

# ALONSOVILLE VOICE

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

SUMMER 2023

ISSUE NO. 10



# **Timothy App: The Making of an Artist**

by David Bolton

**This summer issue of the Alonsoville Voice, the Arts issue, is brought to you by:**

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**Cover art is by our featured artist: Timothy App**  
**Outlier 2022** acrylic on canvas 60 x 60 inches

He described himself as a loner as a child. Growing up in an Akron, Ohio suburban neighborhood filled with children, he participated in play, even organizing a Civil War reenactment, but he also found ways to be alone so he could devote himself to building various objects like airplanes, Civil War muskets, and go-carts. Young Timothy loved being in the basement with his Dad's tools. His father showed him how to use them.

Areas of woods and swamps fascinated the child. "I would wander the woods endlessly," he said in a recent interview, "looking for places to build forts. I didn't attach myself to individuals easily."

His mother, a trained nurse who gave up her career to raise her family, "pushed" her second son at age 9 to attend a tryout for Little League. "It wasn't the first thing on my list." Nevertheless, baseball would play a big role in his life, both as a game and a venue for his competitive spirit.

Another big influence was the Catholic Church, in particular, the education at Saint Sebastian elementary school. "No matter what, you learned. They had really good sports: basketball, football and baseball. And the girls were cute." To this day, while no longer a practicing Catholic, Timothy contributes to the school. "They know me. We're still connected." In the 7th and 8th grade, he was a server at Mass. Being a loner, he considered the idea of the priesthood. "I had great respect for the rituals. I got to see what goes on behind the scenes." As an altar boy, he served "a higher purpose." The idea of a calling made sense, something preordained. The larger theological questions also intrigued him.

His parents worried about young Timothy. He was expected to fit in. "Right from the start I knew that wasn't going to happen. I was very independent." That frame of mind would serve him well as an artist but not with his parents. He wasn't living up to potential. He was a slow reader and had trouble with math. And his parents took good education seriously. For that reason, they made a financial and emotional sacrifice to send their 14-year-old son to Campion, a Jesuit boarding school in Wisconsin, 600 miles from home.

Aside from family vacations in the Midwest, the boy had not strayed far from Akron. Now he was thrust among "a whole bunch of guys" he didn't know. Timothy called it "a game changer." His independent streak helped him deal with what was to come. It would be a challenging environment, "emotionally, physically, academically and athletically."

## **Discovery, Pain & Rebellion**

At Campion, there were no art classes and little encouragement regarding art. One Jesuit, Paul Megan,

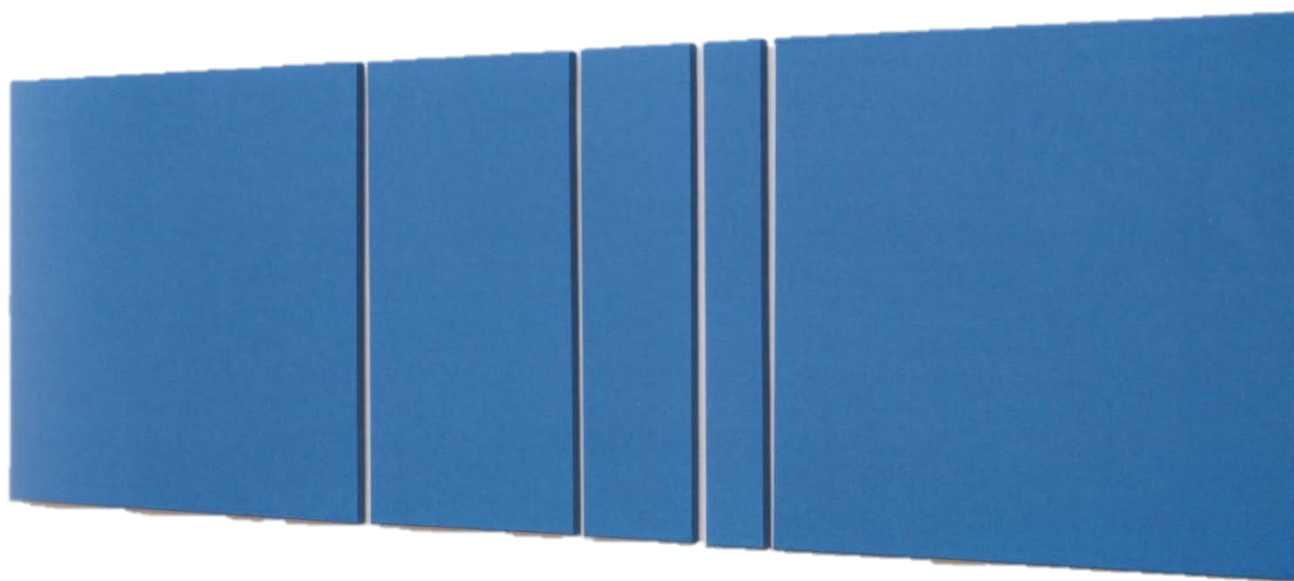


Timothy App, Akron, 1950

initiated a design course, and a few boys showed up, among them Timothy. Not only was this Jesuit a semi-trained artist, he was also the glee club director. He “fueled” the boy’s interest in art and music, particularly in classical music. Once, he gathered together a group of interested students to listen to a new recording of Shostakovich’s 5th Symphony. “This music blew me away.” It seemed radical, abstract, and very challenging. Megan also introduced him to the Abstract Expressionist movement in art. This prompted App to seek out a painting by Jackson Pollock at the Art Institute of Chicago during a train layover on the way home for Christmas vacation in 1963. The work is titled Greyed Rainbow and measures 6 by 8 feet. “If this is painting,” he said to himself, “then I want to be a painter.”

In his sophomore year, Timothy brought an old guitar from home and taught himself to play. With a growing interest in American folk music, he became aware of the folk music revival of that time. He formed a group called The Exiles that performed on and off campus. He was the first person to introduce fellow students to Bob Dylan (who no one liked!), along with a host of other folksingers.

At the same time, he was making art occasionally in the school’s art room, along with a few other interested students, and making illustrations for the school newspaper. The possibility of becoming an artist was growing. He was also writing poetry and essays. Literary aspirations complicated matters. To fend off boarding school boredom, he and his roommate attempted to memorize T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” To this day, he can recite a good bit of the poem. All this time, Timothy was dealing with the pain of sciatica, the result of a herniated disk suffered while pitching in a baseball game. The doctors didn’t know what to do. During freshman year at Campion, Timothy had to wear a brace and was in constant pain. No wonder his grades suffered. Then a doctor, a physician for the Cleveland Browns, put him on an exercise routine. At Campion, the boy was religious about doing the prescribed exercises. Eventually the pain receded, allowing him to try out and play sports, especially baseball.



Untitled 1961 acrylic on canvas 36 x 112 inches

By the end of high school, he knew he had to study art. His aspiration drew resistance from the Jesuits, more so from his parents. They did not spend all that money on a college preparatory boarding school for him to go to art school. Angry that his interests were not considered, he refused going to school altogether. Instead, he would embark on a post-high school summer adventure. Timothy and a buddy spent the summer on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota working with the Oglala Sioux Indians. He coached baseball, life guarded at the pool, and helped to care for the reservation horses. Here, amid Native American abject poverty, Timothy experienced racial prejudice for the first time. He was one of the few whites on the reservation. He found the experience to be “a social eye-opener.” First came skepticism among the Indians, and even hatred. But Timothy and his partner remained friendly and open and won over his hosts. By the end of summer, he was an invited guest at a Sun Dance, where whites were usually not admitted.

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*“Flint challenged me for four years, in classes and independent studies.”*

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When Timothy returned home to Akron, he still refused to go to college. His parents were quiet. They didn’t push him. They were waiting for him to “wake up.”



