

Journal

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News of The Cultural
Council Foundation
CETA Artists Project

Sculpture Exhibit Opens at Federal Plaza

By JUDD TULLY

The tapping of the blind man's cane, like a lazy metronome, floated over the plaza and seemed to settle around the undulating raw timber of Pedro Lujan's sculpture, "Ruby." Residing on the wind-swept western edge of the bleary Siamese towers known as 26 Federal Plaza, the cactus spikes sprouting from the prone timbers shook up the otherwise dead landscape.

"19 at 26" (a catchy title) is an ambitious sculpture and drawing show that occupies the plaza, main floor and balcony areas like a minimal Russian Army shocking the underdeveloped countryside. Curated by two CETA Artists Project sculptors, Barry Feuerstein and David Seccombe, the exhibition flaunts a heady mix of styles and materials, seven of the 19 being outside the orbit of CETA.

Barry Feuerstein's "10007:10011:1000:11:11:1011:" (zip-code mantra?) originally camped on the Lafayette Street side of the plaza, directly in front of the entrance. Stepping stones of steel-plate sandwiches filled with patés of wax covered

60 feet and, according to the artist, "were rich in Jewish motifs: a cream cheese sandwich, matzo and horseradish and a heavenly tuna fish on rye." Building management vetoed the placement, fearing civilians would trip over the Passover tableau. Undaunted, Feuerstein drafted Caspar Henselman's "Roadblock" which had been similarly doomed, and cordoned off the by now compressed arcs with Con Edison plastic saw horses aglow with orange and white stripes. Fickle winds on the night of the opening (January 15) blew the lightweight saw horses across Lafayette Street to a slip of Foley Square foliage.

Faced with exile, Feuerstein gathered his steel sandwiches, wrapped them Christo-ly with burlap, secured them with rope and laid the long bundle to rest against the lip of the plaza fountain. Henselman's surviving saw horses acted as pallbearers and the artist transformed the Passover ritual into a well-attended wake.

Aside from the drama on the plaza, the rest of the show made it through opening night.

Standing alone in the howling wind, David Seccombe's "Hemlock" offered a cubed astronomical view of the ice-blue night sky through his

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Poets, Fiction Writers Face Shrinking Markets During 1980's

By RICHARD VETERE

Richard Vetere is a CCF playwright and a member of the Playwrights Unit of the Actors Studio. His play Rockaway Boulevard recently opened at the Cubicolo Theatre.

