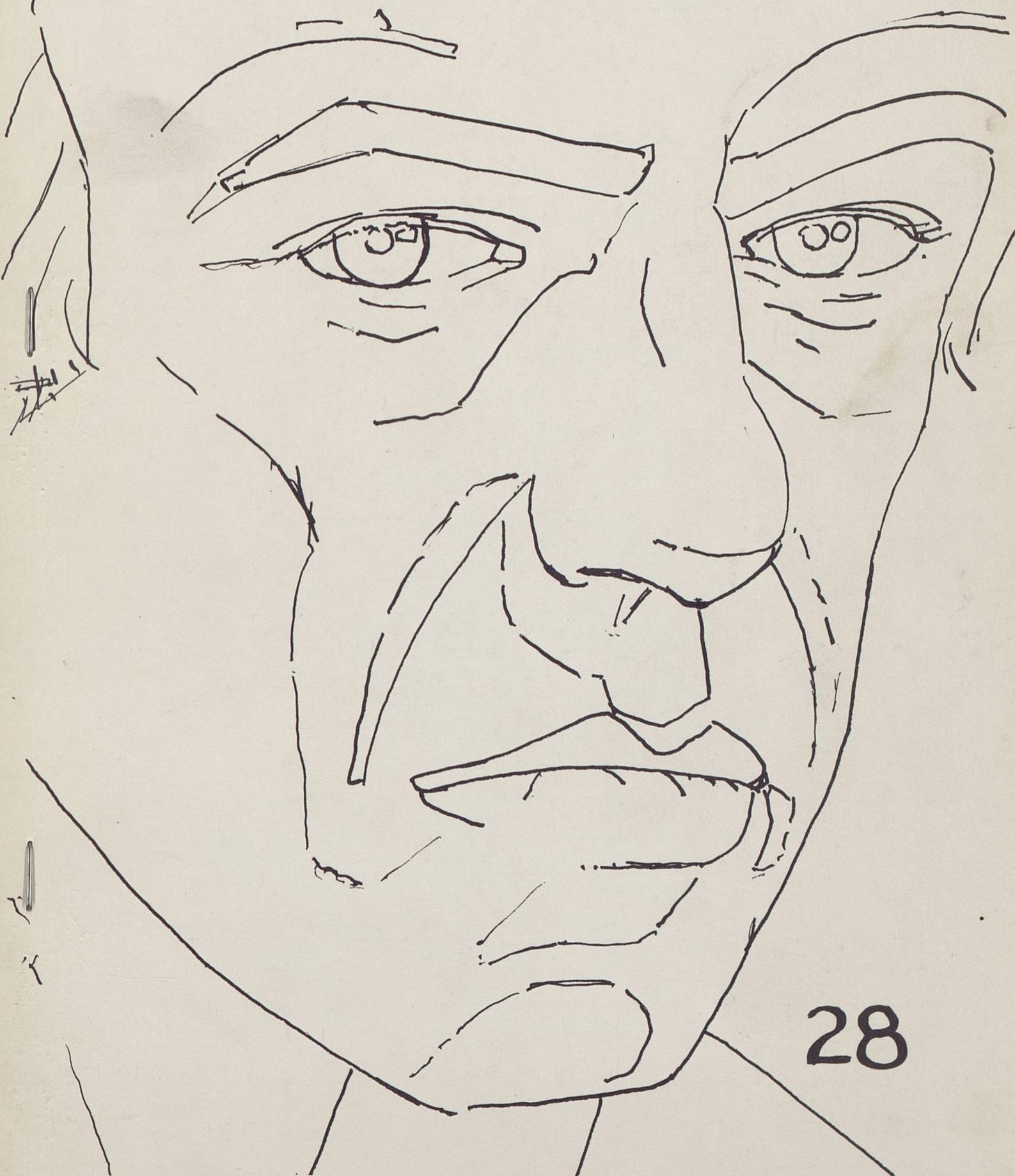


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THE WORLD



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May 1973

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ISSUE

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Cover by Alex Katz

"Red Tuscan Wine" by George Schneeman

"Ted Berrigan" by Joe Brainard

"Spoleto 1965" -- l. to r. Bill Berkson, John Ashbery, John Wieners, unidentified woman, Desmond O'Grady, Ezra Pound, Charles Olson, Olga Rudge (in white hat), unidentified woman facing Pound, unidentified couple -- Pound's translators -- far right. Photo copyright by Werner Neumeister, Munchen 22, Thierchpl. 4. Courtesy of John Wieners.

