

MUSING
SITTING FOR A PORTRAIT
BY PHILIP PEARLSTEIN

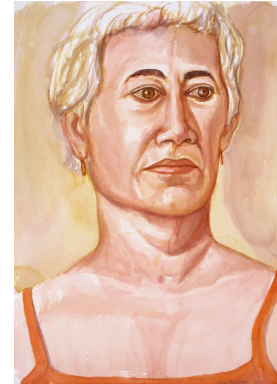
MUSING

SITTING FOR A PORTRAIT
BY PHILIP PEARLSTEIN

BY HELENE VERIN

PRINTED ON THE OCCASION OF
PHILIP PEARLSTEIN: FACING YOU
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Philip Pearlstein, *Helene Verin*, 2011, watercolor on paper, 20 x 14 inches

1st Sitting: August 23, 2016

What should I wear? Decided on a white Viktor & Rolf shirt with black jeans. Feeling nervous going to 36th Street studio, should I ride my bike or take a cab? Decided on a cab (\$12.35 + \$9.36) so I wouldn't be sweaty. It was a Tuesday after work at FIT. They ate at 6:00; I arrived at 7:30. Next week I would cook for them.

This, being my second portrait by Philip and first in his NYC studio — more planned, less spontaneous. The first portrait (2011), which is a watercolor, happened at their NJ house on the lake. Recently, one morning while I was visiting, he said, “Let’s do your portrait.” I was blond at the time of the first painting, so he had noted I didn’t look like that anymore. Think it came about after my Andy Warhol portrait was in the *Pearlstein, Warhol, Cantor: From Carnegie Tech to New York* show at Philip’s gallery, Betty Cuningham (December 15, 2015 – March 5, 2016).



Andy Warhol, *Portrait of Helene Verin*, 1980, acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas, 48 x 48 inches

Warhol and Pearlstein grew up in Pittsburgh, went to Carnegie Mellon together and after graduation, came up to NYC to find work as commercial artists and shared an apartment.

My Warhol portrait is a brilliant 40” x 40” classic portrait, me at 25 years old (1980) with pancake makeup and red, red lips.

On my recent visit, Dorothy loved my white shirt; asymmetric pleats with a collar. Philip took me into his studio and said, “Do you want a head, body, clothed, or naked?” I replied, “You’re the artist.” He searched his prop filled studio and found a wicker-seat chair. “We need a pillow” and I, naively took something off another chair to which he responded “don’t touch that, the model had it set up just right.”

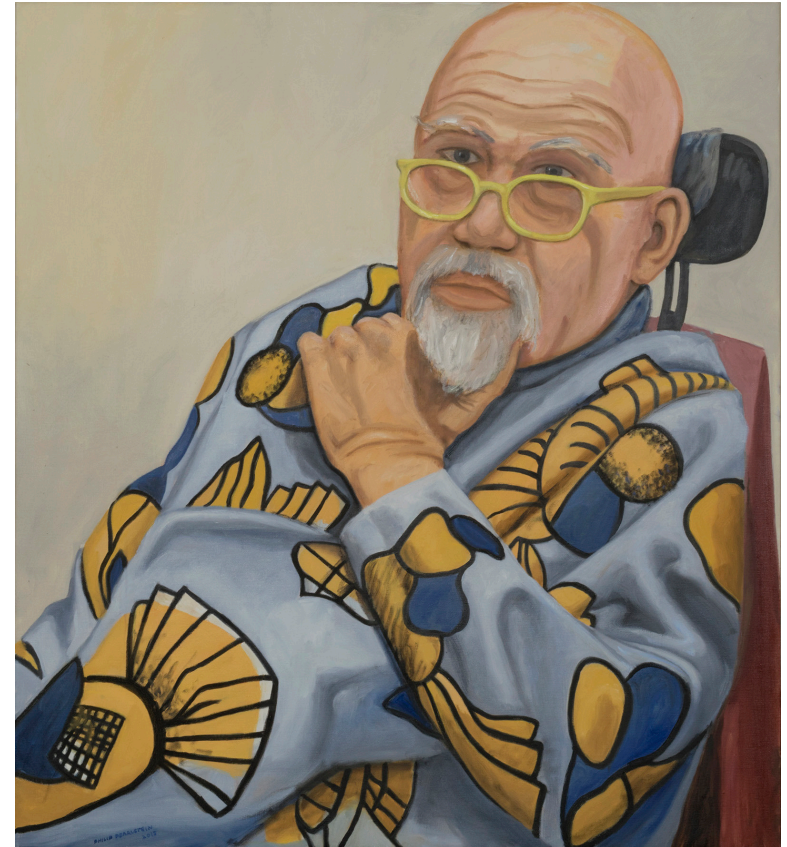
“What kind of music do you want?” You decide. “I’m into impressionistic music at the moment” and he put on Gabrielle Faure. Philip set up his easel less than a foot from me, his profile so close. Him standing, me sitting. Hadn’t realized the position I took would be so important, my arms on my knees, leaning towards him. Not good, my scoliotic back complaining.

He started with golden paint, outlining my figure; his 92 year old hand never quivering.

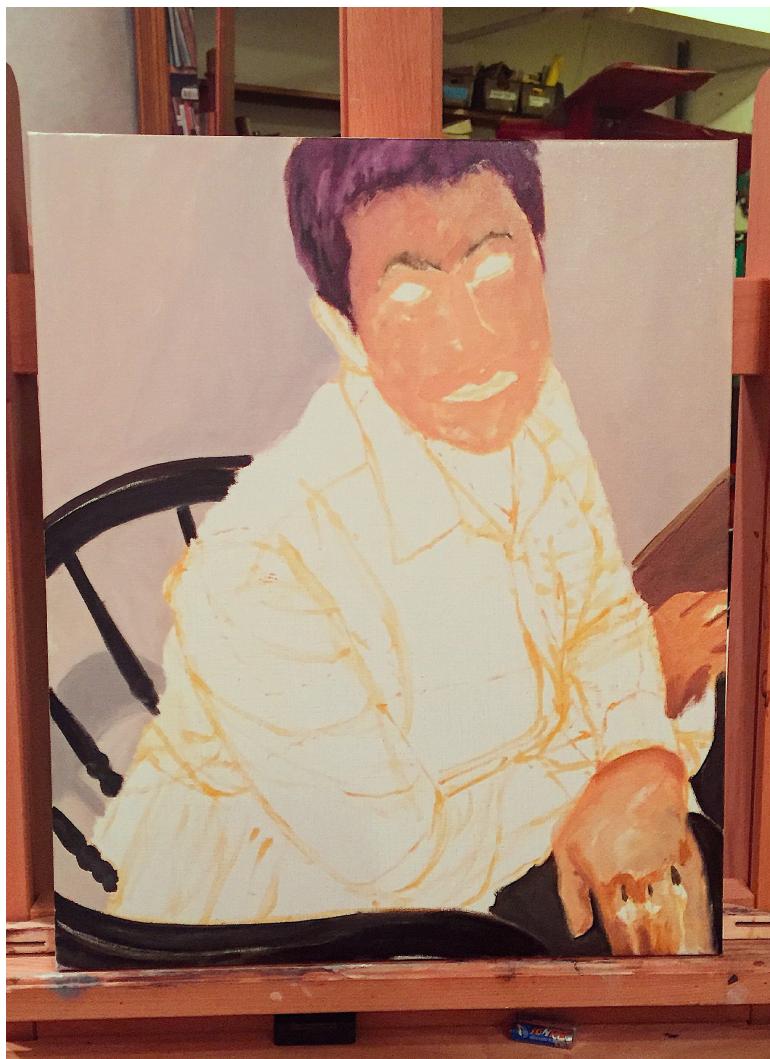
We talked a lot; about the unfinished Chuck Close portrait on an easel “He looks so different now” and about what Philip’s last supper would be “I’ll tell you when it happens”. After an hour and a half we called it quits. I went to the other side of the loft to say goodbye to Dorothy, showed her a photo of the first sitting and she said, “don’t tell him I said this but be sure you smile.”

