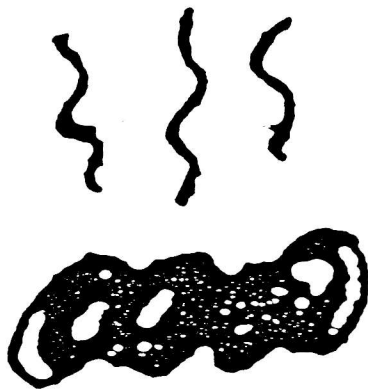


MIRAGE #4/PERIOD(ICAL) #19

edited by Kevin Killian and Dodie Bellamy—August 1993—\$3.00



Sue Williams

*Tom Beckett, Gerald Burns, Cecilia Dougherty/Leslie Singer, Sally Doyle,
Greg Fuchs/Rodney O'Neal Austin, Glen Helfand
Cover: Sue Williams*

GREG FUCHS/RODNEY O'NEAL AUSTIN

ODE to LUCILLE BALL
(in Rodney O'Neal Austin's gown)

of skin, her red red hair and cock below
those slapstick brooding lips as red
as the hundred-petaled rose. Shimmering
after noons of her on truck beds
trying to get off

or get somewhere.

She only wore three dresses, constantly
she bettered herself. Everyone was Lucille
the struggling middle American. Accused
of stressing too much red. Oh Lucy, Oh
Rodney!

He always a woman to me. I loved
Lucy as a young fearsome American son
sentenced to hang like an unwatched star
in the glare of the boob tube stained shag
I never understood the plot as a child
but I understand today's denial. None
of this rouge nonsense mattered
everyone loved the comely spy. Laugh
at the teevee queen, a silly little drunk thing
on the edge of the rink of heartbreak.
Too tintinnabularious the teevee wheezed
and sang answers to the godzillion questions
the seated edge of hangers harbor
reminds Rodney and I that there is no difference
between homos and heteros just sex. Ricky
dead drunk couched tween the club and the sleeves
Miss Teevee touched it too . . . Little Rickie.
The slightly different approach to drag
racing on the streets tries to eliminate the practice
altogether and restricts drag to certified strips.
The three cameras all pointed at her Ricky
discovering reruns Oh Lucy my buxom
belle with the hilarious smile that warms my cockles
lain on the shag setting the dials on the tube
so carefully. Heyyyyyy Lucy I am home,
Nooooo you can't be in the show, no mo Roboto.
Oh Lucy so loosy like Rodney that special dark
margarita brushing her wings in heavenly approval.

TOM BECKETT

ONE THROUGH TWO

1.

Replace meant *window*
Possibly disclosing monospace

Out of the cartoon
Into the carton

Behaviors objects mime
Mine own noun in you

This pronomial shift
Looks great with that ensemble
Reality

Divisible me
Invisible you

Divisible you
Invisible me

2.

Templates become abusive

Evaporating forgotten shapes

Autobiography constituted in re: constitution

I splinter names

Specific anecdotes

Captivity narratives occupy

Fields of frames

Or subjects

Or effects

GERALD BURNS

LOOKING in MANHATTAN

El cojin de us asiento es un salvavidas.

—TWA

I study myself.

