. But she was completely enthralled by beauty. She would sit around and she would go, "but why is the sky green? Look now, it's turned lemon yellow!"

She loved places with views. She had to live on Lake Geneva. She had to see her bloody lake!, to look at the color changing on it, minute by minute; to go swimming in it like an otter as far into fall as November when it was practically freezing out! She just had to go into this silken water and look at the reflections. She would walk around and say, "Why beauty? Why are things beautiful? I just don't understand." It's one of these questions that can't be answered, but she just kept asking.

RW: Fascinating. You must feel that you carry that from your mother, certainly you would. We carry our fathers, our mothers, regardless.

IP: Right. I feel like I have a stellar set of parents. They did not take good care of me. They did love me madly, but they didn't love me well. So I got the love, but I didn't get the proper caring. As a result, I tried to

FRAGMENT 87 1987, DETAIL,  
11" X 6" X 6" OIL, ENCAUSTIC ON  
CONCRETE CURB FRAGMENT

“And I really think that at the foundation of art is this need to make, to be physical; to have that connection between the mind and the body. That’s what it is, really.”

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patch myself together for the next twenty years. I feel like I carry this incredible heritage. That’s why it pisses me so much off that I’m going to die here at fifty. I have so much more to give. But you know, we’re beyond that now. Now I can barely get up. I don’t have a choice anymore. [silence]

The other thing is that it was also extremely nineteenth century. When I came to this country, I mean, it was a shock!

**RW:** Where did you come to? California, New York?

**IP:** I came to Sacramento. Yes. Because I was still timorous.

**RW:** Were you on your own? Alone?

**IP:** Yes. I was out of school for four years. I dropped out at sixteen. I hung out, traveled, had bad boyfriends, did and dealt drugs, drank a lot, ruined my body. Gave myself hepatitis which is probably a major contributor in this cancer right now.

I kind of ran around over there, and I ran into this American woman who was originally from Sacramento. She was a bit of a nut. She was on SSI. I ran into her on the road in Spain. I hardly spoke English.



She didn’t really speak any French, but we took after each other, and we traveled together.

She taught me a lot, like she turned me on to books and feminism, major enlightening experiences, bulbs going on in my head! I hadn’t thought of myself as a woman; then I could really try to cut through that. There were other books on humanistic psychology that also set a framework for my issues, and really helped. And all this came from America for the most part, or from an Angloform culture.

I had always felt a great kinship for the Angloform culture because I’d been sent to England when I was young, to camp. I just loved the English scene, and especially the swear words! Ninety percent of what I knew—since I was a bad girl, you know—ninety percent of what I knew in English was swear words.

Anyway, she brought me to the point that I might want to go back to school, but I couldn’t go back to school in Switzerland because, like I said, once you dropped out of your track, you were just in free-fall.

**RW:** That path was foreclosed.

**IP:** Foreclosed. So she said, well, there are Junior Colleges over there. It might possibly be that you could get admitted to one of those on the basis of what you know at sixteen. Well, I knew a



shit-load for a sixteen year old!—compared to an American who's eighteen, you know?

So I got in. It was American River College in Sacramento. I was too afraid to go to LA or San Francisco. I was a country bumpkin, really. I mean, is all this relevant?

RW: Does talking about these things bother you?

IP: No, but I'm not talking about art.

RW: Well, talking with artists about their lives and experience seems important, too.

IP: Well, that's good. When you say the word "experience" that certainly ignites a very, very important approach in my art.

RW: But please stop, or interrupt if things are not going... I'm not here to put you through anything you're not happy with.

IP: No. I should sit up more. [adjusts her position]

RW: I was wondering about the first time you picked up a brush or a pen or pencil and said to yourself, "I'm going to do a painting, or a drawing." Was there a moment you remember of doing that?

IP: No, not really. I was given those things as a child and I used them; and in retrospect, I think rather well. Art education at school was very minimal and nobody was trying to make me be an artist. The whole of this preamble is trying to lead up to the point where something went "click."

RW: And that moment came?

IP: Yes. It went click after I went to junior college for a year. I took all sorts of other fun and wonderful classes, and had a passionate, delightful, ravenous time availing myself of what was available, mostly the liberal things. Anthropology I remember, fascinated me. Poly Sci was very interesting. Psychology. I mentioned earlier that psychology had been the first turn out of the dark.

RW: You mentioned humanistic psychology.

IP: Yes. Quite a lot of it: Perls, Frankl, Rogers, you

know. People of that era that were happening out here. Esalen, and so forth. And people had tried to send me to shrinks. I did have a relationship with a shrink for a couple of years after I spent six weeks in the loony bin. The shrink was great, because he held my hand and prevented me from killing myself.

He was a support system; it wasn't really a standard psychotherapeutic relationship because they were all trained as Freudians. These Freudians are useless, man. Anyway, they're useless to teenagers.

RW: Did you happen to cross paths with any Jungians?

IP: No. It was Freudians. They sat there on one side of the desk and you sat on the other. They wouldn't utter a word, and you would say, "What am I doing here? What am I supposed to do?" Well, nobody bothered to explain.

So anyway two days after my twentieth birthday, I got to Sacramento with my little suitcases and no idea of what was going to happen next. I stayed at the youth hostel for awhile, because that's what they have in Europe. Then I got myself a bad boyfriend in short order, very bad, maybe the worst one I'd ever had. He was a paranoid schizophrenic.