I knew the pose reminded me of something and then I realized it’s Gertrude Stein’s portrait by Picasso.

Philip wrote, “it’s a great president”, later correcting himself to “precedent.”



Philip Pearlstein, *Chuck Close*, (unfinished), 2016, oil on canvas, 40 x 36 inches



2nd Sitting: August 29, 2016

Vas, my husband, and I rode our bikes, this time arriving at 6:00 to cook dinner. Lamb chops, potatoes and tomatoes from our Community Supported Agriculture in Jamesport, Long Island. At 7:30 we started our session. Ravel's "Miroirs" playing. Talked about Lichtenstein a little, who had told a group at the Tanager Gallery that he decided to paint cartoons when his son pleaded, "Daddy paint something nice, like Mickey Mouse."

Philip started on the background of my portrait, a mauvy taupe color. The chair is black, the under painting happened so fast that the highlight of white made it so very real.



I saw his longtime model, Kilolo Kumanylka, at the Shinnecock Pow Wow in Southampton this weekend. She told me that all of her positions hurt and caused bruises.

Philip Pearlstein, *Model, Neon Mickey and Bouncy Duck*, 2007, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 inches



3rd Sitting: September 6, 2016

Rode our bikes with dinner ingredients in Vas' backpack. He picked me up from FIT. Vas made sautéed chicken breasts with orzo and green beans.

Went to work on the portrait at 7:45 pm. Tonight's musical selections were late masterpieces by Schubert and Mozart.

Philip was using "Naples Yellow" for my skin tone, a paint which hasn't been the real thing for many decades. The bottom of the mine near Naples was reached, so it's now synthetic and paint manufacturers don't list the ingredients.

I lost my daisy ring so Philip decided to work on my white shirt. Although it's only the undercoat, it's looking very classical like the folds in a Roman sculpture.

Philip and Dorothy had an apartment on the Lower East Side on Avenue A, between 12th and 11th Streets, a small loft with the tub in the kitchen. "After returning from the Fulbright Fellowship year in Italy we moved to a renovated apartment on 12th St with a backyard space for William to play in. About eighteen months later, Ronald Strom (a fellow Fulbrighter, a linguist who had stayed on in Rome for a while longer), telephoned me on landing in NY from the boat-pier and said 'I have \$2 in my pocket, enough to get to your apartment, can I stay with you?' I told him Dorothy was coming home from the hospital with a new baby, but he said he didn't mind. (Not thinking that we might mind.) He ended up staying for five months. He and I took turns with feeding Julia at night.' (For that year in Rome I had taken a leave of absence from my job at Time, Inc. doing page layouts for Life Magazine, on my return to NY I left Life, and started teaching at Pratt Institute). My studio then was on 10th Street, which I shared with Lois Dodd and Lester Johnson. Dodd's ex-husband, Bill King, predicted pop art in his own art but he was never given credit."

"One evening after Ronald came, I was melting rabbit skin glue to prepare a canvas. There was no heat and I was bundled up in winter clothes, listening to Mozart's *Requiem* on headphones. I plugged the hotplate into the only electrical outlet in the ceiling, and it burst into flames, I took the gluepot threw the melted glue up at the outlet and the flame sputtered so I kept dousing the flames with water. There were electrical sparks whirring around. When the sparks died out I went downstairs to call the Fire Department to ask them to send someone over to make sure the fire in the

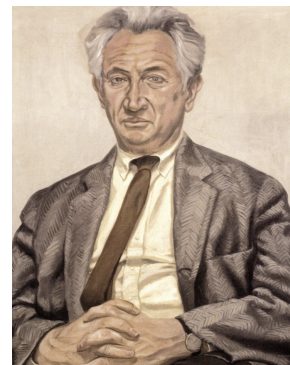
conduit was out and two minutes later the whole street was filled with fire trucks. It was 1:30 am and all of us in these illegal workspaces (de Kooning, Philip Pavia, etc.) were on the street. Lester Johnson's workspace was in front of mine, and the firemen ripped down the bed sheet separating our spaces. The only light came from the firemen's flashlights. They were laughing about his work, then saw mine and slipped on the layer of glue, that was now like Jello, that had splashed on the floor, and just like the Keystone Cops, began slipping and sliding. That was a big impetus to move."

"Gabriel Laderman told me about cheaper apartments uptown on the Upper West Side. We found one through a newspaper ad on 89th Street. There were no artists that I knew of then on the Upper West Side, except Gabriel. We moved into the ground floor apartment (usually occupied by the super) of an upscale apartment building. Our apartment was a couple of feet lower than the sidewalk, with a large glass window with bars across it. Ronald helped us make the move."

"Gabriel was also the one who had recommended me for the teaching job at Pratt because I had a background in graphic design and art history, had published some articles and had already had a couple of one man shows."

"Mercedes Matter was then teaching figure drawing classes at Pratt. One day at the lunch table in the cafeteria she asked if any on the faculty wanted to draw from models they could to come to her place on Sunday evenings. The group that showed up included Philip Guston, George Mc Neil, Jack Tworok, Charles Cajori and soon included Lois Dodd, Mary Frank, Alex Katz Gabriel Laderman, Paul Georges, and me, then several others. The group continued in different members studios for about eight more years. The sessions were conducted in absolute silence and no one was supposed to look at anyone else's work, except I became aware that everyone looked at mine because I was actually drawing vaginas and penises, and they weren't. Tworok had a traditional Russian art education and although he thought the exercise was nostalgic, he was a wonderful draughtsman, but he tore up all of his drawings after each session."