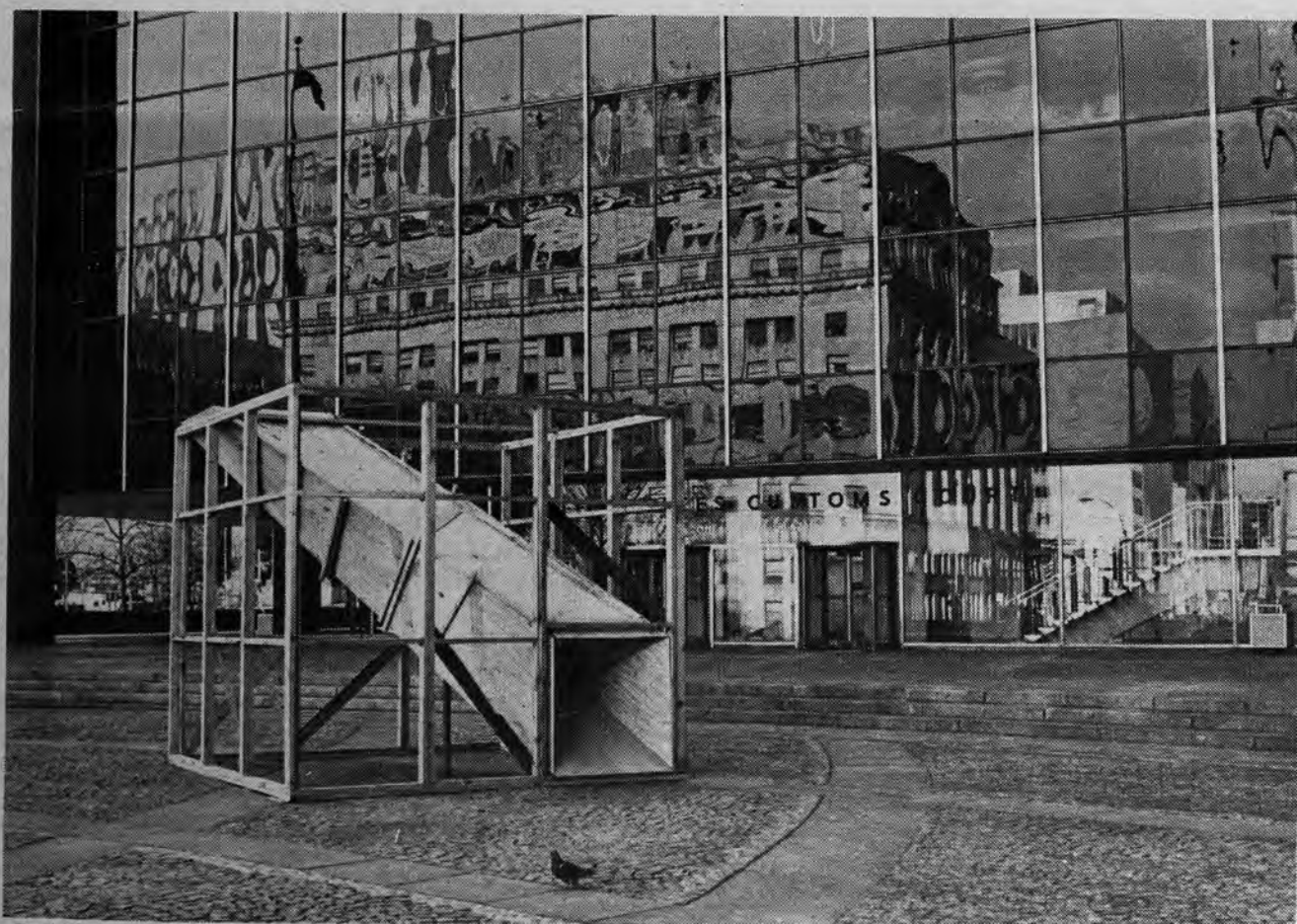
The closing of one decade and the beginning of another is a much publicized time; there is economic speculation and there is hope. For those with secure jobs and a steady income such speculation is fun to read, but for the CCF/CETA artist who may be unemployed either Dec. 31, March 31, June 30, or Sept. 4, sociological, economic, and professional-trend information is of vital importance. Every artist knows that the moods and events of a society affect his pocketbook.

The majority of artists are in business for themselves and do not have the job security that comes from working for a corporation. Some individuals do make big money, but the overwhelming majority cannot even support themselves without other part-time work. Kurt Vonnegut said it, "A writer either makes \$150 a month or \$1500 a week. There isn't any middle ground."

Last summer *The Times* published a special section in its Sunday edition which dealt exclusively with specific career areas and what demands there will be for them in the 80's. For example, engineering, which had little demand in the 60's will be on the rise in the coming decade. Also, business executives and management positions are in great demand as well as any work related to computers: analysis, programming, design. Interestingly enough, entertainment was given a 15% rise concerning job expectancy in the 80's. The rise was in the area of the performing arts. Authors, however, were told that there would be a 3 to 5% drop in job opportunities. Not very good news to a profession already suffering from public indifference.

Going beyond the survey, I thought it best to talk to several writers who are presently working for the Artists Project and who will be entering the job market in the coming year to get their views about the future. Publishing, television, film, journalism, theatre, small presses, poetry readings, lectures, are all activities authors can pursue to earn an income. However, those areas are highly competitive, and the financial reward is inconsistent and sporadic. Without grants or "ins" in the television industry, free-lance work is a writer's

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David Seccombe's "Hemlock" outside Foley Square (Federal Plaza).