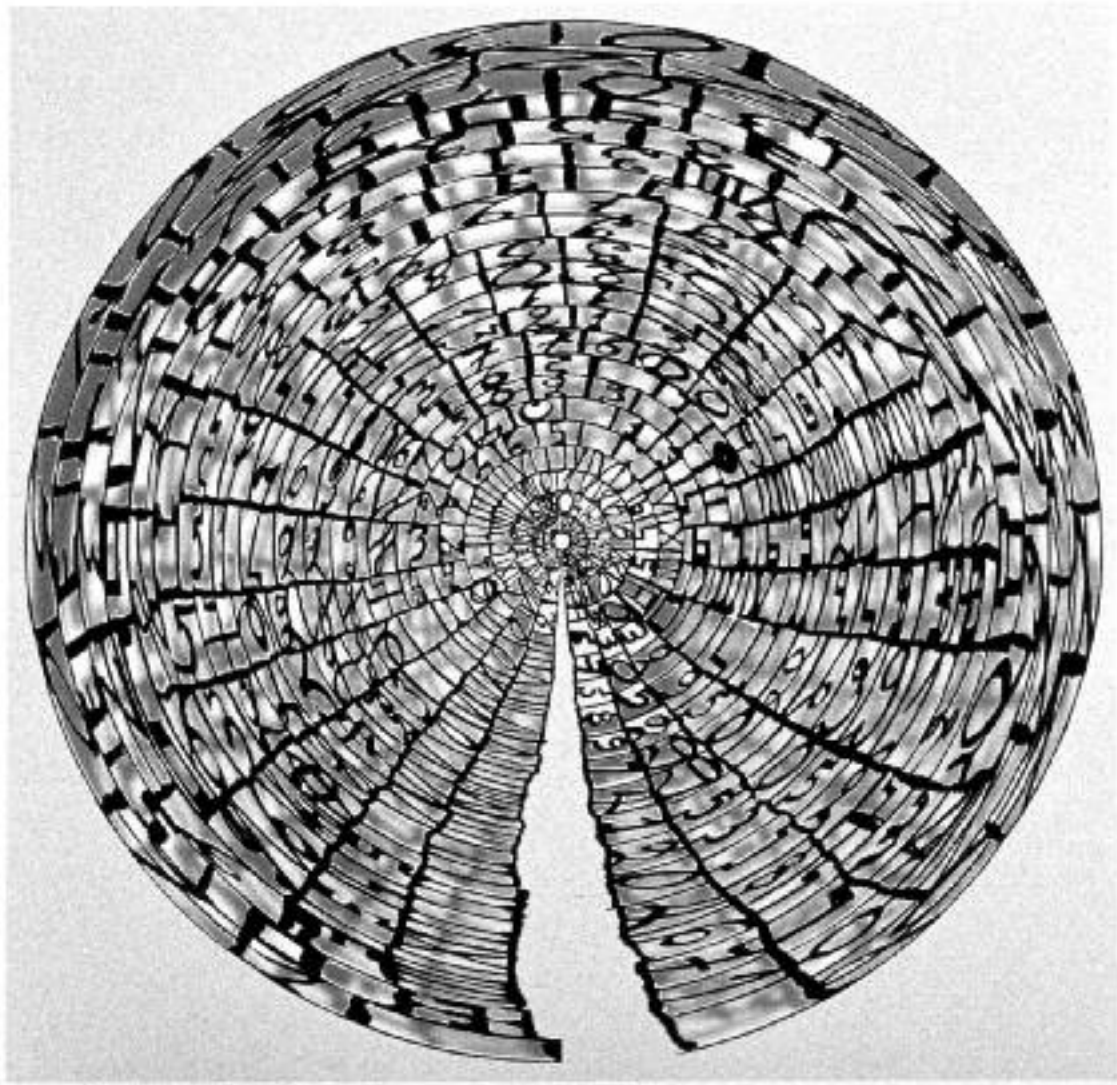
Eventually I found a little room with two very straight and nifty girls who were engaged to be married. They were having their preparations. I was thinking, "Jesus man, this is the moon! I don't understand where I am."

These people were living different lives from me. Everything was different, but I persisted. I took all these classes. They had a rather lively little art department. In particular, there was a ceramics teacher named Temako, a Japanese-American who had been interred and carried wounds from that. He and I just hit it off. The connection with him was so nice, even though ceramics wasn't my cup of...

Then after a year, I went to Sacramento State. At Sac State there was also a good art department at that time in the seventies. There was Bill Allen, Carlos Villa, Oliver Jackson, Joan Moment, the lone woman in the joint.

RW: Was Robert Brady there?

IP: Brady was just barely starting. He's still my buddy. I took classes from Brady, Annenberg, who I adored, —there was a good thing going on.



*FIBONACCI SERIES #5 2001, 11" X 11" GOUACHE ON PAPER WITH CUT-OUTS*

There was also a sculpture lab located to the side of campus in an old hanger. That place was vast and underutilized. Once I realized that psychology wasn't going to be it for me—because I started ascertaining that psychologists were either just as crazy as I was, or they were scientists doing experimental psych—I thought, this is so boring. They're trying to make points that really are common sense.

So that's when the click went on. I just thought, "Well, that's it! There's nothing else." I'd had the idea that I was going to make a difference for the world; that psych was good for that, and I was going to do it one person at a time. I really believed that if you changed one part of the kaleidoscope, then all of the pieces shift a little.

Anyway, I just said, "I can't deal with this." Then I went to the art department and made art all of the time. I needed to make sculpture more than painting. I

needed the physical thing. I needed that corporeal confrontation between the body and the thing that comes to represent, in a sense, the body.

I was influenced by Eva Hesse, so there were these large abstract structures, or semi-abstract, and very much about materials. I was using plaster, because by then I realized, oooh, Manual Neri! I saw a show of his at the Oakland Museum and it was phew! All of his plasters, his figures, I could completely relate to it.

I might add, there is something classical in his work in which I may have recognized Europe, because, quite frankly, I just could not get the smallest grip on what was happening with Funk Art, or, for that matter, Pop Art, or any kind of irony. I seemed to lack that thoroughly. It grieved me that I could not enter that dialogue, because that was the cool dialogue.