We spoke of Philip's friend, Leonard Bocour, the paint manufacturer and collector who helped Philip and Dorothy buy their Upper West Side house while Dorothy was pregnant with their 3rd child. The problem was that Philip didn't have the \$2,500 for the down payment required. Leonard told him to put together 3 portfolios, a mix of twenty drawings and four paintings, and he would get four business associates to buy



Philip Pearlstein, *Leonard Bocour*, 1966, oil on canvas, 44 x 36 inches

them for \$2,500 so Philip would have enough to get it and to start fixing up the place. "After we moved into the house, I was just becoming known as a figure painter and my dealer, Allan Frumkin, said 'let's see what you can do with portraits.' He was going to do a show of portraits of people in the art world. I painted a portrait of Allan as the art dealer, Leonard Bocour as the paint manufacturer, Irving Sandler as the critic, and Alex Katz as the artist. Hilton Kramer wrote up the show, with my portrait of Bocour reproduced in the New York Times, calling it a 'breakthrough painting' and a whole new way of looking at portrait painting. Leonard at the time was attending an art supply convention in Chicago and was overwhelmed with happiness. After Leonard died in 1993, his son gave the painting to the Montclair Art Museum."



4th Sitting: September 12, 2016

Rode my bike from the college, Vas cabbed from home with the sweet and sour meatballs, kasha and broccoli florets.

Dorothy said, “Make sure you smile,” knowing full well that Philip never paints people smiling. I think back to when Andy did my portrait and he kept saying, “don’t smile.”

The music was *Mare Nostrum*, traditional folk music around the Mediterranean Sea.

The summer of 1957 Philip left his job with Sutnar and was waiting for the job at *Life* magazine to open. He worked with Warhol in Andy’s apartment for a couple of weeks, and also for about three weeks for Saul Leiter, who was also from Pittsburgh and a very important photographer. He lived on 10th Street in an elegant studio building and was a neighbor of and knew Diane Arbus who lived across the street: “It was hard to tell who picked up what from who.” He was a favorite of the Museum of Modern Art’s photography curator, Edward Steichen. Known as a street photographer and a founder of the New York School of Photography, Leiter worked a lot for *Vogue* and occasionally did fashion shoots for *The New York Times*. “Dorothy introduced Saul to Andy, and after they met, Leiter said that Andy was the strangest person he ever met. Warhol said exactly the same thing about Leiter.”

Al Capp’s assistant on *Li'l Abner* asked Leiter if Capp could use him as a character in the swamp-life cartoon and Leiter was very hurt by that. Saul was a painter as well, and Philip bought one of his small works, which disappeared when the paint flaked off years later. Philip had asked Saul why he painted such small paintings, to which he replied “I want them to fly higher.” (It was the time of the atomic scare.)

“One day in the middle of the summer, working with Saul in his 10th Street studio, *Harper’s Bazaar* asked Saul to redo an earlier photograph he had taken from his window looking down on a couple walking in a snow fall under an umbrella with only their shoes showing. But as it was now summer the couple had to be walking in a sprinkle of rain in the backyard patio of his building. I think he hired me because I had a car and he wanted a special camera for this significant assignment. Saul found a new Japanese camera, called “Miranda”, but the only dealer was way out of the city, so we drove about an hour to get the camera. The next day, a huge team from the magazine came over, including Art Kane, the art director who later became a

photographer himself. My job was to make the rain with a garden hose on a 10' ladder. Leiter et al were very happy with the shoot and ran the film up to the lab to have it developed. The camera hadn't functioned! We drove back to the middle of nowhere and replaced the camera. Then we did the whole thing again with the entire cast of characters. Rush up to the lab again, and a technician had mistakenly dropped the film in boiling water! Had to redo it a third time."

"That same summer, Andy asked me to spend the month of August working on line drawings on a cookbook he wanted to do, with Andy's mother doing the lettering and me doing the initial drawings which Andy would later trace over in his blotting technique. His studio was then his apartment on Lexington Avenue which he shared with his mother. Their place was full of cats that Julia Warhola took care of. Andy was never around and there were several chests of drawers, in each were a couple of drawers with a litter of kittens. Dorothy came to visit one day and at the end of her visit, Andy's mother asked her to 'find Andy a girl, even a nice Jewish girl.' Andy's mother painted Easter Eggs beautifully hardly spoke English, a real peasant."

The first time I met Philip was at Beth Levine's (Dorothy's cousin and a famous shoe designer) and I remember expecting a big man because of the big paintings I had seen in museums. Philip told me "Beth finally took Philip seriously when Andy became well known because of my association with him." The first painting Philip sold was to the Levines, a painterly expressionist landscape, from his first solo show at the Tanager Gallery, a Co-op artists run gallery on East 10th St.

Philip was one of the early members of the Tanager Gallery. (Jasper Johns exhibited for the first time in a group show at the Tanager Gallery with *Construction of a Toy*



Philip Pearlstein, *Herbert Levine*, 1969, oil on canvas, 36 x 40 inches

Piano, a broken toy piano which he found on a street curb on the way over.) Tom Wesselmann was the last member to be voted into the Tanager Gallery. He had been teaching art in a high school, but by the end of his first show, he was a superstar and joined the Sidney Janis Gallery. Wesselmann had put really low prices on everything and Philip wanted to buy one for \$35.00. But Philip told Tom his prices were too low for such good work so Tom raised the prices and Philip couldn't afford the work anymore.





5th Sitting: September 20, 2016

Dinner was smoked ribs (from Long Island), corn salad, and roasted potatoes.

Music was *Dancing on the Edge of a Volcano*, Yiddish and German songs from a cantor who Philip knows.



Dorothy, Philip and Andy at Carnegie Institute, photograph by Leonard Kessler, ca. 1948

We move to the studio to do the work at hand. “Warhol is my claim to fame, how I’ll go down in history.” I say that his work will stand the test of time and has an important place in art history. Philip talks about his father being friends with Warhol’s brothers, “all hucksters Pittsburgh, who sold fruit and vegetables from the backs of trucks”.

“The fall and winter of 1949, when Andy and I shared the front room of a loft we rented from Francesca Boas, I painted a series of American Icons, including



Philip Pearlstein, *Superman*, 1952, Oil on canvas, 40 ½ x 35 7/8 inches, collection of Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Superman (which was after Dorothy and I were married that summer of '51). Francesca Boas was a well known modern dancer, and was then experimenting with dance-therapy for children. Andy was already getting non-stop illustration assignments. I started painting crazy paintings, like the Angel of Death over New York City, a monument for the unknown hero of World War II, and the American eagle, because I wasn't getting illustration jobs. But by November I got hired by the graphic designer Ladislav Sutnar as one of three assistants. I continued to paint at night."

"Andy visited Dorothy and me a lot after we were married. He moved to an apartment on 2nd Avenue and 89th Street. He then moved to an apartment with his mother in the East 70's that was walking distance from our first apartment. I stretched canvases for his first paintings: dollar bills, Campbell soup cans, et al. Andy paid me because he knew I was on the GI bill."