Untitled 1968 newspaper and enamel on wood 12 x 20 inches

## **Kent State**

One hot afternoon in late August, Timothy walked into the Kent State art office and told the lady at the desk he wanted to study art. “Have a seat,” she said and went to look for a faculty member. There happened to be on campus that day Mel Somerosky, a world-renowned fiber artist. He showed the young man around. Timothy and Mel would become good friends. “I have endless gratitude for his support. He was the first person to say ‘yes’ to my interest in studying art.”

Being from a high-performance boarding school, Timothy had no problem being accepted so late at Kent State. His parents did not object to his decision. Overwhelmed with the plethora of higher educational possibilities, the young man thought he had “died and gone to heaven.” No longer angry about his prospects, he had a path. But it did not include architecture, another path he had considered. Timothy had no desire to deal with clients. He knew he wanted total “freedom of artistic expression.” Another decision he made was to not play college baseball. He decided in his freshman year to focus on the study of fine art and art history.

His first drawing teacher was Leroy Flint, a man in his mid-50s. Flint became a “true mentor in college and life.” He taught by analogy, likening drawing and the perception of form to nature and other life experiences. Flint had been the director of the Akron Art Institute before coming to teach at Kent to run the college galleries. He asked the 18-year-old to work as a gallery assistant, helping as he organized exhibitions brought in from outside, including from galleries in New York. “Flint challenged me for four years, both in classes and in independent studies.” He encouraged the young man to take what was started all the way to completion, no matter what. There was always room for improvement. The shows that Flint organized at Kent always included first-rate contemporary art from which the young artist learned much.

As an undergraduate, like all serious art students, Timothy spent some time aping other artists, “trying things on, seeing what it’s like to paint like artists as varied as Andrew Wyeth, Willem de Kooning, or the Minimalists.” He had a huge appetite for the history of modern art. Life was full. He developed a strong friendship with Michael McCafferty, a fellow “refugee from Catholic high school education.” One day in September 1967, Mike and Timothy, “a couple of midwestern bumpkins,” headed to New York to check out the art scene in the museums and galleries. It was Timothy’s initial first-hand experience with the New York art scene. In the evening they explored the folk music venues and off-Broadway theater in the Village.



**Ascent #1 1972** acrylic on canvas 24 x 60 inches  
Collection Tamara Holzapfel and Richard Tomason, Albuquerque, NM

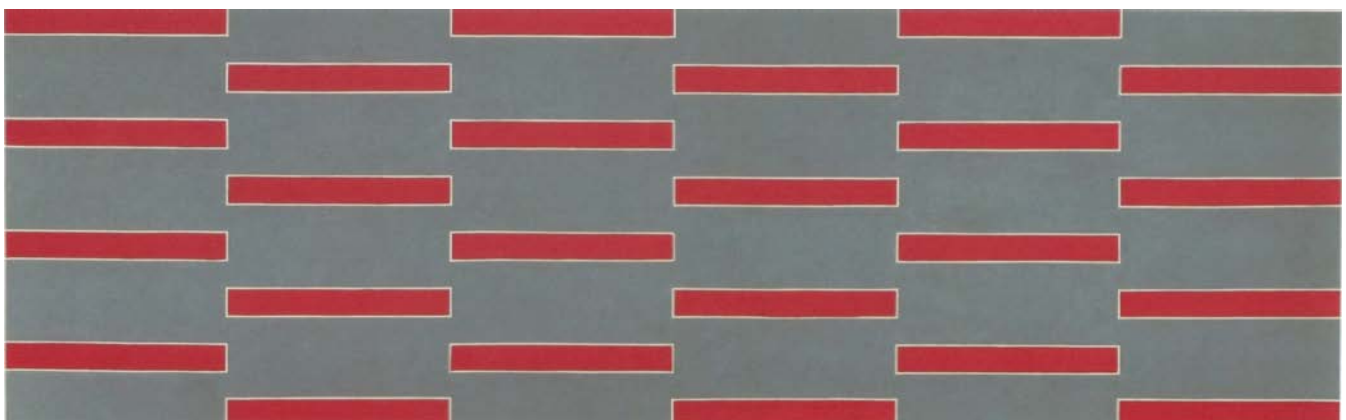
Then came his first back operation, a re-herniated disk. He was back to where he started, severe sciatica in the right leg, and he couldn't stand the pain. A surgeon removed the disc material impinging the nerve. It would be the first of four back surgeries to date.

Timothy traveled periodically to New York to view exhibitions of contemporary art. He was moved by the Art of the Real exhibition at MOMA, featuring work "very reduced and singular, holistic, pared down, and in some cases, constructed rather than composed." To Timothy, his response to this seemed "genuine, preordained...something deeply ingrained, waiting to be discovered." The exhibition had properties of "radical simplicity," and was not so easy to do. Like the Pollock painting he saw in Chicago, much of the work in the Art of the Real show struck "a deep chord" and reinforced his growth as an artist.

In the spring semester, 1968, he studied at the University of the Americas, just outside of Mexico City, where he was exposed to Mesoamerican art and architecture. The geometry of this art was wedded to the indigenous systems of knowledge and belief. He absorbed the sites at Mitla and Oaxaca, how they were laid out according to the passage of the stars and planets. This exposure would have an impact later in his career.

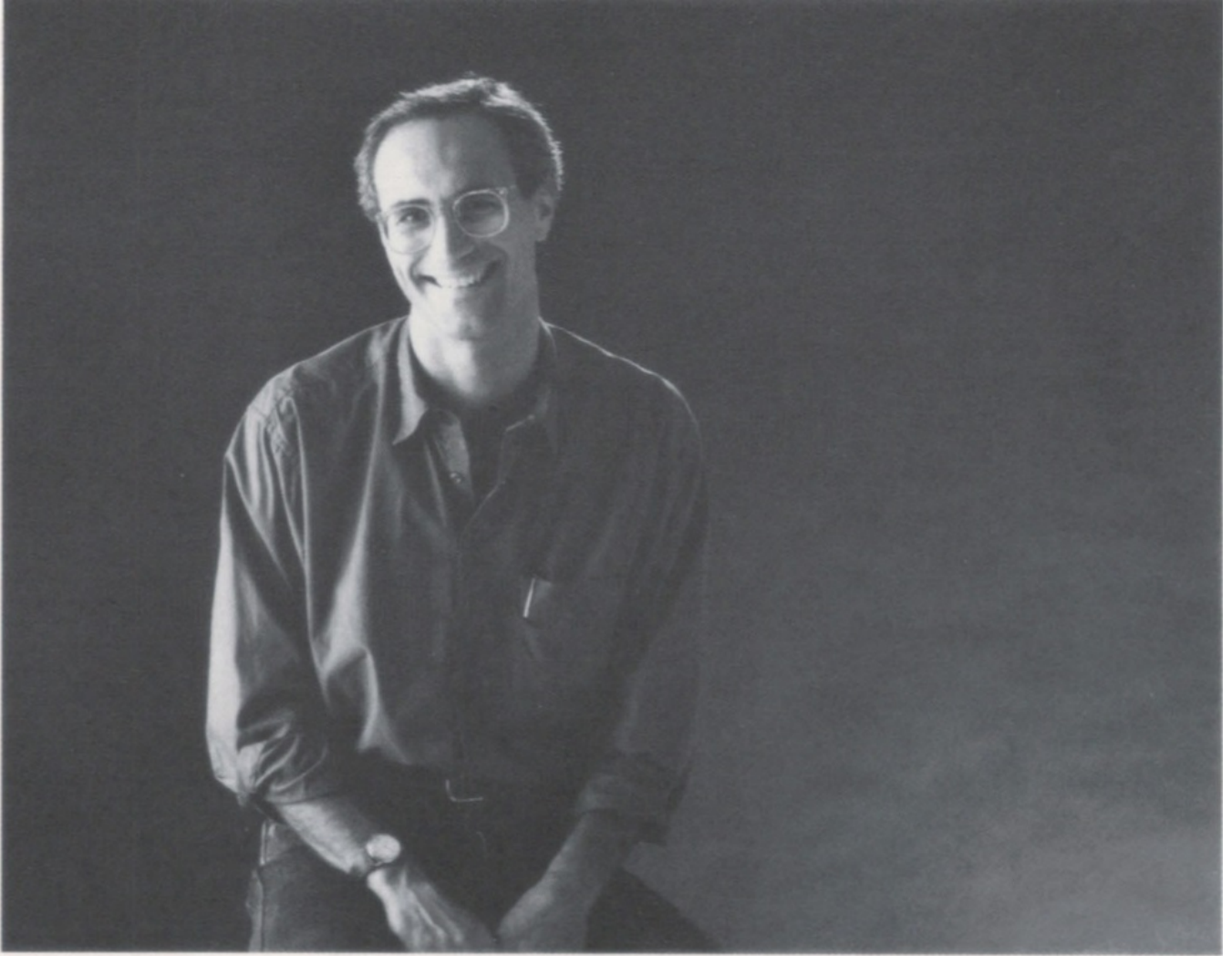
On the 4th of May 1970, Timothy happened to be on campus, running an errand. Across the commons, two hundred yards away, he spotted a National Guard platoon in formation on top of a hill. Wearing gas masks and being pelted with debris from protesters, the guardsmen pivoted and opened fire on students with their M-1 rifles. Timothy watched in horror. "That's how I finished college, being ushered off campus by the National Guard." It radicalized him. "Justice wasn't served, nobody paid for it-- the soldiers, the governor, the police, no one except for the parents of the dead students. None of those killed or wounded was a protester." Despite this tragedy, App graduated in 1970 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a major in painting and a minor in art history.