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Editor: Anne Waldman

Guest-Editor for this issue: Lewis Warsh

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November 10

Dear Bill,

Good morning (Monday). Just got up (10 a.m.) to see the flooding golden light again and be alive in California and share the experience of being tired with Angelica who's been up five hours already with Juliet, and open the mail and wonder why Betty Kray wants me to send her a booklist for jr. high school students (the letter implies it's for form's sake) and drink coffee and finally make it back to "my" room and stir thru the stuff on the desk and find the thread -- last night's late idea to send you these two poems -- really messages that I've been shooting out from a new sense of how to get across to someone on a bridge of words -- stumbling ways into that, but ways that are as new to me as I can stress -- thus the occasion of someone's birthday might be a spring but any way--ANYWAY-- to split the tension would be and is a pleasure. I don't know --of course Lew's presence gives a beautiful sense and light to the personal of life-- and as I'm sure you understand that, I thought to send you these to dig, but not worry over!

Yesterday we talked and thought about you and all that I could see was the image that one can be free -- the image of being so -- to do whatever one wants to: given the knowledge of what that is -- as long as the knowledge and the action happen in the same instant! I mean, that's how I got to California, and that's how I am here, and that's how Lew is -- so I am sort of saying this empirically. And crazy! Because for me, where I am on the earth speaks first to my nervous system, and later to what I think about it. So from that I had you jumping on a plane and right out here -- how come I did that? -- but I "meant well", which used to be important back in Catholic childhood when time meant death hanging over your head horribly, so have fun.

Well. The best thing to do now is gather up the loose chores for the day into one big ball and roll them down the hill.

I hope you are feeling good.

Love,
Tom

* * *

February 13

Dear Bill

Today it is showering! etc. It will be a relief when you finally move out here because then I won't have to think any more about this letter that I am trying to write to you, which in writing letters from Bolinas is difficult! Because of getting it into an envelope and into the postoffice and stamps etc. Tom has just called to say he needs some envelopes, which means Why does Tom need some envelopes. Well, its fairly hard for me to be articulate, but one assumes we all flash off the same pan, although I haven't written any letters in a long time, to New York.

Tom and I got back from San Diego yesterday Lewis's hair is down to his shoulders. He says he is aiming for waist length. I've wanted to write to you for some time, so I'll just push On. Well, Tom lay on his back in this back room and said The Old Man Hears Everything thats Going On. I thought he was referring to my father when actually he was referring to his own. So he was warm anyway. But it meant we had to talk in Whispers. The room was heavily laden, with a bed, a desk, stuffed chair, also heavy pieces of cheap silk brocade hanging in front of the venetian blinds. Over head was a yellow, red, and blue light. After we whispered for a while, I would walk back to the front room where everyone was completely stoned. This was Larry, a student who had lived in San Diego all his life and was born on that corner, he said

pointing it out while he was driving us in the car, made of gasoline station signs. And Lennie Neufield and Kathy Acker, these graduate students who invited us. Tom's just fine I said. Tom had made an ashtray out of the top of a shoe polish tin and was rolling grass in tampax papers. It went on like this for some time, my Feeling of Social Responsibility lessening in terms of the grander Drama which was unfolding through the house. Would we ever get any dinner. Would I ever stop talking. How many days could one keep this up. Where were my Shoes. Was that Tom in the refrigerator at 2 AM? At 6 AM Tom and I met at the dining room table, ostensibly to drink club soda. I've been in this house a thousand years said Tom who had eaten, or rather had eaten, triscuits under his blankets so the old man would not hear him, and had nearly smothered. All the windows in the house were covered. What do you think is the meaning of life.

Love

*

Dear Bill,

Here's what's been happening. (Chapter One).