"Ladislav Sutnar. had been associated with the Bauhaus before World War II, and was now the design coordinator of Sweet's catalogs (for the architectural and building trades) as well as teaching courses at Pratt Institute. One day, in his 36th Street office, Sutnar told me he thought I seemed to be more interested in art history than the usual art students at Pratt, because, on a lunch time break, I was leafing through one of his books on Van Gogh. He said that most art students weren't interested in cultural history. He knew I had time left on the GI Bill and told me to go study art history while I continued to work for him. So, I got into NYU's Institute of Fine Arts on the GI Bill. At the Institute, those students on the GI Bill were considered 2nd class citizens as the other students were from upper class families, spending 15 years doing their doctorate and going into museum jobs. Our professors were war refugees from Germany, including Erwin Panofsky. I only survived because I was comfortable with their German accents, due to Sutnar's heavy Czech accent. Karl Lehmann (worked on excavations of Samothrace) had a talk with me about my future - becoming an art historian because I aced the exams. He became angry when I told him I considered myself a painter, and was taking the courses for my own interests."

"I was soon to become part of the 2nd generation (Al Held, Norman Bluhm et al) of Abstract Expressionists, downtown artists exhibiting on Tenth Street. The first generation which included Hans Hofmann, de Kooning, and Rothko among others, was mostly older - several were immigrants and had roots in Europe. The younger artists were almost all WWII veterans, who, I later decided, were almost all using Abstract-Expressionism as therapy as they had experienced some horrific events during the war."

"In 1957, Sutnar wanted to make me a junior partner, so I left, knowing it would be the end of me as an artist."

"The Morgan Library is taking into their collection 90 small drawings from WWII from the exhibition of my wartime drawings and watercolors at the Cuningham Gallery last fall. Betty (Cuningham) got Bruce (Weber) and Nan (Bush) to put up 50% and David and Jane (Walentas) to give the other 50% to purchase the group to present them as a gift to the Morgan. It's a relief, like finding a home for your children. Otherwise I would have given them to the Archives of American Art where they would just be warehoused."

Philip is telling me to tilt my head back, "One ear is enough" and "Ears get in the way". Next week, eyes.



6th Sitting: September 26, 2016

Yummy dinner of Vietnamese pho with vegetable pancakes. Ravi Shankar and Philip Glass *Passages* on CD player.

There was pressure tonight because I wanted to be home for the first Hillary Clinton/Donald Trump debate.

Philip started the session, “I have to shave some of your cheek away.” He explained the standard $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$ ratio of linseed oil, Damar varnish and turpentine which is used to thin paint and makes the paint very tough, like glass, which “turns to iron when dried.” Philip uses $\frac{1}{2}$ refined turpentine, $\frac{1}{4}$ oil, and $\frac{1}{4}$ varnish. Vas says he likes being Philip’s sous chef when Philip is painting; his mother was an amateur artist and he helped her when he was a child.

Philip was out of cadmium red.

“I had a Volkswagen bus and would drive everyone everywhere. Chuck Close, Alfred Leslie and I were invited to Penn State University to speak on a panel about ‘3 hot young realist painters.’ Alfred told us he was practically deaf as a child so he did comedy and stunts to attract attention. Before he became a realist painter he was close to de Kooning and was considered the crown prince to de Kooning’s king. About 30 years later, I got sick and Alfred came to visit me several times, bringing old movies to watch. Alfred had moved to Queens to be near his dealer, Richard Bellamy, who had been the owner of the Green Gallery. The night we were driving to Penn State (in the middle of the wilderness called Pennsylvania), we stopped at Philip Glass’ cottage (Glass was teaching at Penn State and had been friends with Chuck Close at Yale.) Our paintings had been taken into Penn State’s collection and were hung on the Stage above us while we spoke.”

“Milton Brown, previously head of Brooklyn College’s art department and who was a distinguished graduate of the Institute of Fine Arts, became head of CUNY graduate department ten years or so after he had hired me at Brooklyn. He ate his lunches across the street at the Century Association clubhouse, which was founded by the Hudson River painters.” (Out of discussions at the Century Association in the 1880s, came the American Academy of Arts and Letters in NY, and the American Academy in Rome - the architect Stanford White, did all three buildings.)

“Richard Haas (now my neighbor on 36th Street) had nominated me for inclusion in the Century, as did Will Barnet, who had also proposed me and Chuck Close, as members of the Century. Will Barnet was also influential in getting me into the American Academy of Arts and Letters at a young age. Established by Congress, the Academy’s membership is capped at 250. The members are from all of the arts and appointed for life; the only opening comes when a member dies. I also was voted in as a member of the National Academy of Design. That Academy is very important in the history of American art-- its collection of American art being second only to that of the National Gallery of Art.”

“Stanford White was the architect for the American Academy of Arts and Letters up at the Audubon Terrace. The whole schmear up there is one of the great architectural sites in New York. Edward Albee was also a member; we were on a couple of committees together. Meryl Streep is an honorary member as was Leonard Bernstein. The members of the Century Association and those of the American Academy of Arts and Letters overlap, creating kind of the inner aristocracy of the arts. I was the president of the Arts and Letters for 3 years, a great honor but doesn’t get you anything.”

I’m getting antsy to go home to watch the Clinton/Trump debate. Philip is frustrated he hasn’t worked on my eyes yet, “I’m waiting for the golden moment which eventually happens in every painting.” I ask if I can have a lip on the right side of my face. He says, “There’s a highlight, should I ignore it?” And then, “I’ll do my best to lie.”

Other stories from the evening:

“Sante D’Orazio was a student of mine and then a studio assistant and friend.” We looked at the book, *Pamela Anderson: American Icon* that Sante gave Philip, chuckling about the quote, “The Taliban is after American bombshells.” Philip recounted a story about when he was sailing with Sante and Philip’s model Crolie (nee Carol Pierce). “During a lull when the wind died, Sante told of going to church with an older cousin and when Sante asked what does I.N.R.I. over the crucifix mean, his cousin said ‘I’m Nailed Right In.’ In the boat we all laughed. A few minutes later the sky darkened, the winds were howling and Crolie, who had never been on the water before, was terrified because she thought it was because we had laughed at the sacrilegious joke.”

“When I was growing up, I lived with my parents, grandmother, and all these young

aunts and uncles in a two bedroom house in Squirrel Hill, near Greenfield. They didn’t have a pot to piss in, but were very funny. My young uncles used my bowl full of guppies as their spittoon and teased me about my making art. I would make theater sets on the card table that I was also getting my Hebrew lessons on. Even though we had nothing, theater was very cheap at the time and I and a couple of high school friends would go see the live productions of plays like *Julius Caesar*, staged by Orson Welles et al. Martin Friedman (who years later became the director of the Walker Art Center for three decades) was one of those friends. We had a great art teacher in high school, Joseph Fitzpatrick, who sent us to Saturday morning art Classes at The Carnegie Museum, which has a great collection. Martin and I would go there every Saturday morning for painting classes, and afterwards wandered around the Museum’s collections. We took the long route home walking home through Schenely



Philip Pearlstein, *MERRY-GO-ROUND*, 1940, oil on board, 14 x 18 inches

Park past a small carrousel. One day we decided to write a play about murder on the merry-go round. I did a painting of the set that I was going to make a 3D model of for our never-produced play. Anyway, that merry-go-round really existed and my painting won a first prize in Scholastic Magazine’s 14th annual High School Art Awards. (Reginald Marsh was on the jury.) It was reproduced in *Life Magazine* on June 16, 1941 and from then on I was a big shot and my relatives didn’t laugh at me anymore. My career as a painter was launched.”