—Benedetto Croce, *An Autobiography*

The little lakes that lead from Virginia to New York reflect light as if the earth were indeed a ball. My pens are Pilots with windows to look at the ink. I hold two, black and blue, caps off as we land. Water, seen from this height by Tennyson, is smoother than it is. Croce puts autobiographies on a need-to-know basis, which seems intelligent. Groucho in a nightcap tries to fool his reflection. Years ago Margaret Trudgian & I went to see Degas at the Wildenstein—the pastels in rows against oyster-gray, other colors, late ones of peasant dancers in red boots when he could hardly see, color thrown on anywhere, exactly right making visible by dissonance the visible. (Enchanted by Carol Moldaw's book, in New York light riverine.) No Max Picard on *Silence* in the Strand or Barbara's *Channel*, so next day to (the construction is from Pepys) the Metropolitan, up stairs and a slight ramp to a show of Daumier drawings—"The Fugitives," tiny horizontal oil of emigrants in a hurry, in a deep wood frame like a letterbox, peering in under the shadow—better lit than at home from yellower light. I'm in this *Grand Street*, take away in it postcard Man Reading in Garden, sent one to *mes parents*, noticed (didn't say to them) the Papillon in Fragonard and a railroad-station Daumier carries its tail lower than is now considered beautiful, tried Cézanne again and in honor of my host Edwin Frank essayed Poussin, the subject of this essay. Edwin says he's used, now, to him, hardly remembers the initial shock. I do. Mint green-blue Orion (blind) with tiny people at his feet like Saturn's children, mist like bathroom paper trailing across trees, foreground leaves just adequate. Rape of the Sabines, one guy in a yellow muscle shirt, bright yellow. Helmets. Drapery. Neat dragon, speckled, with a good shine on its tail done out of Tasso. Peter cures a cripple. I want to be able to say what's so infuriating: His handling calls for Mediterranean subjects. His color shows he thinks that he's a colorist. But he's never seen olive skin all his life, everyone white or brick. That's not an objection, but Rubens who knows

pale Flemings sort ill with Hercules' pelt rethinks the skin all through,
his plaster statues genuinely transposed. Poussin's integuments forgo such thought,
clumsy but modular. So it really was like your first view of Cézanne,
and Edwin says current thinking on Manet takes seriously the effect
he had on pennyliner journalists. You can see it and you can't, and
it's there ultimately in the strokes, in his late flower still-life petals
as much as challenge-stares from his guitarplayer or Olympia.
So anywhere in Poussin, chin under helmet strap, rouged sandaled heel
the paint going on the canvas, so happy for its own sake to be there, obedient to some
dream of the whole painting that exists in his head, in tone so *like* a dream
that in the one respect he's hopelessly Italian, a passion for "in keeping" of the sort
never a trouble to Delacroix, makes by some peculiar punch-through reversal
what seems atrocity to fans of unbroken tone. Atrox. Greek names
for things build up; it doesn't *matter* if bricky soldiers hail from Sybaris,
palette so impoverished it renders olive skin as terracotta, effect
oddly like Cézanne's blue apples from contagion by his ginger-jar,
but then he wants his strokes to eat each other. Not Poussin.
We'd talked a night ago of Bouguereau, how it is he's phony. (I find
his approach to buttons, including children's shoe eyelets, hopelessly perverse.)
Now looking at Poussin you wonder if those academics render a dream
of bad faith, complacent exclusion of *plein air* when they'd not ought,
a too deliberately painted non-air air, denied possibility of chill or sparkle.
What would Poussin hold back? It hit me my own verse that seems
to many full of disparates might be to them like he to me.
Daumier, pressing clay to be enormously wicked busts of senators,
or beanpole Ratapoil, assumes the air he thumbs around and so
it's there. Should it be imaginary air, closer together, seen through
Ratapoil's straddled legs or Dali moustache twisted bits of clay?
Rabbits live in our air so why not portrait busts? The ruddy pallor of
Rubens Vulcan shoulders goes well with cooler leaves, shadowed grays,
no attempt at Neapolitan quayside; you know it snows outside.
These others are like a diorama drained of air or the effect of the
two rats, not eight inches apart on a bright slush mound, I saw
outside, clenched teeth uninterested in oxygen, to be sucked up in a city truck,
consequence of thaw. Nude tails. Remote. Ulla Dydo called the night
before to say she, blocked at 3 a.m., was on her balcony, Stein's words
floating free with first flurries of the mighty storm, all consonant,
as Eliot almost said. Her work on Stein amazes me; some key like
one of her insights to a Stein play should kick in, free Poussin
from this uneasiness, out asking where does he get off.
The one Daumier I wanted, two tiny drawings of the Prodigal Son
stacked, on top of each other, framed in gray wash as if
you saw from indoors, a foyer, the figures in bright sun.
Most Rembrandtesque, and close enough together they shared
a common border, duplex ideogram. The other, a big *very* unfinished
oil for the horizontal *Quixote* did the Don in one black line, sinuous