After graduating, and "bumping along," he taught art in a small private school in Akron and painting to adults at the Akron Art Institute. Inspired by his encounters with Minimalism, he painted Red Relay, a large painting measuring close to four feet high by twelve feet long. This work, along with several others like it, was shown at the AAI, in 1971, in the first public exposure of his work.



Red Relay 1971 acrylic on canvas 45 x 144 inches

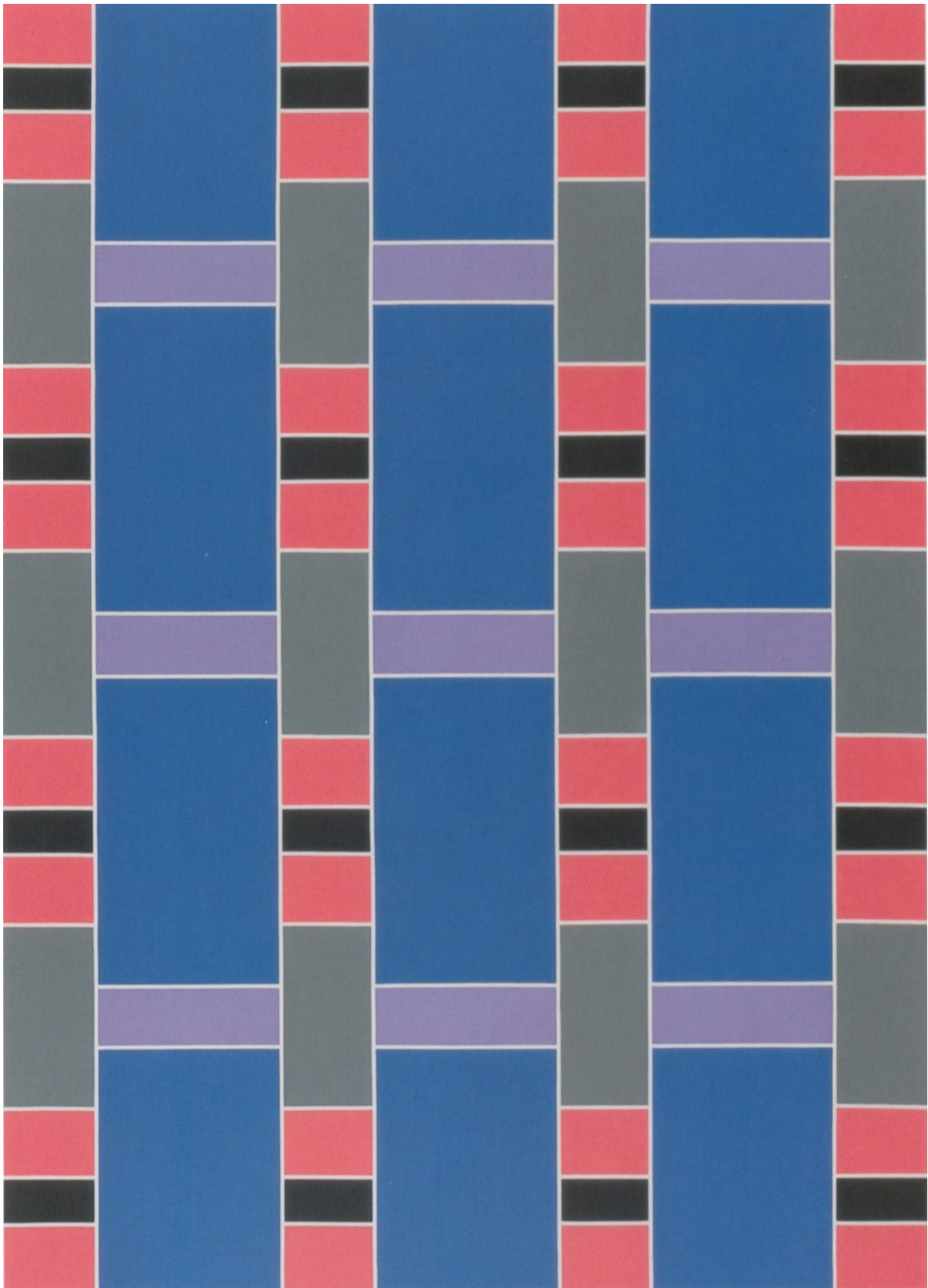
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Timothy App.

Photo by Robert Reck.