Marbeth

Sculpture Exhibit...

elevated tunnel of plywood. Hidden from view behind the low-rise Federal Court House with its baffling abstract mosaic facade, stood the meandering "Racquel Tarn" of Deborah Ossoff. Creeping around the handsome wood river bed of the sculpture on the crunchily landscaped gravel, resembled a treasure hunt for the absurd. It seemed that at any moment, an armed Federal guard might leap out from the scruffy bushes and bark, "Halt." There was some consolation, in being armed with the white on red map titled "nineteen at twenty six." ("Excuse me sir, could you tell me where Perimeter 1980 is?")

The foibles of art in public places or sculpture in "Living Buildings" (as the General Services Administration prefers to call it) are overwhelmed by the opportunity of exposing a leery public to the vistas of modern and post-modern art. Facing identical high-rise stacks of iron skids with a blinking yellow toupée of syncopated light, powered by cable jumpers biting the terminals of a Die Hard Battery, is a great test for Jon Cue Public's appetite for art. The title of Ron Edson's sculpture is "A Set up: a means of holding a warning: Guide thru the dark a civic sculpture." In many ways, this bizarre temple of industrialization accosts the viewer and goads him to respond. Cordoned off by polished stanchions entwined with braided felt arms, the piece looks dangerous, and perhaps the large valve on top could open the floodgates and drown the lobby with the spent juices of industry.

Rudy Montanez's "Ashtray" of compressed coal ash housed inside a plexiglass box was temporarily snuffed out by the spread-out pages of the New York Times Monday Sports section. Soaking in the Super Bowl news, a gaunt young man with stocking cap and wispy beard obliterated the view with the nervous drumming of fingers on top of the display case.

Farther down the hall of the main floor, the elegant rungs of Germaine Keller's battle-ship gray "Systems 24" hugged the wall adjacent to the building manager's office. To untrained eyes, it could have been a misplaced window washer's ladder, but on closer inspection, the taut lines of a minimal landscape popped into focus, and the

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Freda Mindlin of Opportunity Resources for the Arts at first job development seminar.

S. Golob

slow visual climb up the narrowing rungs were alarmingly subtle. Slender black threads strung taut through tiny eyelet screws created more horizontal tension, and the whole piece flowed in a tight embrace of horizontal and vertical planes.

Following the double-entendre signs to "the office of Personnel Management, Federal Job Information Center" and the one-flight escalator ride to the mezzanine, more of 19 at 26 was on view. Steve Linden's "Tower of Blabbel" fashioned out of the flotsam-jetsam world of polyester fabrics for Punk roller skaters and anthropological shards of tenement linoleum, countered the more serious "Safe Harbor" of Francesca Jones. The scarlet blush of the long wooden slats radiating out from the open stack of rectangles gave fair warning to intrepid interlopers.

The best-lit piece on the mezzanine was Tom Doyle's "Sparkill" and his smaller than usual scale of the rough-hewn timbers gave it an inviting intimacy that ate up a lot of cold space around it. Off in the corner, like a naughty school girl, was the sprawling environmental statement of Christy Rupp, "Gulls, Garbage and Airports." Two large nautical maps of approaches to New York and Jamaica Bay were collaged with Rube Goldberg touches. A label from a can of Chicken of the Sea Tuna, a cellophane wrapper of Planters Peanuts, two feathers, a crinkled gum wrapper and the orange logo of a Reese's peanut butter cup swayed on bent wires over the pale blue sea pockmarked by "soundings in fathoms." A white plaster gull, one skrawny leg impaled in the sharp mouth of an aluminum Coke can set the atmosphere of ecology clashing with technology, the increasingly vicious clash between aluminum and flesh. Xeroxed photos of plane disasters mixed helter-skelter with a garbage dump of culture—from spaghetti strands of magnetic tape to a styrofoam Big Mac box.

A last look at "19 at 26" zooms in to the wavy chicken wire construction of Steve Foust's "Flag," occupying great space on a marble facade of the mezzanine. Across the plaza and onto the skimpy median strip of Foley Square another sculpture demands attention, this one outside the curatorial arm of 19. John Holmes' teeter-tawter of garbage cans and jailed rocks is inscribed on the base: "Dedicated to the Individual Looking beyond Stonehenge."