on white, wholly abstract, essence of a man urging on a mount.
Poussin might not have loved it, seems unfond of drawing. But as
Edwin says Cézanne copied him, rapt. It must have been that sense
of a whole picture, so overriding the parts don't make sense. In
another part of the museum Millet grainstacks, not interestingly painted,
not brushstroke-fond, were with stubble a basis for sheep nearly the same
color but *outlined* in partly painted-out thin brown, broken
by overpainting that became in the room next door Van Gogh's portrait
of paired shoes, the leather ties turning from color to color as they twist
in light, against "red tile" I thought free rendering of parquet.
He got it from Millet that if it's all there none of it has to be.
Some of that runs through to Cézanne, who punches through
particulars he *has* rendered, dismissing them at any moment as being there.
The faces I looked at in the museum, including I think Susan Sontag,
while I looked for people I'd known, been there with, twenty years ago
I braced myself to recognize aged, like milkcarton photos of lost children, but
they shimmered, all of them, between ages, times, like faces in Poussin.

JOE-JOE

by Cecilia Dougherty
and Leslie Singer

cameras: Jill Gerollik graphics: Glen Helfond



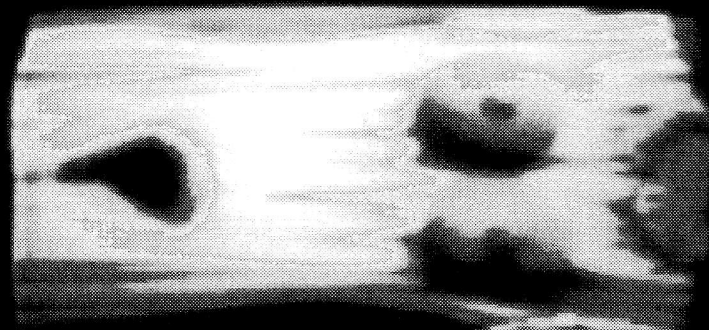
"Art Appreciation"



**I don't like
Trompe de
Olay.**



You mean trompe l'oeil.