“Many years later after I had switched from Abstract Expressionism to Realism, I never forgave Martin for later writing as a museum director, ‘the realists, like the poor, will always be with us.’

Getting ready to leave I asked him what he’s doing for the Jewish Holidays, “I’m too old to sin.”



7th Sitting: October 3, 2016

Oy. The best dinner ever for Rosh Hashanah. It was my chicken soup with matzoh balls and chopped liver on challah. Was made an apple tart.

“Because of my high school prizes, I got a scholarship for my first year at Carnegie. However I was drafted into the army on my 18th birthday (my birthday is in May), but since I received a scholarship for my 1st year of college, I got a deferment for the academic year and went into the army a month after my 19th birthday. After 3 years in the war, I returned to Carnegie and was in the same class with Andy, and met Dorothy. Her good friend, Eleanor Simon, had nurtured Andy through high school because he was obviously dyslexic. He couldn’t do any of the academic stuff and Eleanor – ‘Ellie’ - encouraged him to make art. The four of us went out as a group.”

We talked about Philip’s early career when he was getting well known for painting expressionist landscapes, which were shown extensively. “The minute I started painting realist nudes in 1959, critics hated it, yet I decided to keep at it. My first major show was at the University of Georgia in Athens, and Linda Nochlin wrote the catalogue. The fellow who was the curator ended up being kicked out of his job as a result. The show traveled to Flint, Michigan where I had been scheduled to give a talk. At midnight, the night before the talk, I got a call telling me to cancel my plans. A police cordon had been put around the museum and you had to show proof of age to get in. They had removed 4 paintings which went into a locked room where you had to get special permission to enter. There was no publicity about the show.”

“When I was the Acting Deputy Chairman of the art department at the Brooklyn College, I brought Louise Bourgeois in. Her husband, Robert Goldwater, was a great art historian who organized the study of African art at the Institute of Fine Arts. Her subject matter came out of his writing and she never acknowledged him. She led a student rebellion against me at Brooklyn College because, at the time, when I got designated Deputy Chairman in charge of the studio program, each of the faculty members was teaching their own thing based on the name of the course. I thought there should be some coordination. I was giving my students specific assignments based on the history of art styles. Louise felt there should be no ‘dictatorship’ and everyone should do whatever they wanted, teachers and students. I didn’t think that was an education. Louise said I was drunk with power.”



8th Sitting: October 10, 2016

Dinner was spaghetti with Bolognese and fresh salad from the farm across the street in Jamesport.

Philip said his oft-quoted “I get my highs by using my eyes.”

Philip told me he had a meeting with the other ex-presidents (titled Emeritus) of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The number of members was set by congress in the 1870s or 80s at 250. Since most of the members are well over seventy, into their eighties and nineties with a number between 95-100 years old; every couple of weeks he gets a card from the Academy announcing who died. (Edward Albee was the last one.) The current members propose new members, voted on by department (music, literature, architecture, and fine arts). The four meetings per year are at their remarkable beaux art buildings, on 155th Street overlooking a beautiful 19th century cemetery.

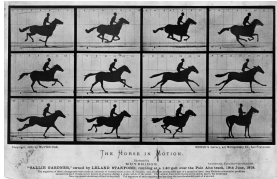
Another vital title of Philip’s is that of a collector. His loft is full of kilim carpets, all kinds of vintage toys, Pre-Columbian artifacts and everything else you can think of. Besides being curious about all objects, Pearlstein uses them in his paintings. He started seriously collecting when he began lecturing as a visiting artist around the US. Considering the \$100.00 or so as “play money,” not like his salary from teaching, which supported the family, Philip would use it to buy things. One of his early students many years later opened the first shop that sold Americana and folk art on Madison Avenue. After coming back from a lecture, Philip would run around town paying dealers. The most he ever spent on an object was \$30,000 for a magnificent Pre-Columbian vessel in the shape of a parrot on its back.

The lectures were controversial even though he never spoke about anything sexual. Usually one half of the faculty thought he was “the devil’s representative.” He would talk about art history and what he took from 20th century developments and how the figure is the most important aspect of the design-structure of the work, how the model’s personality doesn’t come into play.

“I had an exhibition in London in 1975 at the Gimpel Fils Gallery; the openings was crowded, surprisingly since so many avoided crowds because of the spate of Irish

bombings at the time, but order had just been restored. Lucien Freud, I was later told by the dealer, was among the artist visitors who attended my talk at the opening, and whatever he said in interviews in the next couple of years was often based on what I had said. The first decade of my career superseded Freud's by a few years and his first large scale paintings (which got a lot of attention) echoed mine."

"I also met David Hockney in New York when he was young, just before his first exhibition here. Many years later, after he was practically an old master, he wrote a book on northern European and Italian Renaissance realism, *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Master*", which discussed how the introduction of the camera obscura and the camera lucida changed the direction of art in Europe. From Van Eyck and Vermeer to Degas and Eakins, he writes about realists using the camera." Philip wrote about Thomas Eakins and Eadweard Muybridge's photographs influence on painting and artist's use of photography. "Duchamp's sensational painting, *Nude Descending the Staircase, No 2*, was shown at the 1913 Armory show. It was copied by Duchamp from a published diagram made by the French photographer, Étienne-Jules Marey, who in turn was influenced by Eakins and Muybridge work. Marey invited Muy-



Eadweard Muybridge, *The Horse in Motion*, 1878, albumen printed on card

bridge to come to Paris and give a demonstration at his studio by projecting slides made from Muybridge's sequential photos of figures in motion. Degas, Seurat and Rodin were among the many artists in the audience."

"A billionaire had once bet another racing horse owner that a horse always had one hoof on the ground while trotting. He hired Muybridge to take photos to prove his point. Muybridge set up wires to trigger a row of cameras in succession as the horse ran past; Muybridge won the bet as indeed all four hooves were off the ground. Then Eakins invited Muybridge to do a project sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania to photograph athletes and animals in motion. Muybridge had earlier become famous when he was on trial for shooting his wife after he found her in bed with a lover. He was acquitted and moved to South America (where he took photographs of landscapes that were used by one of the "Hudson River" painters)."

"Hockney invited me to speak at a two day seminar at NYU about the theories put



Philip Pearlstein, *Linda Nochlin and Richard Pommer*, 1968, oil on canvas, 72 x 68 inches

forward in his book. Chuck Close and I were the only practicing artists to speak, the others were critics and art historians, including Linda Nochlin. As Chuck paints from photos, I was the only one to talk about painting from direct vision- I work from what I see in front of me, but I set up what's in front of me. Linda Nochlin made a sensation by showing the dress she wore for my wedding portrait of her. Someone in the audience asked if I ever work from photos, and I said no, but I always take a picture of the setup, to show the IRS how I spend my money. It got huge laugh, the only laugh in the seminar. Michael Kimmelman from the *New York Times* was at the conference and asked to visit my studio. As I usually work on the same painting for about two months, he wanted to watch and see how my paintings develop. In Kimmelman's book, *The Accidental Masterpiece*, the 2nd chapter is a description of his visits."