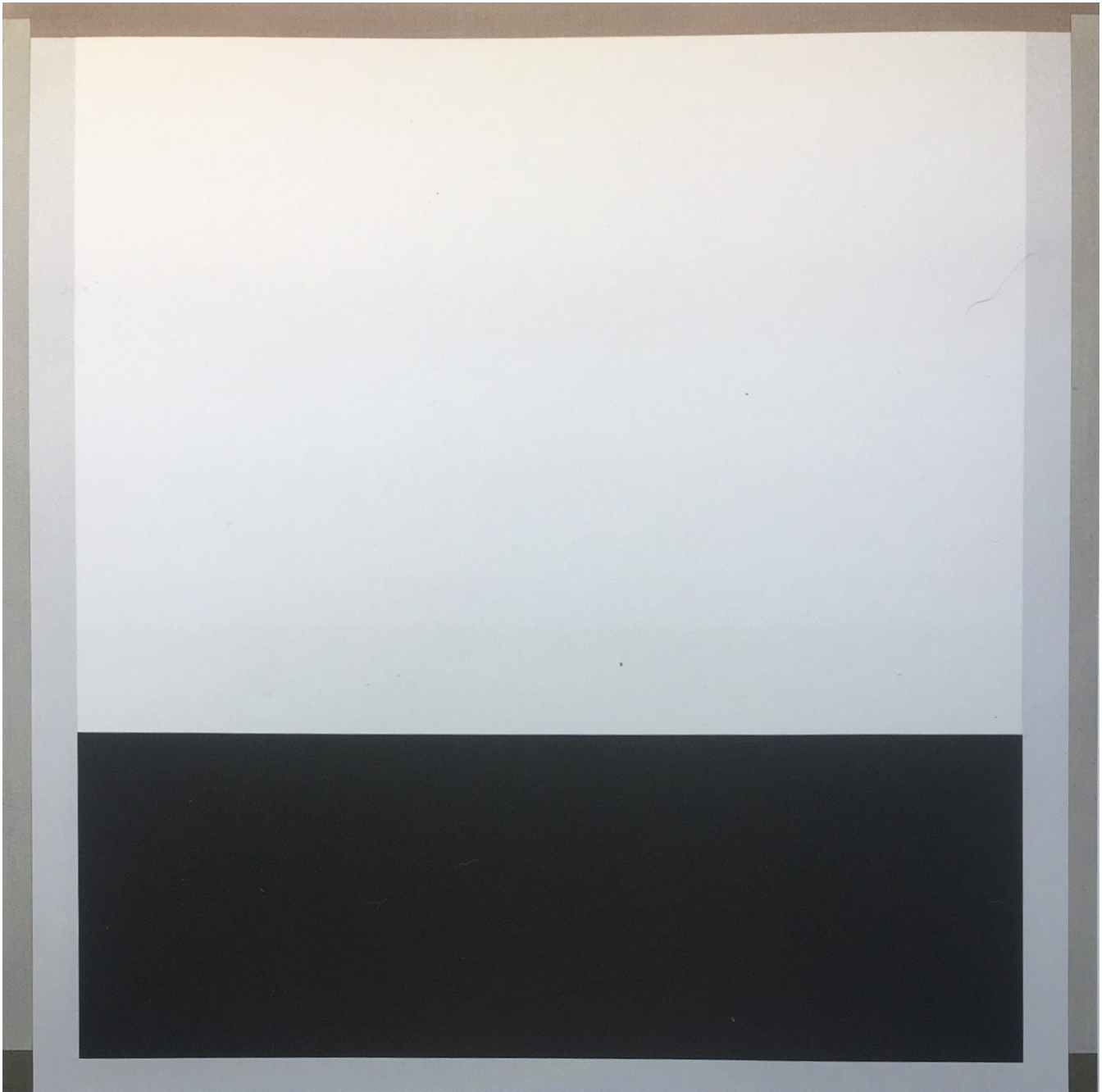




**Transit 1971** acrylic on canvas 84 x 60 inches



**Tyrania 2007** acrylic on canvas 48 x 72 inches  
Collection Theresa Lynch Bedoya



**Proscenium 2011** acrylic on canvas 72 x 72 inches

# Dennis Gray



*Old Joe B's House*



*Ruke's*

## Once Upon a Time

A century past, Roland Park had national significance because of the innovations developers introduced. Noted social philosopher and critic Lewis Mumford praised “the freshness of form and boldness of design.” Considering the idiosyncrasies of the sight, developers turned “the irregular and rugged terrain” into an asset through the use of “curvilinear streets and protection of mature trees.” Less creative developers might have seen this terrain as a liability.

~ Keswick’s History Notebook

# Denise Bolton



Plein air, watercolor, **River Birch Trees**, Rehoboth beach.

## Night

I lie

quiet

still

darkness.

In the night

a chorus of frogs

croaking

peaceful skies

enlighten

by my eyes

for the love

of the night.

~ Lena Brewer

Age 8



Sumi ink, still life.

## Quote of the Day

“To all appearances, the artist acts like a mediumistic being who, from the labyrinth beyond time and space, seeks his way out to a clearing.”

~ Marcel Duchamp

## **False Memory**

Remember the day you were supposed to be at work  
And you were still in New York?

I would say it was a 51 to 49 decision  
And depending on the day  
I was 51 and you were 49.

A Saturday: your head turns  
And you don't mind much where you're from,  
Bread baked the same way since 1930.

I used to live in the city  
Where I could smell the nice, fresh bread.

I dropped a chess piece and you fell.  
And look, there was a red tree for a month,  
The guy onstage when others think  
They see the sun--he points off in a different direction and says  
"That's where it will rise."

I woke up thinking we would do what we've never done.  
I loved you because I had time.  
It won't take two hours for friends to make.  
The horns go off, in a large, unhurried way.

From chambered muscle to the seat of liking,  
An arm of trees swings with the same new thoughts.  
Talk thunders through the forest like a beautiful mate.  
Meat of the illusionless, light held on, wind spread.

~ Don Berger





Churro, Marlo's favorite "stuffy," out on a diamond heist.

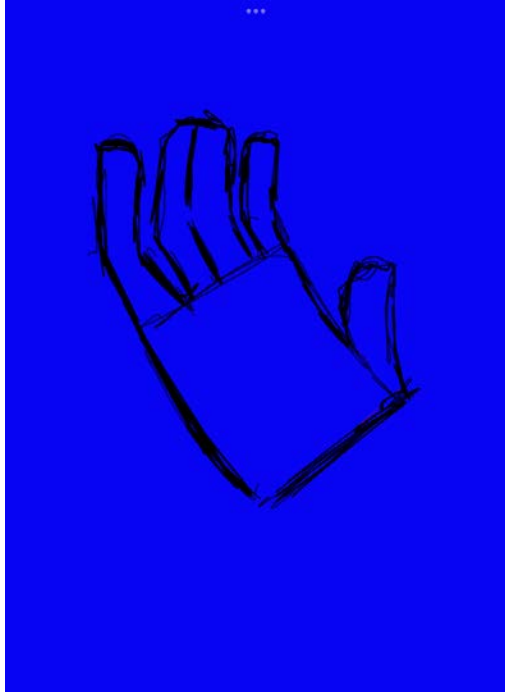
# Marlo Filippi

Age 10, Digital Art (Procreate)



Churro

Wally



Hand

# Steve Ziger

## Sketches of Paris last fall





## Death

Like a knuckle on which everything is hinged.

Like a longing that expands into nothing.

Like the stillness of an evening inside.

Like a whole summer.

Like a white moth disappearing in the palm of a hand.

Like a mold gnawing on a fruit.

Like a dog waiting at the screen door.

Like a pinch.

Like the ashy petals of burned letters.

Like an African violet forgotten on the sill.

Like ivy climbing through uncertain soil.

Like rain.

Like damp air.

Like an unlocked door.

Like sleeping.

Like dreaming.

Like falling.

Like waking.

~ Mia Sharper

## **Welcome, Dorothy Rose**

Late evening, June 16. It's time.

Storms roll in: The humidity blooms, the sky takes on the color of the sea.

You say, Places, everyone.

Your parents catch eyes, the air shimmers with hope and heat.

The cats stir, shift, their fur magnetic with the energy in the room.

You say, Now.

The heavens give way, thunder and lightning marking time.

Taking your bold hop, triple-stepping into and across the waters,

You leap into this world — and your parents' waiting arms.

You say, I am. Here.

## II

I fell in love with you the first time I looked into them there eyes, Ella sings,

Your mother sings, your father sings.