Late at Night (after Apollinaire)

I touch your darkness with my eyelids
Memories of your hands lost in the subway
The fruit of time
Memories no one can out-do
Like 100 words make up just one page
Like 1000 wounds concentrated in one
voice
The prize of smoke unwraps at your feet
Changing the course of failure
A shadow on all fours gnaws your ear
But you listen to me, less
Not knowing the danger of divine poems
Still I hold the space on the pillow
Where your head slept
And the multiple fractures that you guard
Will never desert their positions
To imitate the dust

—Jeffrey Cyphers Wright

Poets, Fiction...

only hope for survival. Like the legendary cowboy, he must rely on himself, following his own instincts and going wherever small successes take him. He has to know the market, develop his skills as much as possible, and hope that he has more luck than the next guy.

Elyse Nass, a playwright for twelve years, is leaving The Artists Project and no one knows what the future holds concerning the economic life of a playwright better than she at this moment. "There is more and more theatre today than ten years ago, but the quality of the plays has declined," she says. Elyse's CCF assignment has been as a play reader for the Quagh Theatre and she has seen thousands of scripts. She feels that theatre is the place to be right now because, "You can live off one hit for a long time considering movie sales, stock rights, publishing rights, Broadway production..." But she admits that getting a play



Myron Heise with his on-site painting at 42nd St., & 9th Ave., flanked by interested by-standers.

S. Golob

Myron Heise Finds Painting In City Streets A Challenging Art

By MADELEINE KELLER

MK: What kind of artistic training did you receive, and was it in the tradition of realist or abstract art?

MH: I was first fascinated by the comic strip. I lived on a farm in Nebraska, where there was no exposure to "culture", per se, but the daily paper *did* have the comics. My first drawing experience was when my brother and I would reproduce our own comic strips because the newspaper didn't come often enough. From there I took correspondence courses in cartooning, commercial art, and illustration. My scope gradually widened, and at 18, I went to the University of Omaha to study art.

I was always interested in realism, but at the University I was under the influence of an abstract artist. My teacher was a very beautiful person, and I made Picasso-ish distortions for about six months. I still do abstractions from time to time, but the true range of my work is in figuration.

When I was 23, I came to New York and studied at the Art Students League, and came under the influence of Arthur Lee, who was a great classical sculptor. He really became my close friend, and talked art to me. I was only there for a few months when I was drafted. In the Army, I became a sign painter. When I came back to art school in 1959, it was really to pursue fine art. It took me until I was 25 to realize what I was going to do.

MK: Were you painting in your studio then, or outdoors on location?

MH: In art school, I would paint on the street, or by the river. At first, it was difficult to deal with people and their questions, but now it's been over 20 years, and it has become easier. When I was in Italy, from 1962-1966, I felt more comfortable. There is a certain respect and awe for art there. People might watch, and say "Bravo" afterwards, but in America, people say, "What's that?" or, "That doesn't look like that." Or "Is this a hobby?" It seems that people don't have respect for what you are doing, whereas in Italy, in Florence, in the tradition of the Renaissance, there is a respect for the artist.

MK: Do you paint outdoors in cold weather?

MH: I've done a lot of city paintings by doing drawings, writing down the colors, and making my paintings from that. I can do those in cold weather. I haven't set up in the winter time. I paint from windows, particularly from other artists' studios who have good views. That's my winter scheme.

successfully produced is tough. It is, however, the one thing that keeps her going. She also feels a playwright should be affiliated with a theatre for the security and exposure: "Regional theatres have more money right now and being a playwright-in-residence or literary advisor at a regional theatre can boost a career. Some regional hits do move to Broadway, and a hit can get you television special or TV movie work. Writing for the stage is like writing for film. A playwright is very flexible since he can move quite easily between both media."

Unlike the optimism Elyse sees in a career in theatre, Barry Levy, a screenwriter, recognizes the difficulty in getting an original film script sold and made into a movie. He sees the 80's as a time when fewer films will be made and those that are done will be financed with incredibly high budgets. "The chances are very small for breaking into the market since the market itself isn't very flexible," says Levy. "If movies about superheros are in, you have to have a script about a superhero to have a film made. A writer, to succeed, has to get his script to an agent, then to an independent producer." Levy feels that Hollywood and TV have to grow up and make better films before they make life any easier for the screenwriter. Yet Levy, who has loved movies since he was a kid and prefers telling a story with pictures, will continue to think visually and push his work in the free-lance world doing documentaries and smaller things until a big sale.