RW: It sounds like something saved you from wasting

your time just going down a path for the sake of fashion. That's not so easy for a lot of people.

IP: No, I tried. I actually went down these paths many times.

RW: What happened?

IP: What happened is that it sort of dead-ended, but it taught me stuff. I believe in learning by osmosis. I believe in people making, as I've sometimes seen students do, making Francis Bacons for years—yet you know that they have more in them. You just have to hold their hands and wait it out.

Anyway, there was something that was just so highly satisfying in making these big sculptures, and some little ones too, that were very private, very intimate. The place was open twenty four hours, and man, I would just go there in the evening and stay until three a.m.

RW: You were working in plaster and ceramics, too?

IP: I wasn't working in ceramics anymore because I wasn't in a ceramic lab. My pieces were mixed media. I principally used plaster on top of something. There's something regurgitative about me. It's something that's almost scatological. I almost eat and shit, and play with my shit.

RW: I've never heard an artist say that to me. You know, that's a classic Freudian analysis of what art is.

IP: Yes.

RW: Do you think that's why you're putting it that way?

IP: No. I think I just tend to want to handle things, and handle things until I own them. So mixing plaster; getting all covered with plaster; making these lath structures—some cheese cloth would be applied to that and then the plaster applied to that. A piece might be about eight feet high by eight feet long and very flimsy and funky and leaning on sticks and not made to last. Then on top of this structure that has a very physical presence, then painting a space like a room that has perspective that would then engage us back into the space of painting and the space of illusion. So trying to have both the illusionary space, where a narrative can

evolve, and the physical thing that's in the room with the viewer, confronting the viewer.

RW: Would you be willing to say, if I were to put it a little differently, that touching the material, having your hands in it, feeds something...

IP: Yes.

RW: This direct contact, it feeds something...

IP: Yes. Yes. It does. And I really think that at the foundation of art is this need to make, to be physical; to have that connection between the mind and the body. That's what it is, really.

So there was a flurry of work that happened in this short period of time. My friend David Stone from the Acme Gallery, a wacky, artist-run gallery which was a complete blast where we would just have fun and think we were the coolest kids in town, David said, "I'm only going to keep the gallery for another month. Do you want it?" And I said, okay. So in one month, I did a slew of work like you wouldn't believe! It made a beautiful show, and damn if it wasn't even reviewed in the paper! I was a junior.

So right there, all of the sudden, there was a teeny bit of E-G-O poking in; suddenly I realized, "Oh shit, I can do this!" I could compete with you know who.

RW: I'm not sure what you mean.

IP: My dad, I guess. Actually it was very, very empowering. At the same time, it was very disempowering, because, as you know, and as I've gradually come to absolutely believe and reckon with the fact— for the artist, the needs of the work, the needs of the self, the needs of the lived growth involved, these are perpetually in conflict with the needs of the marketplace, the expectations of success, the building of a career, the strictures of money and basically the world in general, the worldly world.

That conflict is the central paradox of the position of the artist, and just destroys most artists and most art. There are a few who, I would say, are able to just blithely shine us on and continue their imaginative journey without too much interruption. These people are either heroically strong somehow, or gifted with such a good sense of security that it doesn't matter, or they are so insane that it doesn't matter to them.

But I am not one of those three kinds. What I am,

is one who has struggled. Part of the struggle comes from the price paid inside, of the family, that wants to crush the ego before it does anything.

You're supposed to be good, be perfect and blah, blah, blah... and just hide basically. "Be a good girl and don't expect anything; never toot your own horn." I've done this to a large degree, and it's cost me; it's cost a good bit; it's cost me a lot.

Because, America! If you don't toot your own horn, you're submarined. I think it took me to about the age of forty-five to realize that it wasn't such a big deal; to where my relationship with my ego became conscious enough that I could negotiate in and around it, and to have some lucidity around it.

It still didn't get me out of the woods, because we internalize a voice in our heads that is never ceasing, I will say "we"—maybe I should say "I"—but I suspect strongly that many, many, many other artists have that, that fucking voice, the voice of your dealer, the voice of your greater ambitions. I mean every artist has a wild dream to have a big retrospective at New York MOMA. So you always try to see if you can point your boat in that direction and second guess what it is that could be the winning ticket. You sit there in front of your work and you're making micro-decisions every moment.

These micro-decisions add up to a work, and this work is either quote, authentic, or not. The word "authentic" has a big, bad rep because of post-modernism, and I'm quickly understanding why.

At the same time, the artist facing the work has to recognize and decide and see whether this work really tells the truth about him or herself; not the truth with a big T; the truth with a little t; the truth of today; the truth of now; the truth that makes a real account of a situation. Or some other, larger truth in which the painting starts to glow in the way that happens beyond intentions, and which is really what we would be looking for.

What makes the painting really happen is when we can say, "I planned this and this has happened." You just go someplace, following something, and you get someplace like that.

The place where you go is not the place you had anticipated. The place where you go is the place where you may have had the courage to let yourself go to. In other words, it's not a person doing the creating. What it is, is a person who is scanning experience, and positing experience on the artwork, such as it is. This experience comes to us from who knows where?

"At the same time, the artist, facing the work has to recognize and decide and see whether this work really tells the truth about him or herself; not the truth with a big T; the truth with a little t; the truth of today; the truth of now; the truth that makes a real account of a situation."