You knit together Mobtown and Chi-town and the Sunshine State,

Preside over a court of cats and chickens; a castle of luffa, lemons, and love;

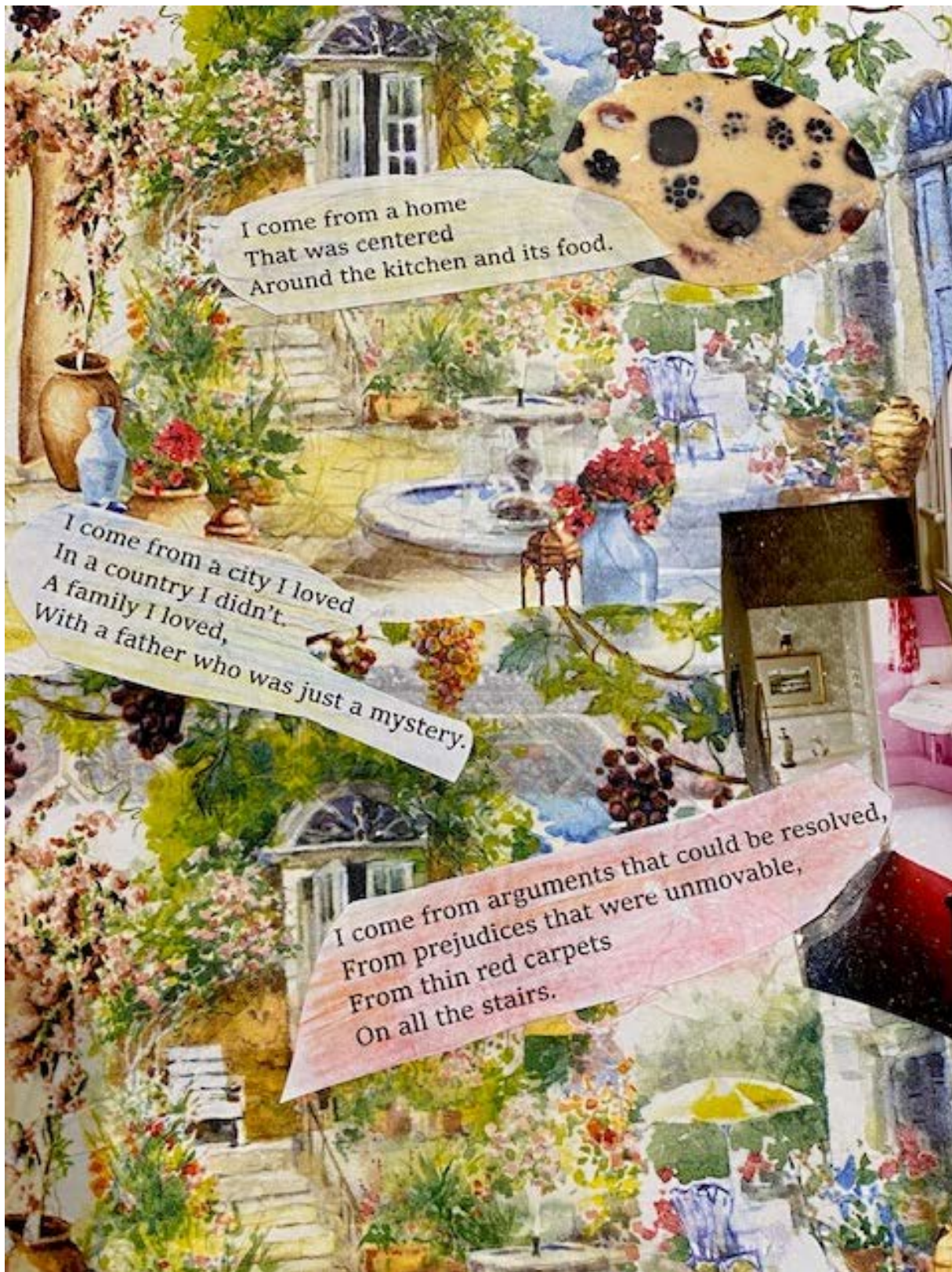
And all the history and hope and faith of our families.

Dorothy Rose, our brave and beautiful little Dot, welcome to your new world.

We've been waiting for you.

~ Mia Sharper


# Nick Sheridan



I come from a home  
That was centered  
Around the kitchen and its food.

I come from a city I loved  
In a country I didn't.  
A family I loved,  
With a father who was just a mystery.

I come from arguments that could be resolved,  
From prejudices that were unmovable,  
From thin red carpets  
On all the stairs.



I had uncles and aunts,  
Cousins and a sister,  
Playmates on the street  
Until I didn't.

From money spent on travel,  
Rather than smart houses  
Or large cars;  
A tradition I follow.

I come from a past  
That is longer  
Than my future.

## News & Notes

Let your voice be heard. The hearing on the liquor license will be held at the earliest August 24 or later on September 7. Details to come. If you wish to sign the petition, stop by 502 Wingate and KIA chair Matt Mulcahy will glad to assist you. Every signature counts.

Doesn't look good for speed cameras on Cold Spring. DOT dropped the ball.

**Many thanks to master craftsman Larry Grubb for his creation and contribution to the Little Free Library in Linkwood Park.**



Labor Day, September 4

First day of Autumn,  
September 23

Artscape, Sept. 22-24

MLB playoffs begin, Tues.  
Oct 3

World Series, Friday, Oct 27

**Go Orioles!**



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## Theater in our Neighborhood

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Not exactly in the neighborhood (venue is not in the hood, plays were at MICA) but the members of the talented production team do have roots in Alonsoville! Meredith and Max Garner (4402 Sedwick) are involved with Rapid Lemon Productions. This summer's theatrical short stories were based upon the theme of "The End"

The End of what you may ask. The end of a romantic relationship over breakfast, titled "I don't want to eat your Effin pancakes"

One of the short plays was about the end of a child and pet (goldfish) relationship titled, "Pissed off Goldfish" - which was my favorite. It starts with a child wanting a puppy but got a goldfish instead and the relationship ends with a ceremonial breakup, flushed away! (The goldfish was)

Another one of the short 10-minute plays was about the end of a working relationship between two superheroes.

Next summer there will be a new theme and new plays!

~ Jerry Henger

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## Featured Dog in the Neighborhood

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### Juno

Cockapoo

3 lbs & 3 years old.

He's one of the pups Cyndy Serfas and Larry Grubb babysit. Cyndy says Juno is "funny little creature & we enjoy him."







*At work in the studio*

(Timothy App: The Making of an Artist - continued from page 7)

## **Making the Move**

Later in 1970, Jenna App entered the world, a glorious event, but one that altered his plans significantly. Nonetheless, along with the demands of parenthood, Timothy committed himself to someday having a studio practice in painting. To make ends meet, he wanted to teach in college, with graduate school being a necessary requirement. Upon his acceptance to the Tyler School of Art at Temple University, he moved his family to Philadelphia. Awarded a graduate teaching assistantship, Timothy went to school during the day and took care of Jenna in the evening while Caren, his first wife, worked as an RN. Thanks to a University of Pennsylvania lecture by the revered American artist, Agnes Martin, he began to reconsider his work. Martin's spiritual and philosophical concept of "the perfection underlying life" made him pause before continuing with his graduate work. He read Thomas Merton for wisdom and dove into the

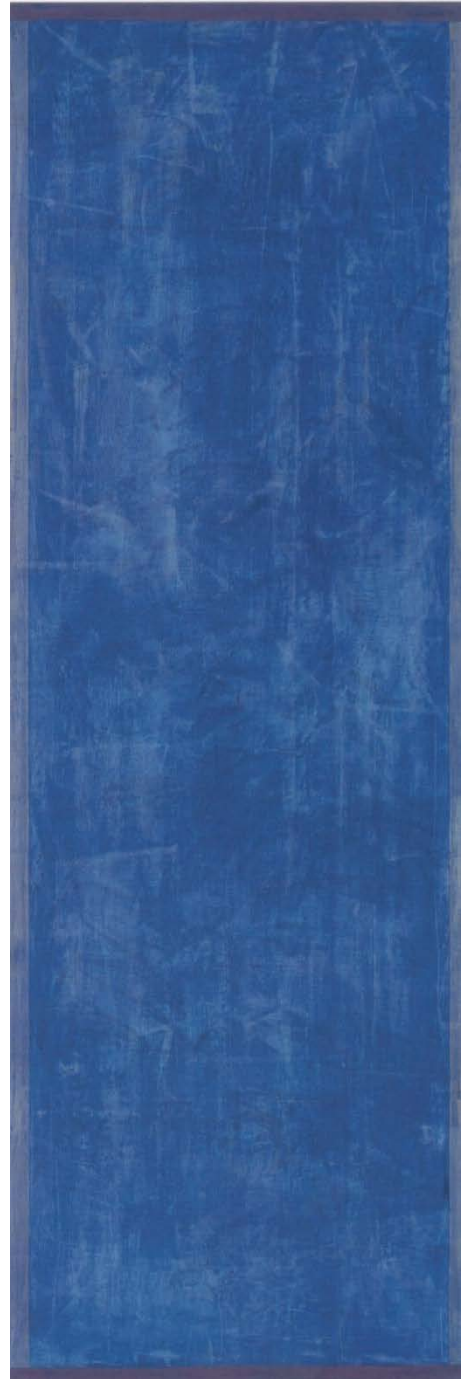
work of the Dutch painter, Piet Mondrian, regarded as one of the creators of abstract art. Timothy scrutinized Mondrian's theory of "dynamic equilibrium," the careful asymmetrical balancing of pure abstract forms, creating dynamic tension and balance to achieve a dynamic whole." So different from Pollock. It was "exquisite." He viewed Mondrian as an important influence on his own work.