We finished the session by talking about the continuing influence of Dada; how the found object is being made into art. How the juxtaposition of unexpected objects is basic to Italian Futurism, which is all about speed; going fast is a drug, "maybe that's why speed is called speed."



9th Sitting: October 17, 2016

Chicken and corn barbecued on grill with salad.

Once we set up for the session, Philip says, “People think my work is gross.” I say, “you’ve outlived them all and your work has a secure place in art history.” Philip retorts, “I’m sorry to hear that; you mean I’ve lost my purpose?”

“Dorothy now has a website with her complete works. The website establishes her as an artist in her own right. Now it becomes an estate problem.”



Philip Pearlstein, *Self Portrait/Portrait of George Klauber*, 1948-1949, casein on masonite, 31 5/8 x 24 3/8 inches
Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of George Klauber, 2005.20.1

“George Klauber was the reason that Andy and I ended up in New York. He was a fellow GI Bill student at Carnegie Tech, our first year back, but as he had had his first year at Pratt Institute, and was from Brooklyn, he went back to Pratt to finish there. He was also working as assistant to the art director of *Fortune* Magazine, Will Burtin. Those were the days when *Fortune* put contemporary artists’ work on their covers. George convinced us to visit him in New York during our last Easter vacation at Carnegie. The 3 of us slept in his bed near Pratt, and he persuaded us move to New York. When we got there the next year, George gave us his Rolodex of all of the art director’s secretary’s contact information, telling us to use his name. We decided that Andy should visit the art directors first because he was a shoe-in for illustrations; his portfolio was so charming. I would go next: my portfolio was partly made up of visual training aids of Infantry weapons I had made while in the Army, and of illustrations of the ideas that went into the writing of the U.S. Constitution, based on my idea that visual aids would be useful in public school education. He was also the one who introduced Andy to New York’s underground gay world. Later, one of his students from Pratt was Robert Wilson, who cast George as an ostrich in his first production, *Einstein on the Beach*.”

“One never expected to sell paintings in those days, and I never had much of a market.”

“In the middle of writing my thesis on Francis Picabia for my Masters of Art from the Institute of Fine Arts, Picabia died, in 1953. Tom Hess of *ArtNews* and Hilton Kramer at *Arts Digest* contacted the Institute and asked if anyone knew anything about Picabia. At that time, Duchamp and Picabia were off the map as artists. But Picabia’s ideas were basic to what was going on in American art. He was the only European artist to show up at the Armory show (reporters thought he was Picasso because their names are so similar). At the time Dorothy had gotten a degree from Columbia’s Teacher’s College, and had a teaching job in a public school, so I took time off from Sutnar to finish my thesis. Tom Hess rejected my draft for the article because he thought it was too serious, and not about ‘bubbles and champagne.’ I told him that they (Picabia and Duchamp) were nihilists out to destroy culture from within. Hilton Kramer accepted the draft but had me rework it; it took another 3 months in a house we rented for the summer in Montauk. Hilton finally accepted my 3rd draft.”

“At the time, Andy was making money as the highest paid illustrator in the US. For us, it was unthinkable amounts of money. He was doing I. Miller shoe advertisements. I got him a job at *Life Magazine* to illustrate a major article about the use of drugs in high schools, which never was printed. At the time, he and Dorothy talked on the phone for hours about their lives (mostly his).”





10th Sitting: October 24, 2016

Bouillabaisse tonight, PP said it was better than one he had in Italy.

Moving to the studio, we listen to Beethoven's 'Moonlight' *Sonata*. Philip starts in on my right hand.

He tells me a story about Andy trying to help him in the early days of television.

"It was 1949 and Andy had met the woman in charge of educational programming at NBC television. He told her about the project I did in college about the U.S. Constitution and set up a date for her to meet me. She had an office filled with 19th century posters, including original Toulouse Lautrec's. I was very impressed, and she was equally impressed with the fact I knew these artists. She couldn't do anything with the project but had an idea. She wanted to use the Broadway singer, Lorenzo Fuller, who sang 'It's too Darn Hot' in the original production of 'Kiss Me Kate'. She thought of having him singing songs about early U.S. history while I would draw illustrations in lemon juice on newsprint paper because the camera would not pick up the lemon juice drawing, but on camera I'd trace the lines in charcoal (it was before the time of magic markers.) Because Fuller was black, the bosses at NBC said he had to be an Uncle Remus type. She found it so insulting to him that the project didn't happen. She visited us in our loft a few months later and said she was dying of cancer. She did die within the year, but now had the idea of hooking me up with the man who wrote *Daniel Boone*. The Daniel Boone guy sang while I drew. We did an in-house broadcast for the people in charge. The verdict at NBC was that it was the most boring thing they ever saw."

"The fall of 1951, the year Dorothy and I were married, I started out at the Institute of Fine Arts. We used the library at the Metropolitan Museum. One of the books I came across was Paul Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook*. It was essentially the course he taught at the Bauhaus. The Bauhaus mission was to teach art to people who were going to be designers or architects, not artists. It's about 'taking a line for a walk.' I rewrote a version for the woman at NBC. She liked it. My friend Leonard Kessler and his wife, Ethel, who had been working on a summer camp program for children, had just moved to New York, and I introduced him to her because he was charming and outgoing and a natural performer. He used my script with his illustrations. Everybody loved it! But as a TV program it never came off because a sponsor could not be found for it. Leonard then had the opportunity to publish it as a children's book. He called

it something like “All in Line”. I gave him whatever rights I had. He ended up being a famous children’s book author. By then I was deep into art history and my own career as an abstract expressionist artist.”

“The first major article I published after the Picabia article was called ‘Figure Paintings Today Are Not Made in Heaven.’ The first line is, ‘De Kooning did not go to heaven to see Marilyn Monroe.’”

“When we returned to Rome in 1980, I had the position of Visiting Artist at the American Academy in Rome as advisor to the Fellows in Art. We had an apartment in the Academy. It was supposed to be for a year, but I only wanted to have the post for three months. It was a terribly cold winter. It was too cold to ask a model to pose so I only did a self-portrait. I did the portrait looking into a mirror which allowed me to include the complex view of Rome from my studio window. I devoted myself to taking photo slides with an antique stereo camera, about 900 stereo shots of antiquities and sites around Rome and Sicily. Al Held, who was a trustee of the Academy, and his then wife Sylvia Stone were almost our constant companions. (After we were there, the Academy renovated the building and put in a heating system.) While in Rome, I read *The Great Roman-Jewish War* by Flavius Josephus. It was about the destruction of the Temple. Josephus was a Jewish Army Commander who was captured. While a prisoner he became a confidant of the Emperor Tiberius who led the war, and I decided I had to do a painting of Jerusalem.”