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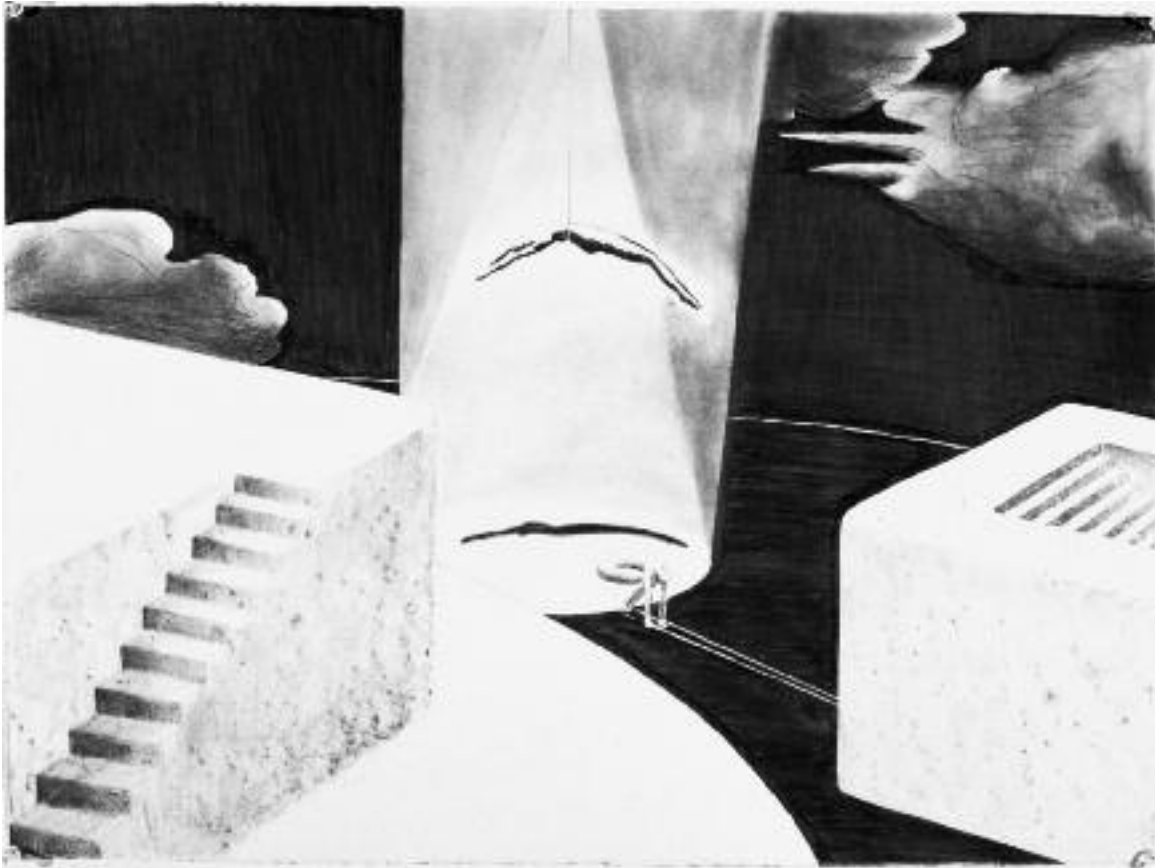
Because, as you know, life is ungraspable. The privilege of being able to manifest, is ungraspability. It's an amazing privilege. To have the courage to go there is another thing again. So I don't know how I got here. Ask me something.

**RW:** I believe a lot of artists will recognize what you're talking about. Have you read any of Agnes Martin's writings?

**IP:** I love her writing and her work, and what she stands for. However, she's really such a purist and a modernist, and in that sense, it's a bit too much for me, really. I don't consider my work, as it stands right now, to be modernist work, or to want to espouse a line of purity like that. For instance, I've changed styles, I don't know how many times. It has cost me a lot, but I am very happy for it, because it was fun, man! And it was agonizing, because I knew I was going to take a hit, career-wise.

**RW:** I wonder about those moments in your career where you changed something. How that was for you?

**IP:** Well, my work kind of happened in reaction to



UNTITLED 1978, 22" X 30" GRAPHITE ON PAPER

the previous body of work. I started out with these big sculptures. I got into grad school at UC Davis which, at that time, was Arneson, De Forest, Thiebaud, Neri, and Cornelia Schultz—once again, the lone woman. All these people had big reputations. They were the leading shock troops of Bay Area Funk, and I didn't understand a thing about their work—Arneson's work, Roy's work, even Thiebaud's work, in a way. The only one I really understood was Manual, and we hit it off.

It didn't matter that I didn't understand these people, I took them anyway. I earned their respect somehow, in an oblique way. I had virtually no training in 2D. I precipitated myself on what I wanted to do. I had virtually no training in art history. I found myself in high company, tons of stress—graduate school. You don't piss or shit for the first two years. Then this emotional event happened. I lost a close relative in Switzerland, and I responded to this; I just really looked inside.

When you have a highly emotional and painful experience like this, it's easy to pinpoint what's going on, because it's just right there in your face.

So that was good. I could tell what I did not want

to do. I started to make a structure in wood that was whittled and paper maiché. It was a long, elaborately made boat, but it didn't quite fit the bill. So I started making drawings. That was the only thing that did. These drawings were in 6B pencils on BFK Reeves. They all used the same compositional format. Two rings, concentric, in a circus, some figures in the ring, things flying off in space, off of trapezes, or doing unexplainable rituals down on the floor; and using the basic geometric elements, the square, the circle, the triangle, to create various things.

The upshot was that these drawings were not drawn very well, since I didn't know how to draw. But we talked about looking into the unknown; they each contained a silence. They were narrative, but I could not tell you what the narrative was about. Yet, it was precise. I would spend days working out where things were going to be. It was a pretty amazing experience of spending days using your intuition and not much else; working these relationships out, and not out of any received ideas; then drawing them in, shittily. There were about a dozen of those.