In '74, he received a Master of Fine Arts in painting. With much good fortune, Timothy landed a teaching position in Southern California at Pomona College. He and Caren bought an orange Volvo station wagon, and with a toddler and a dog in tow, headed west for the town of Claremont, nestled in the San Gabriel Valley east of LA. He taught undergraduate painting and drawing at Pomona and tutored graduate students at Claremont Graduate School. At the time, radical abstract painting was all the rage. Timothy delved into the theories of phenomenology related to this work.

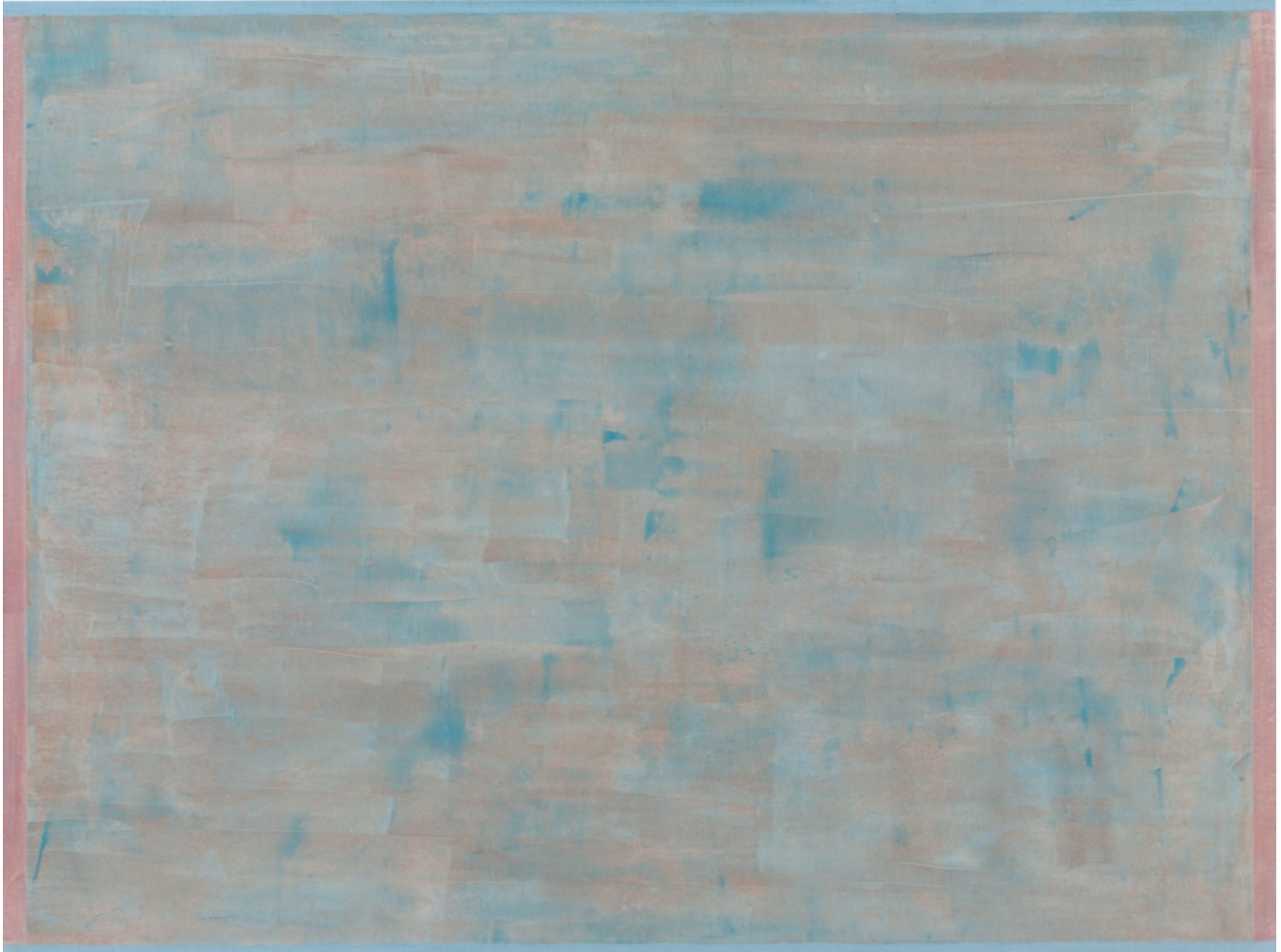
Now a professor of art at 27, Timothy was closing in on his own style. With the "Vessel Paintings," his first truly mature works, still two years away, he began experimenting with very liquid paint applied with squeegees. These were "loose paintings, with water seeking its own level." This painting method opened the door to a broader use of color, with subtle effects analogous to the light and color of Southern California.

The California environment of sensuous color and light gradually "seeped" into his work. Color is life. Color is light, broken down in parts via the spectrum. Coming together, "colors have endless possibilities." He ended up rejecting the looser handling of paint, favoring instead a more precise and methodical method that continues to the present, a style often referred to as Hard Edge painting. He knew there was a very active art scene in Los Angeles. Eager to "get connected," he had his first show of the Vessel Paintings at the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art in 1979.

Lily Wei, who wrote about Timothy's work in the catalog for his 2017 retrospective, Timothy App: *The Aesthetics of Precision, Forty-Five Years of Painting*, had this to say about this time: "He embraced the sensuous vivid hues...drinking in the light, air, temperature, color, absorbing them into his work, into his being." Timothy's work in the show attracted admirers. Looking at the other paintings by accomplished Southern California artists, he knew he belonged.