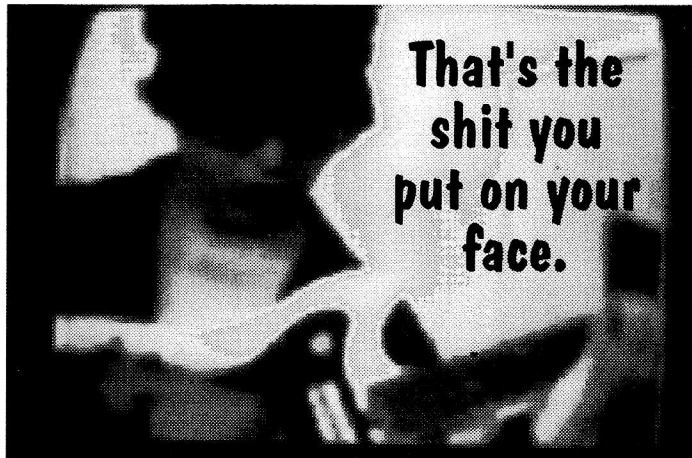
**That's what
I said.**

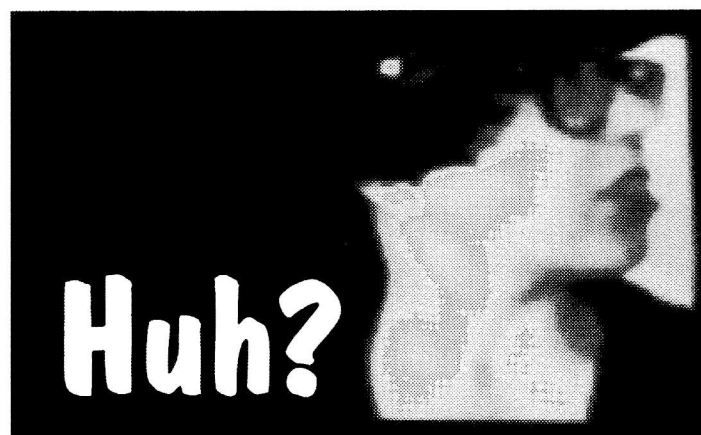


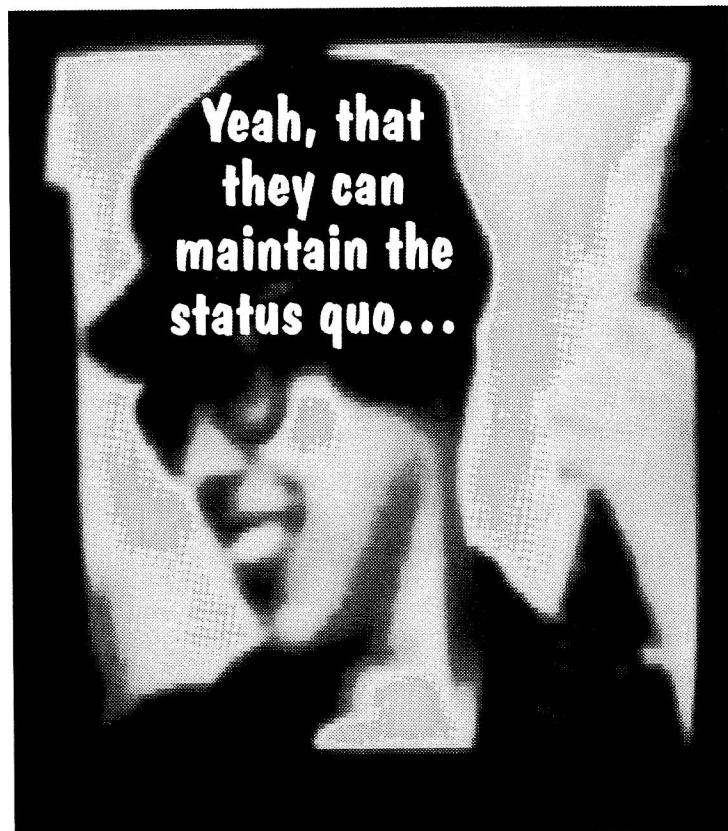
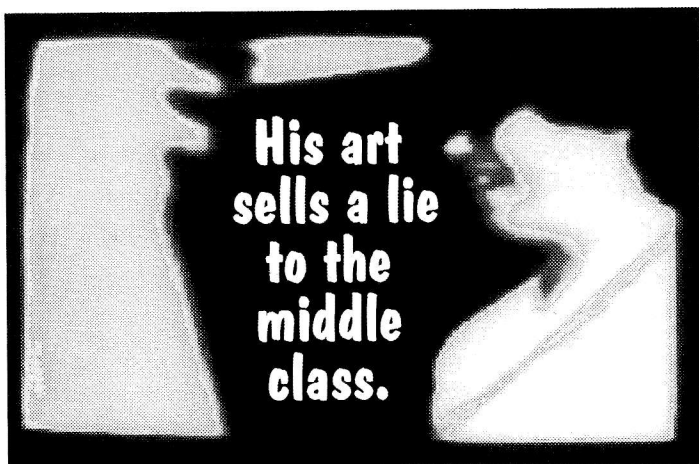
**No,
you said
"Oh-Lay."**



**That's the
shit you
put on your
face.**







SALLY DOYLE

DIRTY SHOES

THE LANDSCAPE IS UNPREDICTABLE. Whose fault is it?
I can't find the enemy, but someone is hurt. QUICK! My scarf is in the wind
blowing away from me. My shoes are running into the forest. THEY HAVE
SWITCHED ALLEGIANCES. This has happened because I have no guardian
angel. Whirlwind and the pandemonium of an UNGUARDED SOUL.