At the same time I did this huge sculptural installa-



*KICK COUNT CHART DETAIL 1995, 156" X 240" GOUACHE ON PAPER WITH CUT-OUTS*

tion with my friend Liz Jennings, these kind of monster things. Actually, they were kind of like me. There was plaster, burlap, there were chairs piled up underneath to make a structure. It was nutty. We worked on this all night long for weeks. So I was on these two different tracks at the same time, really different. Okay, so I did that, and somehow I was sure I was going to get flunked. But I didn't get flunked; I got a scholarship to Skowhegan, and I got a full scholarship for the rest of grad school.

RW: That's something!

IP: Yes. So all of the sudden I became sort of the little, you know, somebody over there. It pissed everybody else off, of course.

RW: Do you think their response to that body of work was because it was authentic?

IP: They saw that! And what I'll always be grateful to

them for, is that they didn't penalize me for marching across media, for going into a media [drawing] I had not been admitted in, and had never done before. And they respected me as a woman, which is another thing, you know. So I have an everlasting gratitude to these people.

RW: The art faculty at UC Davis...

IP: Yes. So then I went to Skowhegan. I started making little self-portraits. They were so intimate. I didn't really need to talk to anyone, even though I had a great time at Skowhegan. Great summer sex, and all of that. And again, they saw the work; they saw its strength, even though it was so modest, the double portraits.

One style was realistic and the other one was a metaphor. They functioned as equivalents. This side, water oozing down a wall, it could be tears or not; and the other side, a little lady holding a towel in a Renaissance kind of setting. The lady's face was paint-

ed in oil, which I had never touched before.

It was a great liberatory experience, just to throw in all these styles. It was just a little before the “New Image” thing. Remember the new image painters, Lois Lane and all these people?

RW: I can’t say I do.

IP: What they did was called “bad painting” also. They brought image back into the language. It had been thrown away by abstraction. Then it had been pulled in a different direction by Pop. Theirs was much more personal. So it was opening up that possibility. Because “personal” was a fucking dirty word, I mean.

RW: Right.

IP: So it was really quite a gesture of liberation moving from the idea of “a style,” the idea of a person adhering to their hard-earned signature. Anyway, I was still going through grad school. Then I started making these little pieces in encaustic. There’s one on the door. Go ahead and take a look at that.

RW: I’ve never seen encaustic done like this, with this three dimensional surface.

IP: It’s a technique I invented. I studied about encaustic through all the books in the seventeenth century. There was not much written about it. The little Faiyum portrait was in my mind all along, all the Faiyum portraits.

RW: That was 2000-year-old one?

IP: Yes. It’s the one in my living room. It’s a home place that I went to; the idea of self-portraiture that entered in Skowhegan and continued with these things. It combined two styles, the hyper-real style of the raised figure, and then the backgrounds that could be painted loosely. I wanted the looseness confronted with the tightness.

Actually it’s always been a strategy that I’ve used to some degree. So I made these things! And they were, oh, they were nice! People started buying them. This was in grad school, my last year, 1979-80. People liked them. People came to the studio and wanted to show them. I was kind of like this little island out there in Davis.

[A little material was lost here. Pijoan began talking

about envy, others for her, and her own feelings of envy of other artists.]

IP: ... I was getting sick of that: the envy, jealousy, wanting more success. “I think my paintings are just as good as hers, but hers sell for \$30,000 blah blah blah...” Okay, let’s not go there. Maybe some other time.

RW: Enough said. [laughs]

IP: So I made those. I showed them with Inez Storer at Stinson Beach or wherever it was that she had that gallery. Do you know who she is?

RW: The name rings a bell, but I don’t know why.

IP: As if it matters. Then I got a scholarship to be an artist in residence at the University of Georgia on a Ford Foundation fellowship. The stipend was just enough to live on in flea-ridden Georgia.

RW: Gosh! Georgia!?

IP: Georgia was a revelation, man! Georgia was just—oohhhh, goshhh. Now I understand what they mean by The South. I still know, I’m sure, only the quarter of it, but that was really something! Especially from the point of view of being a woman. It was very interesting because the faculty paid a lot of lip service to how much they respected my work and so forth, but then when it came to actually being buddies, hanging out, they were gone.

But the University of Georgia had a summer program in Cortona in Italy. They sent me there to teach, so I had three months of teaching in Cortona. The hill towns. It was really cool because I taught in this little chapel that had disappearing frescos in it; it was old. There is no development there, so this was a gym. They had put the gym in a chapel with frescos. It was empty during the summer, so it was my classroom!—with a bunch of girls from the south with their hair-curlers and god knows what else.

I got a lot out of the teaching there and, of course, tons out of Italy which I had already traveled two or three times. But just taking advantage of tours—it was loathsome to be carted around in a bus, but once you were there, phew! There was always some unbelievable marvel to see, and you were filled with it! The beauty of Tuscan light. The utter dream of Tuscany. It’s



UNTITLED 1995, DETAIL, 30" X 22" GOUACHE ON PAPER WITH CUT-OUTS

like a dream, floating, floating... okay, I'm digressing.

So when I was in Georgia, I made more of these encaustic things and I became more interested. I went from self-portraiture to portraiture. I worked in that series and had another show, this time at Paule Anglim in San Francisco.

Then I went to another fellowship, an artist-in-residency in Roswell, New Mexico. It was quite well-known because they support you for a year. They give you a house, a studio, a stipend and, at the time, it paid for your materials. Six other artists in the middle of nowhere.

**RW:** I've been through there a couple of times, the flying saucer capitol.

**IP:** [laughs] Okay. Yes. The isolation is almost complete. Which would help one concentrate, but would also drive one slightly out of their gourd, a single woman, blah blah.

So I continued making my relief things, but I changed them. I made them on more 3-D surfaces. They were round, or concave or convex forms. I would put the figure on there. They were very beauti-

ful. They were good. Then I realized, shit, I'm going to get pigeon-holed into this thing. Are they going to expect me to make encaustic relief things for the rest of my life? Because it wasn't like now, where you can freely change and so forth.