**Aquarian Night I**  
1975  
acrylic on canvas  
72 s 24 inches



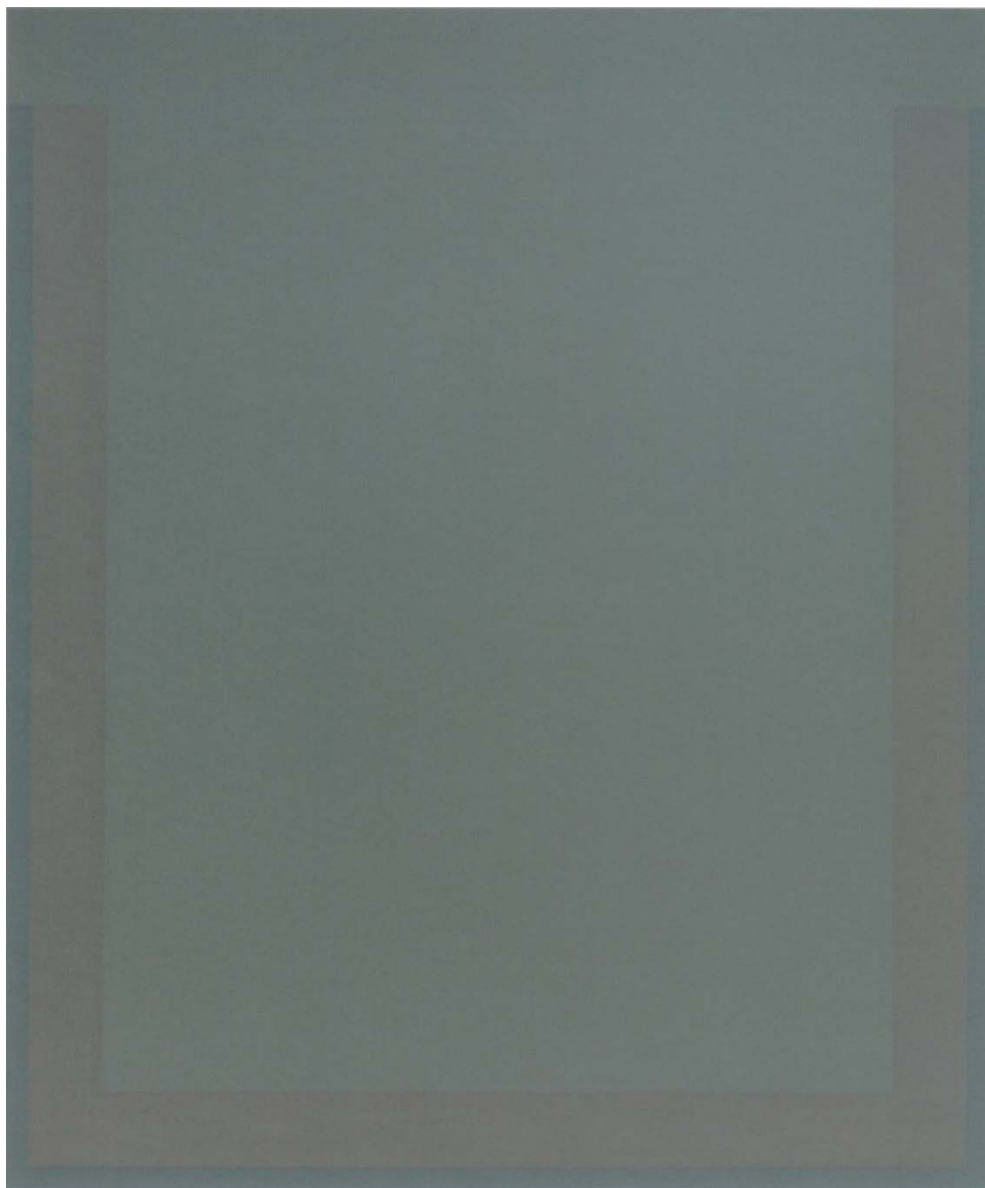
**Ways of Water 1975** acrylic on canvas 36 x 48 inches

From California, Timothy moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico to teach at the famed art department at the University of New Mexico. There his career as an exhibiting artist accelerated as his work gained greater exposure through the efforts of the Linda Durham Gallery in Santa Fe. At this time, he married his second wife, Constance, who was a fellow teacher and practicing artist. He traveled extensively in Italy and Greece, studying firsthand the history of Western culture by visiting various sites.

Timothy lived, worked and taught in New Mexico from 1978 until a job opportunity opened here in Baltimore at MICA that was too good for him to pass up. "Of the colleges where I have taught, MICA has been, hands down, the absolute best for me. The students are extraordinarily talented and a true pleasure to work with." This quality of student is, of course, due to the high level of professionalism in the Admissions Office at MICA, which had been led by none other than Theresa Bedoya, Timothy's wife of twenty-seven years.

Along with his devotion to his life as a practicing artist, Timothy is an avid student of American history, and not least of the Civil War. It is tempting to attribute his involvement in Civil War reenacting to an unfulfilled childhood fantasy of actually fighting in that war. Who's to say? But until recently, Timothy has been a faithful and active member of the Third Maryland Regiment, a long-standing re-enacting

group from this region. He has participated in many battle scenarios here and in other states, along with numerous living histories, including many at Fort McHenry. He has also taught a course at MICA titled “The American Civil War”.



**Daybreak 1981** acrylic on canvas 72 x 60 inches

## The Painter at Work

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“He designs paintings as an architect designs a building, cognizant of form, scale proportion, measure, color, light and boundaries.”

~ Richard Shiff, Timothy App,  
*The Aesthetics of Precision, Forty-Five Years of Painting*

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Walking into Timothy App’s studio is a feast for the eyes. Begin with the three huge windows flooding the industrial space with northern light. Dozens of large paintings (“I’m running out of space.”) fill the racks he constructed on both sides of the aisle leading to the center of the room, This is not counting the many works stored at his gallery, Goya Contemporary, located in the Mill Center, let alone the dozens of works in museums and private collections across the country and abroad. Every other Wednesday, his Alonsoville drawing students congregate around a well-worn wooden table for three hours with the Professor. They are lucky to have such a dedicated teacher. Twice he received at MICA the Trustee’s Award for Excellence. He draws joy from students’ progress, but, like his mentor, Flint, he gives praise only when it’s deserved. “My idea is to give them a problem to work on. I pose a question. Everybody gets to interpret it in their own way, even as they grapple with the all-important fundamentals of drawing.”

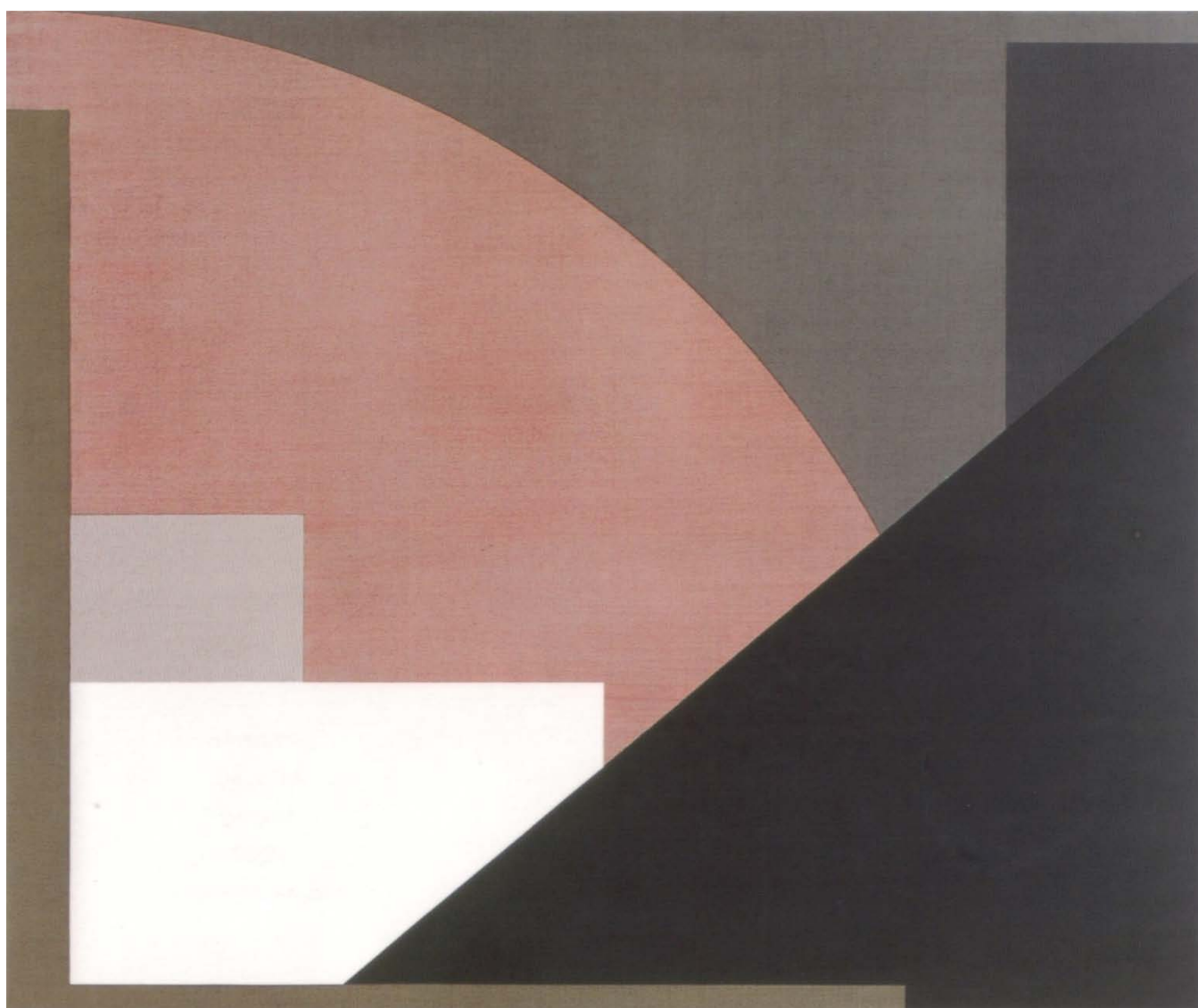
In 1990, Timothy, now a painter of note, left a tenured position at the University of New Mexico to join the faculty of Maryland Institute College of Art. “MICA was a small art school with supremely talented students--perfect for me. I was elated to be back in the East.” After 47 years of teaching—twenty-seven at MICA—he is now retired from academe. Life got even better when the twice-divorced man met Theresa Bedoya, Vice President for Admissions and Financial Aid at MICA. She just happened to be at the end of her marriage. Over a “famous” four-hour lunch, they became close and tied the knot in ‘96. Through Ann McCracken, they learned of a house off the Alonsoville circle that was about to come on the market. It belonged to writer Daniel Mark Epstein. It was a seller’s market. They paid “top dollar they couldn’t afford,” a common refrain for new owners. Timothy and Theresa fit right in with the artists, writers, architects, dancers, toy designers—you name it! “I have enjoyed the best years of my life while living in our neighborhood. The interesting people, the friendly atmosphere, the community activities, and the beautiful tree-lined environment combine to make this place impossible to beat. I am truly grateful for the privilege of living here.”