In the publishing world, life isn't much different. Grover Amen, a poet and writer of fiction and non-fiction, is more militant and aggressive in his attitude. He knows large publishing houses are suffering from best-selleritis and knows that, even when they decide to take a chance on an unknown author they look at publishing the book as a tax loss, often doing very little publicity for the writer. The days of editors developing a new talent are gone. The fast-paced world of TV and media coverage show and scrutinize the entire creative package in an instant. An author's first book no longer means as much. If it's not a blockbuster and if it isn't made into a movie—forget it. Amen has a possible solution to the dilemma—self-publication, the way Henry Miller and Anais Nin did it: "Writers should take the initiative and publish their own material, especially poetry, and send it to the editors they want to have see it. Writers feel bitter

toward publishers when they have to wait two years and end up with only a standard rejection letter."

There is also the problem of distribution where the small press is concerned and the long wait for reviews which can sometimes take up to a year after the book's release. Though the goal for a serious writer is to gradually build a reputation and gain recognition so he can give lectures and actually make a living from writing, there just doesn't seem to be an audience out there for any of it in the first place. As Amen says, "It's really the colleges in the long run that judge what endures," but God knows how that process works.

Lynda Schor, author of *Appetites*, Warner Books, and *True Love and Real Romance*, Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, both books of short stories, says that she sees bad times ahead for writers. She agrees that sales are nearly impossible without an agent and she doesn't see the point to small presses: "Small presses have an intellectual elitist attitude which I want nothing to do with. They're probably better for poetry. Anyway, there's no money in them."

Lynda writes in a prose style—the short story—that is not easy to sell, but publishers have found her work potentially commercial. Lynda, who must support three children, finds very little to be optimistic about when talking about the 80's and what it has in store for the writer. "The 60's welcomed sexually-oriented material," she says. "Right now things are a lot more conservative. I see literature as a mass market production of garbage. You can't expect anything in publishing. You can't expect to write and live."

Whether it be government-supported programs where writers work as writers or whether authors are trained to be industrial employees, everyone agrees that there aren't enough stipends or grants around for many writers to support themselves. A writer lives on chances, but he's not necessarily a gambler. He doesn't study the odds, nor does he take risks for the rush or the money. He's a gambler because the technological society he lives in has made him one. The government he lives under destroys tax shelters for films, so fewer independent movies are made. Inflation and union costs escalate Broadway and Off-Broadway costs so that fewer plays go into production. Nobody reads, so publishers package junk literature like

Myron Heise...

MK: *Is there any reason why you paint night paintings as opposed to day paintings?*

MH: The night fascinates me more, and so I prefer doing night paintings. I don't really know why; it's just a feeling that comes through. I come from the Mid-West, from a small town in Nebraska. I found New York so fascinating and exciting, especially Broadway at night. What I sometimes say is that the night symbolizes a certain state of the soul of our society, because there is a low spiritual feeling, a low moral standard in our society. These are simple statements, and perhaps naive, but that's a sign of our time.

MK: *Are there certain locations which interest you more than others?*

MH: Times Square does. I get so involved with the energy there. Maybe the unrealness, the larger than life aspect of it. And also the projection of a false image of mankind. It's all the movies, theatre, glitter...the way store windows glamorize everything. It's the illusion that interests me, and the idea of capturing what's trapped in that illusion.

MK: *Do you ever use any scenes of the Mid-West in any of your paintings?*

MH: No, but I do think that I will go back some day, and paint my home town of 500 people, which is in farm country. I want to paint their Main Street, the bars, and try to capture the landscape, just as I do in New York City. We do use everything we are, but I am not consciously aware of what I use. I don't have a cynical attitude toward life—perhaps because I was brought up on a farm, and it's easier to develop a more relaxed attitude there. I paint the city very romantically. Many people comment that my paintings of 42nd Street are so clean that I cleaned up the city. When I paint garbage, it seems only like token garbage, arranged very nicely. But I feel I'm dealing with the reality that I see, even if it is more romantic.