It's been a long time coming, this moment, a great moment! Back then, changing was like jettisoning everything!

**RW:** Would care to say more about that?

**IP:** Yes—for people like me who have needed to change their imagery in order to grow. My commitment was really to growth; it was to following wherever it was that the art was telling me to go...

I wanted desperately the other stuff, the success, but not so desperately that I was willing to give that up. So there was a great deal of conflict. And that's also partly why, in time, I chose to teach.

I didn't want to be dependent on these gallery checks and their fickleness, and the fickleness of the marketplace. And I knew that I was a born teacher. I knew because my mind is so didactic that it's horrifying.



RW: What do mean it so didactic that it's horrifying. Can you say a little about that?

IP: Oh yes. I can tell you all about it! My mind picks up experience and thinks about it, cogitates, analyzes, puts in categories and prepares to explain it all to the next person! To shed the light! Both my parents were teachers. My father was a university professor; my mom was a little kid teacher. So that's one thing. The other thing is that I'm a control freak! So doing this enables me to try to control the world around me and make it in my image somehow.

RW: This didactic part wants to control, but help, too, I suppose—show people the right way.

IP: Umhuh. But it's also fuckin' Calvinistic! But yes. The didacticism of my mind applies to not just my students, but to my friends, my family and everything around—to the point that now I'm planning my own funeral.

RW: Yes, and with probably so many things, there's the good and the bad, right?

IP: Yes. There's both in me. I have learned to hold back a little bit, but if I look at my stream of thought, through meditation, I see every attempt. It's funny, because my teacher here was actually talking me out, through a meditation, allowing me to let go of that so I could see and receive the world and its perceptions without trying to tweak them until one thought turns into another and another, and pretty soon you're out in Katmandu, you know? I realize that for me it's a very special task, especially, especially at this late date.

See that's the problem with these questions; they are absolutely great, but then I feel like I need to start about two miles behind and explain the whole circumstance I've lived through. It's such a roundabout way of doing things, and I don't see how, in an interview, you would include some of this, but really, it's more of a document.

RW: That's right. I think it's good to think of this as a document, rather than to worry about the rest of it. You have some important things to say, and if they're put in context, so much the better—as long as you're up to it.

IP: Okay. Let me close my eyes... [pauses]

*Didacticism.* I do think it's an endlessly difficult question, not just for artists, but for human beings in general. We need to be able to instruct each other; to guide each other. In order to do that, we base ourselves in our own experience and reframe it; articulate it.

Yet at the same time, you can't get caught in that process. I was saying how I get caught in that process. The only thing that has given me a teeny bit of distance from it is through meditation.

So now I'm going to get on the subject of meditation, okay? but making my way as clearly as I can towards the question you had, which was why did you think that this opening up of all styles for all artists any time now was important? That's what you had asked.

RW: That's right.

IP: Maybe I'll start by answering the question in as simple a way as I can. People's worlds in this era are bombarded by so many different levels and sorts of experience, inner experience, clashing with art, conflating with outer experience and having constantly to try to bring the two into some sort of harmony.

You know, analytical experience has taken a very strong lead in art in the last ten years, maybe fifteen, and that's only a reflection of what's actually happening to us: mobility, different media, different approaches, and so forth. So you have to really commit to an artist and go there with him or her and just try to follow the train of thought through it all. I mostly don't have the patience to do that, but with younger artists and how they work, that's just how it is. To stick to one thing is okay, too.

RW: Is there a connection to be made between the overwhelming amount of information, the overload of stimulation, and not being able to find a quiet mind, if you will? I mean I have my thoughts on that, but...

IP: Yes. And that transitions us perfectly to the subject of meditation. I came to meditation about 1983 out of an inner need that was just very strong, the kind of need for someone to have a garden, or to live in New York. Or the need for somebody to get married and have a big wedding with a dress...

RW: It is something you felt.

IP: Yes. Because I had already practiced without really knowing that this is what it was called. In my hours

in Roswell, in my loneliness, I was already practicing.

When I was only a teenager, I read books about Zen in French; they were turning points for me. So twenty years later, I call up a friend, Cornelia Schultz. I say “What do you do if you want to meditate around here?” She gave me two sources, the Tibetans and the Vipassana folks. I went to the Tibetans a little while, but that went nowhere. So I went to the Vipassana folks, and I hit the jackpot.

**RW:** Is Jack Kornfeld connected with Vipassana?

**IP:** Yes. He’s one of the lead teachers of a strong and growing array of primarily Western teachers who have studied in depth. There is a center based in Spirit Rock in West Marin and also one which is led by Joseph Goldstein based in the woods of Vermont or somewhere in the northeast. There’s also one in Hawaii. There’s a Sangha that’s kind of all over the U.S. now. It’s remarkable that this has expanded so beautifully because it’s based on very definite principles. It’s kind of tweaked for Westerners, but it’s not a watered-down practice; not a lot.

Okay. Let’s go to the practice itself. I could go on about the practice itself for hours, and I would give a dharma talk. I don’t think this is the purview of our time here together. But I’ll try to go as shortly as possible into it.

The practice is of holding up a mirror to the mind and the body. So you sit down, close your eyes. Silence. You pay attention to the breath, sensations in the body, and the emotions, or feelings, that we feel at all times. The breath changes all the time; the sensations change all the time; the emotions or feelings change all of the time; and then the thoughts come and go and change all of the time. So these four levels of experience—there’s another one that’s too rarefied and I won’t talk about it—these really represent all that comes into us.

It’s like automatic function, like the breath. It’s mental function; it’s emotion response; it’s physical response, and you start to see, interestingly, that these functions are kind of articulated with one another, at least at one point in the meditative process, if you go to a certain depth.