SAN DIEGO

Feb. 11 (Bolinaz):(6 a.m.) it's still dark when I wake up, shave, put on brown suit & Mike Goldberg Italian wedding shirt, pack poems in an envelope, pack acid tab inside antibiotic capsule, kiss the girls goodbye, run out the door & jump in Jack's bus, say hi to Ebbe Joanne & Jack. We drive to the airport, get there at 9. I go to the PSA desk & buy a round trip ticket to San Diego. Ebbe buys same for Joanne, I board PSA Flight 2:30 for San Diego nonstop, leaving at 9:30. The plane takes off. I tell Joanne I've always wanted to fuck while taking off. Joanne takes out the Esterol spansule Lewis gave her, pours some of the time pellets into her palm & swallows them, I do the same, but look to see if the stewardess is watching. She isn't. She's wearing an orange cap, suit and bloomers. Her black hair is tied up in a bun under her cap. I tell Joanne she'd look better with her hair down. (The stewardess). Joanne tells me she saw two stewardesses lacquering themselves in the airport ladies' room. Lacquering their hair. The 727 is buzzing above the clouds. Pure blue air goes by slowly and billowy polar landscapes pass. I read that Elvin Hayes has called his teammates losers. I look up the entertainment page of the San Diego paper and start to pore over the movie ads but can't pay attention, so I borrow Joanne's notebook and write a work called "Giovanna in San Diego" while she looks through her poems and pretty soon the plane lands in San Diego. Two students at UCSD, Kathy Acker and her boyfriend Lenny Newfield, are waiting for us. They have a car (borrowed) so we jump in and drive out to David Antin's house in Solano Beach, some 25 miles by freeway. Lennie driving while Kathy bad-mouths the local scene by way of putting us in the know but Joanne and I look out the window and spot a tiny mesa which reminds us of Bolinas and we all talk some more and finally get to David's house, a green stucco bungalow on the edge of a cliff over the ocean, where we're kindly greeted and served lunch and beer and more talk, this time more interesting, with David and his wife Eleanor--they've just returned from New York where Eleanor had a show at Gain Ground Gallery--their son Blaise Cendrars (2 1/2) charges around behind toy jet airplanes and throws napkins at me while we eat avocados and anchovies & discuss nakedness. It occurs to me the question is more real here where it's warm than in Bolinas where you'd freeze your ass off if it wasn't covered. It occurs to me that Eleanor will--uh, would--look great without clothes. Everybody drinks more beer and laughs. I go in the bathroom and drop the antibiotic/acid cap, then to the patio where I fall into a chaise lounge in the sun to read the proofs of John Ashbery's A DOUBLE DREAM OF SPRING, which David A. is reviewing for the Nation, but the chaise lounge is broken and I fall straight through and out of it onto the ground, horribly scraping my inside right forearm on jagged metal from nowhere. I go in and Eleanor gives me the Phisohex and I wash the cut and go back outside

and lie down, this time on the grass, in the sun, which is very hot, under the very blue sky. Minutes/hours later everybody else comes outside too. Lennie and Kathy want to talk about poetry. Joanne talks about rock lyrics. Lennie and Kathy hate rock lyrics, but love Jackson MacLow. David and I talk about James Dickey, then Robert Bly--then Blaise Cendrars, who's in David's lap as he is talking, suddenly grins and takes a huge runny shit. David goes inside to change his shirt. Joanne goes inside to look over her poems. Finally Lennie and Kathy and Joanne and I leave for the reading in "our" car. David and Eleanor will come later. We get to the UCSD campus and spend an hour or so checking out the landscape, looking for postcards, and smoking cigarettes while lots of students walk by and look at us blankly--Joanne and I are sitting on a bench, waiting for Kathy and Lennie to gopher our checks. They show up and say the checks won't be ready until tomorrow. We says that's OK. Then a bearded prof type named Ben Van Wright shows up, introduces himself as editor of the LEMMING REVIEW and starts a rap about Richard Brautigan which leads into soliciting poems for the LEMMING REVIEW. Then it's time to go to the reading--which is held in a peaceful anonymous spacey afternoon room and attended by about twenty-five people. We read two sets each and it's a good reading. Quickly afterwards everyone splits--David and Eleanor go to teach evening classes, while we walk to the car with Kathy and Lennie and someone named Larry, who it turns out owns the car, and someone else (nameless) who tells us about how to measure the height of a building with a barometer. We all pile in, Larry drives, it's getting dark and the Ocean sky is orange and polluted and lavender and beautiful and it's hot, like St. Louis in June, and we drive through the night. In La Jolla we stop and Nameless Barometer gets out. Then we stop at FOOD BASKET. Lennie and Kathy and Joanne go in to buy some chow. I stay in the car and rap with Larry, who's in his fifth year of college-to-avoid-the-draft, about "how to get out of it". Then we discuss California, which we both like-- he's spent his whole life here in San Diego--etcetera--they come back with the groceries and we start off again, this time to get what Kathy and Lennie call "the stuff". First we go by Melvin's place, Lennie runs in, but Melvin ain't home--no stuff. So we motor through a few more neon editions of La Jolla, Del Mar, Mission Beach or wherever and stop in an alley, Lennie makes the run and this time comes out with de stuff--zoom back across fifty avenues and finally come to Kathy and Lennie's pad on B Street. Out, up and in. Kathy goes to the kitchen to dress the roast. I put on a record of Satie orchestral music. Larry sinks into a chair. Joanne examines some of the millions of books that are propped on homemade bookshelves all around the apartment--which is big, lots of back rooms, walk around, drink wine, Lennie slowly rolls the stuff, no papers--Lennie likes to dump the tobacco out of a Salem and replace it with the stuff. Although this operation could be simply performed by one, Lennie asks Joanne to help by tapping the stuff with a pencil so it'll slide gradually from a piece of paper held by Lennie into the empty Salem tube. All this takes infinite years. Finally three joints of stuff have been rolled. We light up and pass them around. It's fantastic grass. Instantly we're all stoned. Who's here? Lennie has long blond hair. He picks up a stuff-filled Salem and wiggles it back and forth in front of Joanne's face, then asks what does that remind you of? It reminds everyone of a limp prick. Joanne refuses to answer. I say "a turtle". More stuff comes around. Larry is sinking deeper and deeper and deeper in his chair. His face takes on an expression of ageless mirth. Kathy runs back and forth between the roast and the stuff. She is wearing a mini-skirt that can't be longer than--you can see her ass, about two inches of it, below the bottom edge of the skirt. She has lots of poetry books. She attended Brandeis for two years and is married. Lennie is married too. He edited a magazine called OMPHALOS once. He is twenty-seven. He is nodding out. He is in bliss. Kathy is talking. She loved Rilke until she came to hate all Christians. I vanish into the back room with a parcel of stuff. The back room is tiny and lit by a triad of bulbs--red, blue, yellow. Beyond the back room is another room where an old man lies dying. Occasionally he coughs. The sound seems to be amplified, rather than diminished, but the distance (a few feet) through the wall. I very quietly search for some papers. I find some dressmakers' patterns and scissors (Kathy uses this room for sewing and also as a stash for