Tear the buttons off the tree and make them stand very still. If you whip them
they will bleed. Shhh . . . the flowers won't make a peep. THIS IS SAD FROM
HEAD TO FOOT.

Scare the storm out of its wits. Can a storm be unconscious? Can it droop
forward and die? ANSWER ME. Who is drinking in here? CRY. The trees are
trying to stay calm, but they are speaking too fast and annoying me. This time
who is getting into a state? WATCH THE GRASS SPIT MY FACE IS
DISGUSTING. The horse threw me. Stuff it down the chimney. Every part of
the landscape has blood in it. GO TAKE A BATH.

Who cut the kingdom into a thousand pieces? Who sliced the horse in half with a
razor blade? The dogs are let out to kill the rabbits in the meadow. I didn't mean
it. Is despair a sin? FLINCH do you belong to God? Wring out the water. He
will strike me blind. If I bury my shoes here, will grass grow over? I could have
had a hundred other lives and I got this one. I don't believe it. Nothing interests
me now. FROM HEAD TO FOOT. Something beautiful has been punished.
Before sunrise everything had looked safe. DON'T SAVE MY NAME SPIT IT.
My dirty shoes. Nobody will remember who I am.

SLEEPING MIRROR

The light is shipwrecked—again. What is the use of living if the horses won't come out of the sea? The child's story is a secret peep. But the sleeping mirror wakes with a shriek when the child looks into it.

I don't want to memorize my face in a terrifying encounter. I don't want anybody to own a picture of me. My skull is a sequence of ashes. Describe my soul gets on my nerves. Throw up. She never twinkled after an exact moment. An average word made her blood cold. Did you really SEE God die? The words have moved far away from her memories. Who will look at her photos, if the devil is in every picture? Even the fire is in a helpless heap.

This door leads to a disfigured FOREVER. They use broken bones for kindling. The conditions this time is a tangled house, a woman and a blood thirsty wolf. I don't understand.

The devil came pouring out of the child. We have gone too far. We are in the part of the world that can't be mended.

No one knows where the child is living now. No one can find her. If God has abandoned her—how can she live anywhere?

GLEN HELFAND

KNEE DEEP IN NEED

It was getting kind of warm in there and I couldn't remember whose birthday it was. Somebody's boyfriend, but the gossip was they weren't getting along. Maybe he left for some after hours dance club fitted with a cluster of mirrored disco balls. Birthdays often require those luminescent dots of festivity. Little pick me ups. God knows we could all use a few of those.

"Everybody in this town is suffering from a broken heart," Carl told me. It was as if he thought I didn't know. "Take me," he continued without asking. "It got so bad with this one guy that I couldn't sleep, so I started doing downers and shots of jäger like every night." His handsome, unmemorable, midwestern face was a bit flushed. He took a sip of something transparent. "But then I couldn't wake up in the morning, so I had to dip into the speed. It was real *Valley of the Dolls*."

I could never quite understand why people treat me like a party confessional. All I wanted was some observational fun and maybe a little sex. I tried, and failed, to squint the wrong people away with cold, quiet stares. Obviously, something kinder emanated from my face as I quelled a constant hunger for graying guacamole and too-salty tortilla strips. Maybe Carl had something in him that I didn't. Prozac or something.

I was beginning to like Carl, even if he was kind of overlook-able, and sensitive about it. His tales of his his dark side, however, were making an impression. "But I got over that," he said as his round, wire-rimmed glasses began to skid down his oily nose. "Pretty soon I just figured if I couldn't sleep, then I'd just stay out all night and party. In my neighborhood, that's easy. After the bars close, you can hang with all the speed freaks at the after hours clubs and then drift into Ginger's at six a.m." There was nothing in his little speech to indicate that he had currently moved past this broken phase. He actually sounded proud.

"Wow," was all I could think of to say. His story sounded so glamorously fucked up. This town's full of stories like his, yet hearing it was a poking reminder that Oprah topics have a reality component. I crunched on another chip. Somehow, its saltiness counteracted the nakedness of Carl's oral autobiography. "Everybody in this town has a broken heart," he said again. "It's like dominoes. We all sleep with one another and pass it along." I thought about diseases and leaned back, nodding mutely in the vinyl fabulous fifties recliner. It was a really cool chair.