Where you go is so interesting and so complex and so rich, that it makes you understand that this process has no end. That this process is a process of discovery, pure research. You don’t get to some place where you’ve conquered it at all. There’s more discov-

ery; there’s more adventure. It’s like an adventure; you’re cast out in the wilderness by yourself in the jungles of Papua New Guinea, you know. Everything takes a different color. Everything changes all the time.

You start noticing these changes. Because... well you think, “the breath; I breath in; I breath out; leave me alone.” But then you really pay attention to it for a period of days, and nothing but it, and you notice all kinds of stuff. One of the things you notice is how the breath, for instance, is connected with emotion, or feeling—a feeling sensed sometimes, things that you can’t really put into words. You may feel a certain way that is just odd; and then thoughts, a thought may come through the mind, trigger an emotion, that will trigger a sensation in the body.

How these things are articulated fascinates me. There is the Cartesian level, the emotive level, the physical level. So that is just fascinating to me—and watching at which point the mind just becomes distracted, constantly, from the task, which is the task of concentration. The mind just focuses on the breath for a minute—maybe thirty seconds, maybe ten—then a thought interjects. And thought, as we know, leads to another thought, leads to another thought, leads to another thought. Pretty soon, you’re in Timbuktu. You’ve completely forgotten where you are and what you’re doing.

**RW:** The didactic process in relation to this inner landscape could be a matter of providing some guidance, some knowledge, right?

**IP:** What it is, is that all of the sudden you have a little experience, You start noticing, “Wow, this is what happens, the breath was here and then these thoughts interjected.” So your mind goes around just trying to frame this, articulate it, and take that home.

**RW:** The mind wants to possess it. And have control.

**IP:** Exactly. So for me there’s been a monkey on my own back in my own practice. Craig [Pijoan’s husband, Craig Nagasawa] doesn’t have that. It’s amazing! Totally amazing.

**RW:** Yes. I have some experience along these lines.

**IP:** Maybe that’s why you make this magazine. It’s not a bad thing because it propels you in the world. It makes you do stuff.

“...experience enters, and then leaves. Actually we don’t have much of a choice of what it is, or even what our response will be. We may have the choice, a little bit, of coming back to attention, having given ourselves this instruction, and trying to hold this; of coming back and letting go of things, and then coming back to the place of beginning. Beginning again, each time, you know?”

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RW: Right. And it has the good and the bad, too.

IP: I think it’s a way of co-opting experience in order to gain control over it. It’s very unfortunate when you’re just trying to be, and let things come in and out—because it is a flow. Something comes in; it leaves. And the process goes on and on.

I guess that was a discovery; and I was able to struggle with that, agonize over that until a point when I just went, “God! This is so idiotic! This is so prevalent! This is so goofy!” and I could laugh about it.

That, and other things from practice, is what gives me a certain distancing and, at the same time, a closeness to experience that made it possible to take what was happening to me with a grain of salt. If it wasn’t for that practice, I don’t think I would be with Craig. I don’t think I would have had a child. I don’t know whether I’d have a career. I mean I’d just be getting

peeled off the ceiling somewhere.

Anyway, I’m just describing to you a tiny example of things that happened. The things that didn’t happen—as I talk to you now about the chatter of the mind—things that didn’t happen, are silence, and a certain emptying out. Those moments are blissful in the extreme. Healing in the extreme. Mysterious and deep. Those are some of the goodies in meditation. They’re amazing goodies. You can’t take those home, because they come, and then they go. Then another wave of something else happens—agitation perhaps, or sleepiness.

So the purpose of meditation is not to attain those states; it is to continue the discovery, the layers, the levels, the strange and beautiful things that appear.

There is a teacher in Thailand, Achann Chah. He said something like “Just be quiet. The mind is like a still forest pond. If you sit there quietly all manner of strange and beautiful animals will come and show themselves.” It’s such a true thing. Yes...

I hate to have to use this word “mystery”—it’s really boring... “numinousness,” to use a Jungian term, the glowing of experience; experience starts to glow. You look at a leaf on a tree and you just see it for the first time; you see light, and color starts to come back into your vision. You had forgotten that it was even there. All kinds of things.

So, how does that relate to my work?

The way that it relates is that it forced, at some point, the radical change from figuration and narrative to a different kind of figuration and narrative that was much more loosely organized. I started to see myself, not as a container or as one who had to present this statement, but more like something with two ends; experience enters, and then leaves.

Actually we don’t have much of a choice of what it is, or even what our response will be. We may have the choice, a little bit, of coming back to attention, having given ourselves this instruction, and trying to hold this; of coming back and letting go of things, and then coming back to the place of beginning. Beginning again, each time, you know?

But for the rest, we think we’re containers, and that experience amasses, that we grow into this big important thing. Mind you, on the brink of death, I’m very sad about the big important thing that I’ve become to myself and to others. I have to leave that behind. It really bums me out, because I feel like I was in a really good place in my life. I was just almost, you know, really getting going, because it [cont. page 49]

took me so long to really get going.

Seeing yourself, though, also as this vessel, as a sieve: there's lots of little holes; water enters the sieve, and it spends but a moment there; then it drips out. It's a lovely image, this sieve. It doesn't hold onto anything. You get to see what happens a little bit. It doesn't just fall straight through; and it's pretty. A sieve is pretty. It has all these holes and these dots and stuff, and it's cute.

From seeing all that, I saw that experience was non-hierarchical.

That is the big thing that I learned: there wasn't any place in my experience, my close inner experience, that really superseded something else. That means that a thought is just as good as a weird shape that just came from God knows where. The thought may have a narrative for describing itself. A shape that comes from anywhere, we don't know, say a structural shape that appears, that things can fit into, and so on. Daily things of daily life. Sensations, Feelings. They get worked through, and you get to describe these with precision and patience.