poetry books) and cut the pattern-paper into papers for rolling stuff. The first few test joints don't burn too well, so I look around some more and find (bathroom) some Tampax--Eureka! Tampax comes packed in a soft white paper of perfect consistency for rolling. Roll and smoke several joints of stuff in Tampax papers. Open the window. Nighttime red light roominghouse night in midwest summers I've never known about suddenly are realized as James M. Cain Southern California visions--a million carlights twinkle and move in the warm night out the window--all over San Diego. I'm lying on the bed. Years later I pick a few poetry books off the shelf and strum through them for 1 second. Joanne comes in. She goes out. I go too. We're all in front again. Lennie is dead. Larry is dead. Kathy is still alive--still fixing dinner? Joanne is social and graceful and brings the dead back to life and moves on easy lights, lightly easing everyone over to the beef. We pack away lots of beef without even knowing it. Then Turkish coffee. Ben Van Wright shows up, to read some manuscripts to us. The poems aren't his, they're by somebody named Arthur Lane. They're hideous. He is creepy. He gets creepier to us as we smoke a million more stuff. I fade into the back room again, years later Ben leaves. Before he leaves he tells me is Philbert Fuckknuckles. I'm not sure what he means. I'm in the back room. The old man coughs. The poetry books are asleep. The night is white. It is morning. Kathy and Lennie wake up. We all have breakfast and decide to miss the bus to the airport in order to have time for some more stuff--finally call a cab, it comes, goes away again, comic seconds, more cab comes, we get in, drive away to airport, get on plane, fly to San Francisco. The plane nearly crashes into, instead of landing on, the runway, but my heart is full of Escatrol or whatever it's called and only misses about 1/2 a beat, and at the last second the pilot flips down his rudder, straightens out, lands, & later we're home.

* * *

May 5, 1970
San Francisco

Hello again my friend

as the war grows and buildings burn in Berkeley and people die in the united states from bullet wounds and firebombs I begin to wonder if it isn't maybe getting down to the nitty gritty and time to get a gun or split for kabul but I'm getting tight here enjoying the abundant chiquitas and mind bending substances including the secret of the orient abundant poppy resins

for amusement	a baseball game between the giants & mets
SF 3 NY 6	a great reading by poets Warsh & Clark
Woodstock	a pretty good movie

also dinner at Krishna temple in the Haight

I was writing a pretty good (speaking of pretty good) novel based on certain recent adventures but I lost the notebook containing this 30 page work and also several other interesting writings

talk about karma

I just shrugged (it was in Weed California standing on a roadside just below giant snow covered cloud shrouded Mt. Shasta that I discovered this fateful loss) I did my best to retrace my steps through the forest where I'd taken a shit, the restaurant where I'd had some morning coffee etc. but alas I was resigned to it

I guess it wasn't good enough or something