Chronicling his accolades and work can be a challenge:

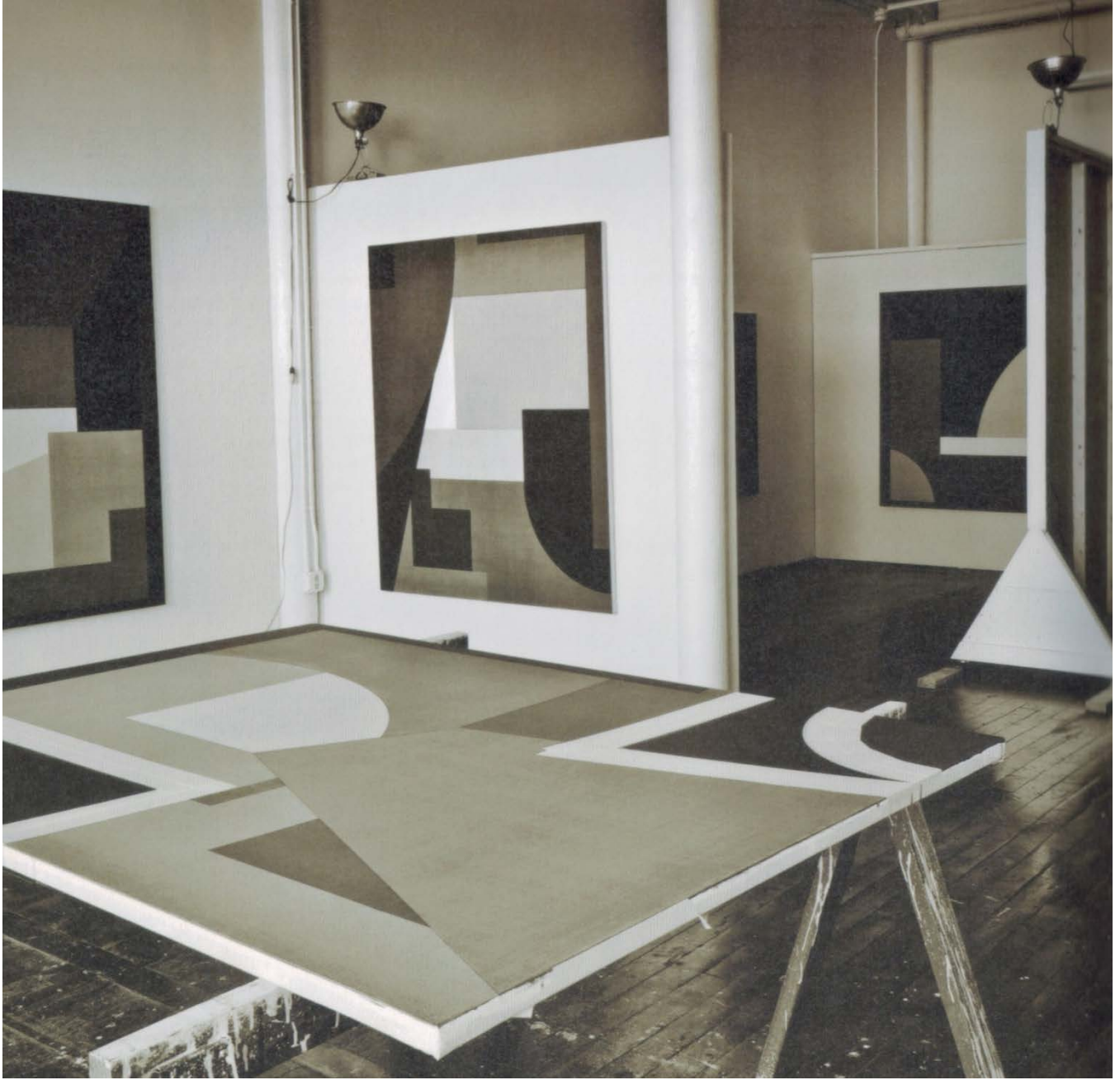
- 24 one-person and 5 two-person exhibitions
- Over 200 group shows
- 20-year survey exhibition at the Linda Durham Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico
- National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in painting
- Two individual artist’s grants from the Maryland State Arts Council
- In many private and public collections here and abroad, including 13 museums of art
- Chosen for the 185th Annual Invitational Exhibition at the National Academy
- Board member of the Maryland State Arts Council, 2017-23

In 2017, a 45-year retrospective of his work was held at the Katzen Art Museum, American University, in Washington, DC and at Goya Contemporary. A comprehensive catalog was published in conjunction with the exhibition and is available from Timothy upon request.

His work is represented exclusively by Goya Contemporary in Baltimore.



**Terminus 2002** acrylic on canvas 60 x 72 inches



# One More Word

When I was living in Tokyo years ago, I saw on television a political ad of Prime Minister Yoshiro Nakasone painting calligraphy on rice paper. Of course this sumi ink production was staged, but the Japanese take seriously the inner man of the candidate. It was expected of politicians to be well rounded in the arts. It saddens me to see primary and secondary schools omitting art and music from the curriculum in favor of STEM. There's room for both.

French philosopher and novelist Albert Camus believed that people create art to give their lives order in an absurd universe. Hard to argue with that. You could say that art is an exploration of the soul. It's also a wonderful escape.

Living in DC in the late '70s, I spent a lot of time in the Phillips Gallery, just off Dupont Circle. The image of one young woman in Renoir's *Boating Party* entranced me. Sometimes art is immortal.

## Boating Party

Your strawberry lips  
as dewy as a May morning  
A goblet poised  
A stolen glance, a jester's leer,  
its source a man in a  
sailor cap, an invitation off the raft?  
Must this be a smile  
curled on your lips?  
Dare jealousy raise its pout  
at oils and paste?  
Shrouded in chiaroscuro  
I steal a glance  
a century removed  
yet you remain the same  
impervious to change.

1978

From *Twitchy Fingers & Itchy Eyes*