MK: *Your paintings are very present, very concerned with what's happening right now. Have you ever painted a scene from memory—one that recalls your early life?*

MH: I do have a few things of my parents, and some work from photographs. I record more of this type of thing in my journal, because I like to write also.

One of my dreams is to go back to Nebraska,

and paint America, almost in a Whitmanesque sense, in the tradition of the itinerant painters. Whitman's vision is so thrilling to me, and I can see myself in today's terms, in a station wagon or van, traveling from town to town, and, hopefully, existing on paintings.

MK: *Who are some painters you admire?*

MH: Edward Hopper is my chief love. Also, American painters in the Ashcan School, although they are in disrepute—Reginald Marsh, John Sloan, George Bellows. Today, I guess there are no artists who have a national name that I really admire, but there are painters in the Street Painters group, and at the Figurative Alliance, whose work I am very fond of.

MK: *In Hopper's paintings, you are very aware of a definite psychological attitude, but he claims never to put any of this in his work. Do you have any feelings about projecting psychological attitudes into your work?*

MH: I am often struck by the powerful feeling I get from Hopper's paintings, and I've done that in my work, when I want to get a certain effect. I would like to have more control over these things, and an working towards that. I also have a love of Surrealism, particularly Magritte, with his strange juxtapositions of realistic things.

MK: *How important is figuration in your work?*

MH: I am a figurative painter, but I don't have many paintings with figures in them. I feel it's very important to use the figure, and I want to use it in connection with some form of a modern myth that might emerge out of literature, with the cityscape as background. The figure in my work doesn't dominate. In my philosophy, I talk about using the figure as it is, but in my cityscapes, they just aren't that prominent.

MK: *What is your interest in doing self-portraits?*

MH: When I was living in Italy, I started doing a lot of self-portraits. I would do them often, generally once a day. Then later on, when I looked back over them, I saw how revealing they were—much like a writer keeping a journal. It tells so much about the time that you are recording.

MK: *How did you become a member of the Street Painters?*

MH: We have a Manifesto that was published in *American Art Review*, Nov. 1978. We got together a number of artists from the Alliance of Figurative Artists, and we all started painting together on the street. I was used to painting alone or drawing by myself. We got together in Times Square to paint, and it was a lot of fun

because there was a support system there, and it was easier to paint. At the end of the night, we would all line up our easels, and have our show. We could discuss each other's paintings, and the Broadway characters would give us feedback. We decided to form our own group, and we have been successful in getting publicity because of this unified effort.

Our philosophy is concerned with capturing the passion and vitality of life. We feel we are in reaction to painters who paint too much from the intellect, too much from ideas.

MK: *Could you describe the mural you're working on?*

MH: I've been working on four mini-murals for an organization on the West Side called GAME. They are seven feet by two feet, and will be installed on four columns which will face each other, within that square. They are of the upper West Side with three panels which deal with three ethnic families—a Jewish family, a Black family, and an Hispanic family. There is a hodgepodge of the Upper West Side, that includes store fronts, etc. I worked on the traffic island on the Upper West Side, from 90th to 96th Street, drawing, making watercolors, oils—out of 125 works, I composed these four panels. It's been a challenge to try and unify all these elements.

The murals are on display at GAME, 314 West 54th Street, New York, 10019. Heise will be exhibiting with the "Street Painters" at Baruch College, starting Feb. 21.

Project Staff Members Leave for New Jobs

Several staff members have recently left the Artists Project to take new positions.

Wayne Karmosky, the project's public information director, is now director of public information for the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration in Washington, D.C.

Suzanne Randolph, Public Service Program director, has started her own business as an art dealer. Liz Thompson, coordinator of residencies, is now artistic director of Jacob's Pillow. Ileana Fuentes-Ramos, who was Manhattan coordinator, is director of Hispanic Arts at Rutgers University. And Ida Talalla, coordinator for the Exhibitions Team, is assistant director of the Museums Program of the New York State Council on the Arts.

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