“Philip Guston was very elegant – in contrast to the other artists he was always very well groomed. I really liked him. Apparently Mercedes and he had an affair. Harold Rosenberg, the critic also had an affair with Mercedes. His wife, May Natalie Tabak wrote a revenge novel about the art world in East Hampton, *But Not For Love Alone*. It’s about the art world at the time and she identified everybody. Even then, I was an outsider. One of my collectors rode in a taxi with Harold Rosenberg and Natalie, when she mentioned that she had a couple of my paintings, Rosenberg went on a tirade against me. Rosenberg didn’t like Tanager Gallery because we put on our own shows with artists we thought should be exhibited, usurping the power of the critics. When the collector defended my work, Natalie said ‘you just insulted one of the great minds of America’ (meaning Harold Rosenberg). Rosenberg hated my work and also that I had the presumption to write about art. Clement Greenberg liked my work. He curated a show called ‘Emerging Talent’, which Ad Reinhardt called ‘Emergency Talent.’ (Ad was instrumental in getting me tenured at Brooklyn College. But we were

once stuck in an elevator together and he said to me, ‘you’re going to be responsible for the souls of all the people that you’ve painted.’) He was deeply religious and would spend two weeks every year in a monastery that practiced silence. I said, ‘they’re not people, they are paintings.’ “

“In the 1950’s we lived on Avenue A in a loft. There was a storefront on the ground floor and the loft was upstairs. Directly across the street was a place where many writers had lived, referred to as ‘Paradise Alley’ (501 East 11th Street). On the north side of Tomkins Square Park there were elegant townhouses.”

“When I returned from my Fulbright in Rome, I rejoined Mercedes’ drawing group on MacDougal Alley. Mercedes hated the way I drew and made no bones about it, as she was into Cezanne and Giacometti (making marks in order to find forms in space rather than making outlines of the forms). We met every Sunday night from 6:00 pm until midnight. You couldn’t talk at all. Jack Tworokov drew beautifully but destroyed everything. He was a great friend of de Kooning’s and partially supported him. De Kooning lived like a bum, his loft had no heat and it was freezing.”

“By the late 1950s I got a lot of attention but so many disliked my dealer, Alan Frumkin (he always smoked cigars and would blow smoke in the face of the visitors), as well as the critic Hilton Kramer who gave me the best reviews. I got well known due to all the negatives, which, I guess, worked to my benefit. The trouble is I had training as an art historian and I was applying it to myself and my work. What else can you write about besides yourself?”



11th Sitting: October 31, 2016

Halloween night. I made chicken Marbella with sautéed cherry tomatoes for supper. Music selection was Ravel and Colette's opera, *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, which is the scariest Halloween music Philip could find.

"The first time we went to Israel was to make prints." Philip was the first artist to be invited to work at the University of South Florida's Graphic studio in 1969. "The fellow who started it, Donald Saff, was a former graduate student at Pratt. He's the one who made Rauschenberg internationally famous. Bob moved to South Florida to be close to Donald." Philip continually made prints there, culminating in his woodblock masterprint in 1987, 'Jerusalem: Kidron Valley' which is 40" x 119".



Philip Pearlstein, *Jerusalem, Kidron Valley*, 1987-88, woodcut, 40 x 119 inches

While in Jerusalem to make the water-color painting from which to make the color separations for the woodblock print, he climbed down into the Kidron Valley which is the site of the biblical city, where there is an ancient 50' underground water well, reached by a steep staircase that he climbed down to visit once. In the valley he made a drawing on an aluminum lithographic plate of the ruins of an ancient Roman rock-cut tomb. He became friendly with the Arab man at the bottom of the valley who ran a concession stand selling cold soda to tourists. "He sold me an ancient gold coin of St. Helen, which was genuine." He also invited Philip and Dorothy to his home in the valley for a dinner, which they attended despite warnings from the artists of the Jerusalem Print Workshop. At the dinner they were treated with honor by the host and his male relatives and friends in his elegantly furnished dining room, while the women of the house sat outside the room. After some musical performances by the men, they were driven back up to their own place.

Joseph conquered Jerusalem because of this underground water supply.

“Back in Florida, with all of the changing humidity, the paper kept expanding and shrinking, during the printing of the wood blocks. There are 18 color separations in the print! Donald Saff invented a way of transferring images by using my work on Mylar that traced the color areas of the watercolor painting to make negative transparencies of my positive transparencies. He then coated the wood blocks with his own formula to make old fashioned sun-prints with these negatives so that the sun did the first cutting of the color areas”. After spending 2 weeks correcting it, they printed 60 copies, kept 20, gave him 1, the others which had too many miss-registrations were destroyed. “When it came out, it wasn’t what people wanted; after all, the Dome of the Rock is in the center. There were no Jewish buyers. The other problem is that they had to be shipped in a crate that was 10 feet by 3 feet, which isn’t easy.”





12th Sitting: November 7, 2016

Dinner was lamb burgers with potatoes au gratin, tomatoes and red onions. We watched election television. Like everyone else, we thought Hillary Clinton was going to win.

Philip worked that day on a portrait of his friend's, (Kurt Gitter, a well-known ophthalmologist) wife, Alice Rae Yelen. Philip had met Kurt earlier when their children were little. Many years later, when Dorothy's eyesight began to go, Kurt got her to a clinic that helped. Kurt and Alice are collectors of Outsider Art and Japanese screens from the Edo Period. "Alice is a well-educated person but she honestly thought that self-taught artists were original inventors and that all artists who go to art schools are taught what they do. I contradicted her by saying that all the really important artists invented their own way of working (think of Cezanne and Picasso), they educate themselves and learn little in art schools. I was an exception because I studied art history at the Institute of Fine Arts. Nor had she understood the patronage system, i.e., that the Popes of the Renaissance came from wealthy banking families and that in the low countries it was the wealthy merchants who commissioned paintings. Rembrandt survived on commissions. Gericault was from a wealthy family but gave up his family wealth to live in abject poverty; he was one of the first documented Bohemian types and set a pattern for European artists without patronage."



The Gershwin we listened to was "Of Thee I Sing", and "Let Them Eat Cake."

"I did a portrait of Gilda Buchbinder in 1976. She was very skinny, wearing a Missoni dress which looked knitted on her. Her daughter, Leslie, did a film on the Hairy Who of Chicago. During the same time period, I did a portrait of Cardinal Krol which I thought was also a great painting. He, however, thought it didn't reflect his spiritual side."