I use dots a lot in my recent and, not so recent, years. Making a dot is a way of just facing oneself in the center of a moment. You just [gesture] as with a brush! Bing! You make a dot. Then the moment changes, and [gesture] Poing! You make another dot.

So it's just all of these little markings, or trackings. I did a lot of works on paper that worked with that. Anyway, this was tremendously liberating. It was also, once again, tremendously befuddling to my public, whatever tiny amount of it there is.

That's when I realized I could put everything but the kitchen sink in there as long as it real and it's coming out of me right now. Then gradually, sort of more concerted things re-appeared.

When I start cutting through the paper, I have to plan; I have to know where it's going in advance. But I'm always able to avail myself of this method of receiving into a work by just abandoning, putting down my weapons, abandoning the kind of control, and yet being very clearly and precisely answerable to what is happening right now.

So that's what led me to an understanding of—postmodernism is a word that is already out of fashion now—but the whole opening up of the vocabulary and of the field for artmaking today.

I think this idea of being non-hierarchical was

picked up by others, too. Probably in a completely different way. It has been fairly prevalent. I think it's been a major break. So that's why I said I love Agnes Martin. I love her purism and her, what's the word...?

**RW:** One thing she talks about is humility which is an idea that is probably incomprehensible to most people.

**IP:** And I think my seeing really is humility—in the sense that I really have to be brought to my knees to make movement in my work, and I am being brought to my knees now. I have to roll with the punches, and it's really quite a job, but it's a good job.

I'm getting so much wonderful help, and I'm so full of gratitude for that. People who are true friends and have true love.

[Pijoan is overcome with emotion. I turn the tape off. After awhile she wishes to continue.]

I've had a very big battle with humility because, in my background, you weren't supposed to show any ego. My mother had virtually no jewelry. She never wore a spot of make-up. The money that was in the family, on my brother's side, there was a real feeling that you had to make a contribution.

All this is to say that humility was given to me as an "ought to" which is a total drag. You don't get to come by it. Ego was given to me as something I had to win, up against my father. It took me until I was about forty-five years old—I kid you not—to come to the realization that "Fuck it, man!" If I want to go around wearing something on my chest, I shall.

But, at the same time, I deeply believe that building a life on ego is, it's a losing proposition, man. You will never end up where I am now, surrounded by the loving friends I have, if you did that.

**RW:** Are there particular pieces you'd want to say anything about? Maybe some really stand out.

**IP:** Well, out of every body of work there's always one or two where you feel you've really nailed it. I can tell you which ones they are, but I don't think it's very important.

**RW:** Another question would be, and this is a bit redundant, but first of all, would you describe your life of artmaking as a search, a journey? (cont. p. 59)

**IP:** Oh, completely! And it was there (cont. page 64)

from the beginning, a commitment to process. My first commitment was to process, which really is a meditative pursuit, as opposed to product.

Of course, I got tangled because I wanted a product, and artists need a product, not just to sell, but they need it because it reflects their quest. It reflects what they are trying to do. A whole bunch of processes all stuck together is not going to be enough, which is sometimes what students don't understand. But my life, and my work, yes.

**RW:** And if one were to describe it as a search, then what is the search?

**IP:** Well, as I said, there's no end. The search is for discovery. The search is for understanding, or seeing life, the universe, the planet, ourselves, our interactions, our social constructs, and so forth. To see them in a new way; to see them more clearly. In my case it really had to be centered on the inner life, and I know that I'd probably be crucified for that by most of the art world which, by the way, has haughtily shat on my face for the last twenty years.

I've had some very faithful and wonderful people in my trajectory, too, but there just have been some things that really rile me. So, like every artist, I'm subject to bitterness, but I do my very best to maintain perspective about it, and not let it lead me around, because that's the kiss of death. Artists motivated by bitterness—there's just a bad scene. That's going to eat them alive.

**RW:** So much of what you've said is so valuable. There seems to be a lack, in the fashionable thinking, a lack of articulation of the potential value of the kind of search you have spoken about so well. This realm of inner experience, that world is a huge world. There are no maps, really. And the artist is the person who has the privilege, the difficulty, without support or guidance, of finding his or her way in that world.

Theory is all over on the side of the object. It may be very sophisticated, and so obtain authority, but what about this other world?

**IP:** Yes. It's I think true. The writer is the writer and their job is to try to contextualize it in a philosophical context. It's very Cartesian. There are artists out there, for instance, Amy Sillman in New York. She plays

## LETTERS

We got your *works & conversations* #13. I read it with pleasure, as always. I particularly liked the story about Braceros and look forward to seeing Cayuga Park someday. In relation to the other interviews I am constantly reminded of the way that a person's art and his/her life are so closely wrapped. It makes institutional theories of art seem so odd, as though they left out the key component: a car without wheels. Rue Harrison's rendering of the Laocoon plus Bearcat is priceless. The color Robert Brady photographs on the last two pages really make his work live for me, as also the b&w photo on page 5.

—Tom Leddy, San Jose State University

I love your magazine and read every word. The article on Cayuga Park is so moving. I feel I want to go out and hug Mr. Braceros. As I read the article I could feel the love in his work. He makes me very proud to be Filipino.

—Carmen Wolf, San Francisco

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when she paints. She plays. Her playing is full of style that comes from the sixties, but it's also just invention. Really it comes from a very similar place as myself. I don't know what they're writing about her, but that's where her work is.

So much work you look at and you just go, "duh." That's kind of a drag, but I've gotten much more tolerant in the sense that I've become aware of all that I don't know. Maybe these people are doing something that I don't know about. I'll cut them some slack, rather than just to crash in on them and say, "Well, this is fucked."

I think it's too easy for us artists to kind of write off the rest of the art world and just try to make ourselves a corner and solidify our corner, and get our friends to join in. I mean it's great to have that, but it's also great to stay open. You need both, basically. ♦

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