Suddenly, a bit of unintentional live entertainment unfolded just across the bedroom we were partying in. Eric, a dark, freshly shaved man of indeterminate ethnicity, was coming on to the host big time. "So, do you have a boyfriend?" he asked Frank, the young, queer activist man of the house. Eric had earlier boasted that he was 39, and everybody in the room agreed he looked at least ten years younger. His face was rendered in perpetual boyishness. "You know, I'd really like to be tied up on this bed," Eric told Frank factually. It was Southern Gothic brass, after all. Startled by the unsolicited advance, Frank seemed to shrink into the missing sleeves of his plaid shirt. Eric edged him towards the bedpost, and into a position of compromise.

"I think we're out of beer," Frank said as he wriggled free and left the room.

My lips curled as I sniggered, a little louder than intended. Eric glared back at me with a dim, sexy smile that bared his uncommonly white teeth. I turned back to share the moment with Carl. He was watching me survey the courting ritual, yet seemed a dazed drunk. Thrown back into his heartache, I presumed. Our eyes locked, but it was difficult to tell what went between them. He began to look a bit cuter than I thought before, like a stunned intellectual. He had curly dark hair, and a firm, rounded face. His impassive brown eyes betrayed the thought processes that held together his cracked interior. Too bad he wasn't internally chipping away at a lengthy algebra equation. I looked at him and smiled anxiously, sort of wanting to offer physical consolation.

"Wanna another drink," I asked him instead.

This shook him out of his slight trance. "Sure." On the way to the kitchen I walked past Michael, who, like a floppy princess, reclined on floor cushions. His leg poised in white plaster—a skiing accident—he offered recaps of this week's daytime TV versions of world events to anyone who happened past him. "God, that Bosnia stuff is just so barbaric," I heard him say on my way to the kitchen. I muttered in agreement, not quite knowing what I really thought about that particular subject: "Oh, I know . . ."

The party was aging, and all there was left to drink were mismatched bottles of cheap champagne on a table heaped with gnawed-at casseroles. Three guys and a girl, all reveling strangers, teased me as I grabbed a bottle around its green neck, along with a few paper cups imprinted with a red gingham country pattern. "Oooh, Classeee," smirked the girl with a bleached blonde crew cut. I nodded cynically and headed back into the bedroom.

Someone had put on a CD of industrialized exotica which cast an arty, danceable tenseness over the room. Carl, who seemed to have shaken his melancholy, was talking to Eric about a sex club. I took the wire protector off of the bottle of cold duck and waited for him to finish his story. "They're still doing that barbecue thing in the back," he said. "After you get sucked off it feels so *American* to have a hot dog," he said, amused with himself.

"What do you think, Joseph?" he asked me. The plastic cork loosened on its own accord and shot off, hitting a wrought iron candelabra perched on a bare bookshelf. "It's about as American as this shit we're about to drink," I joked as I filled the cups.

Carl introduced me to Eric, even though I already knew his name from an adoring distance. "Joseph, this is Eric." I handed him a paper cup. "Hi. I hear you like to be tied up." I was smiling. Eric returned my expression more firmly, though didn't exactly concede his failed flirt. "So, what are *you* into?" I rolled my eyes at his forwardness and tried to think of something clever. "That's a good question," I answered suggestively. It wasn't a great response, but it would have to do. Carl said something more conclusive: "Three ways." I thrust a cup towards him. Some of the pink liquid sloshed over the top.

"Oh yeah? I could get into a three way," Eric leered, almost mockingly.

We toasted to triangles and made soundless clinks with our paper cups and gulped. I felt the corrosive sweetness wash over my tongue and mingle with an avocado aftertaste. Carl burped. Eric didn't waver from his faint smile as he playfully said, "This stuff is disgusting." This was beginning to feel a little like male bonding. I burped too.