Philip Pearlstein, *Portrait of His Eminence, John, Cardinal Krol, of Philadelphia*, 1976, oil on canvas, 72 x 60 inches

Philip's 'heavy book' is another wonderful story. "The publisher went bankrupt, lost everything including his wife, and the book was remaindered

before it came out. *The Strand* ended up distributing it. The book had come into being one day when I was on my Catamaran with a friend on the Great South Bay in Fire Island. He mentioned that his father had left him and his brother a large printing company, was a printer of *ArtNews*, etc. and that he was going to turn over the business to his brother as he wanted to buy a house in Connecticut and have people come to use a kit which would turn a Volkswagen bug into a Cadillac. There was a lull in the wind and he asked whether I ever thought of changing my career. I replied that painting is what I always wanted to do, but I could see that this career could get better. He asked, 'what would make your career better?' I said I'd like a big important museum one-man exhibition in a major city with a big book. A couple of hours after we got back he telephoned and said he had a publisher for the book: a guest in his neighbor's house who used to work with Harry Abrams but had started his own company publishing coffee table art books, now wanted to publish books on current American artists. I went to the neighbor's house and it was a done deal within 3 hours of mentioning it. But the publisher said we would need a scholar to write it. At home, I remembered a young man who I met at a cocktail party at the Buchbinders in Chicago who asked my permission to write his doctoral thesis on my work. I called Gilda and asked if she recalled the man's name. She explained that it was Russell Bowman who was now working in the education department at the Art Institute of Chicago. I called him that night and he told me that he had just been appointed to be the Assistant Curator at the Milwaukee Art Museum and had used the beginning of his dissertation and proposal of a one man exhibition as a sample for his application. He agreed to write the book as the catalogue raisonne for a show. Things should always happen like that."



Philip Pearlstein, *Gilda Buchbinder*, 1976 , oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches



13th Sitting: November 14, 2016

I made French lentil soup accompanied by Taleggio, sopressata and bread from Eat-aly.

We joke about the portrait that will never be finished because Dorothy and Philip adore Vas' and my cooking.

Put on Bach, "The Art of the Fugue." Andy and Philip took piano lessons in college from a fellow student, who started them off with a fugue by Bach. Their teacher thought they were not serious and the only piece Philip learned was the opening fugue of the second book of Bach's "Well Tempered Clavier".

We begin the session with Philip telling me what's left to do in the painting. "Need to sharpen your chin, heighten the whites, which become transparent when it dries, and get rid of any brush marks, in other words, not show 'the hand.'"



Applying eyeliner

Later, de Kooning had a child not by his wife, but with the twin sister of the woman who was the mistress of Franz Kline."

"The 1950's was the best time in America for the arts. What was so exciting at the time was that painters like de Kooning never cared about money. In fact, if they sold something it was almost embarrassing. We would all meet on Friday nights at the 'Artist's Club' at 39 East 8th Street, across from the old Whitney Museum on Eighth Street to talk about ideas. A lot of the artists were teaching but didn't mention it because it was considered an embarrassment to teach. There was no art market, it was all about ideas. Dorothy and I were busy having three babies in a row.

"I picked up my discipline for the Institute of Fine Arts from working with Sutnar. I learned his method of constructing charts of ideas and thus jumped from a schmucky, dumb C-student into someone who could think and construct ideas. At the time, I met a fellow student, Lucia Sherwin (completely made up name) who was married to Dolph Sherwin, who years before had been the display director of Kaufmann's department store in Pittsburgh. She offered to teach me French for free. She had lived

in Paris and I went to her apartment on 79th Street one day a week. I learned from her that all language is a construction, like architecture. One built phrases, clauses, tenses. In my second year at the Institute of Fine Arts, I was especially turned on by a Professor, Jose Lopez-Rey. The course set me on fire! Most of the other people in the class were bored but I LOVED it. The basic idea was the comparative and parallel development between Picasso and James Joyce. They're practically the same age, born 5 months apart. The reading material was James Joyce. For example, Picasso's Blue Period and Rose Period compared with Joyce's *The Dubliners*. The beginning of cubism corresponds to *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. The move into surrealism was *Ulysses*. We all took turns reading Joyce aloud which was the first time I ever spoke publicly. Among the slides he showed, were images of early Dali, nothing to do with the slick later work. Gertrude Stein figures in all of this, I read all her books and poetry, playing around with language. Her work, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is basic reading for the understanding of 20th century art. In it, she gives recipes for fudge and brownies made with cannabis. Along comes Picabia, his wife, Gabrielle Buffet and Duchamp. They became a trio playing word games. Picabia was a brilliant poet as well. All of the Futurists didn't need to make money, they came from wealthy families. (Severini, Boccioni, Marinetti et al.) They loved the idea of war and pushed fascism. Apollinaire was the critic mostly of the Cubists."

"Picabia was the only artist from Europe who came to the 1913 Armory Show. The Press thought he was Picasso because of the similarity of their names and he was swamped upon arrival at the Pier by reporters."





14th Sitting: November 21, 2016

Dinner was skirt steak with mushrooms; green beans on the side. Listened to Miles Davis, “In a Silent Way” with Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea.

“Where’s my victim?” Philip asks. Tonight is touch-up. We talk about his life as a collector. “Every Time I needed money, I sold things for a profit. Never sold anything for a loss. One of the pieces where we didn’t get a great gain is worth a great deal now. A weathervane griffin (half dragon and half eagle) with a coiled tail ending in a huge point, made by Fisk. It’s American, supposedly there were two, but only one survived. Ed Merrin, a Pre-Columbian dealer had bought it from a dealer, who got it from a convent in NY State and had an exhibition of Americana. I went to see the exhibition at his gallery and draped over my arm was my winter coat. After admiring this griffin I heard a loud metallic crash behind me; my jacket had caught on the tip of its wing, it fell to the floor, and the wing broke off. Feeling guilty, I asked ‘how much?’ It was \$10,000. My salary at Brooklyn College was small, but my lecturing paid for my collection. Ed allowed me to pay on time. Brooklyn College liked the publicity I would get from lecturing and the press I received. Merrin was a terrific person and would have experts on pre-Columbian art lecture once a month at his gallery. We would go and he became a personal friend. He had bought three of my paintings which scandalized his religious father who thought the paintings brought shame to the family. I bought the griffin, it took me a year to pay it off. You can’t believe how beautiful it was; lightning had struck it and it was covered with gold leaf which had bubbled up, caught the light, and the whole thing glittered. I had it on the ground floor of the playroom with a 19th century floor lamp stand as its base. A collector came to look at my work and wanted to buy it. I wouldn’t sell. Had it for ten years, sold it back to Ed for \$25,000. He then sold it for \$50,000. My dealer then, Stuart Feld at Hirschl & Adler, was so impressed that I had owned it, he had new respect for me.”

Picabia show opened at MoMA this week. “My thesis interpreted everything sexually. I translated every fucking poem of his. It didn’t fit in with the Museum of Modern Art’s concept of Dada. Picabia was so persuasive in the talks he gave; his theories became dominant in American arts education.”



“How’s my patient/victim holding up?”

Julia and Steven come to deliver Thanksgiving fixings. “I think he’s done,” I tell them.

“Daddy, the hair isn’t purple enough, needs more ultramarine (I’m a Pearlstein!).”

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