

Futurepoem books is So Bright Founder Dan Machlin On His NYC Press Turning 10

INTERVIEW BY
DAVID A.
KIRSCHENBAUM

Raised a few blocks from Penn Station in the former International Ladies Garment Workers Union Houses, Futurepoem books executive editor, poet Dan Machlin, founded the press 10 years ago. I caught up with him recently to discuss where Futurepoem's been and where it's headed as it enters its second decade.

How'd you first become interested in poetry; involved in the small press world; know you wanted to start a press?

Wow, that is an epic question, so forgive me if I give a slightly epic answer.

I've always been interested in poetry for as long as I can remember. I probably had a romantic notion of myself as a kind of tortured Keatsian poet or a Dylan Thomas-like poet high on the musicality of language when I first began to write poems and poetic prose.

I began to think more seriously about myself as a writer as a student at Wesleyan University, though I interestingly gravitated toward non-fiction prose writing courses as the teachers like essayist Annie Dillard and literary biographer Phyllis Rose were much more intriguing to me as writers than the poetic faculty at the time.

After Wesleyan, in New York I become aware of the downtown avant-garde poetry scene. I met people like Joel Kuszai (Meow Press/Factory School) and others who told me about The Ear Inn reading series and about The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church.

For me my initiation into the small press world had a lot to do with my initiation into the avant-garde writing world. I think I got my first true initiation into the possibilities of contemporary writing through a workshop with Bernadette Mayer at The Poetry Project where I was introduced to the notion of writing experiments and seriously read Gertrude Stein and the Oulipo writers like Raymond Queneau for the first time. Bernadette and her radical approach to writing caused me to dispose of all previous notions that I had of what it meant to be a poet and a writer and really ingrained an exploratory approach into my poetics.

Shortly after, I joined an M.A. writing program at City College to study with Ann Lauterbach and, concurrently, began a part-time job working for James Sherry to manage the avant-garde press Roof Books and direct The Segue Foundation, a performance rehearsal space and arts non-profit on the Lower East Side. So as Ann helped me develop a more critical understanding of why and how I was writing, my work with Roof educated me in the practicalities of publishing experimental writing and taught me how critical a small press like Roof can be in championing the work of important avant-garde writers.

Why did you decide to start a press?

I probably got my feet wet as an editor through The Transcendental Friend, an online litzine started by fellow City College graduate Garrett Kalleberg. And at both The Segue Foundation and at The Segue Reading series I also served as a reading series curator for many years.

The actual decision to start a press probably was somewhat of



Serena Jost photo

I think my impulse to begin publishing was born out of a sense that there needed to be a fresh approach to publishing innovative work and an outlet for a new generation of editorial leadership. ... I wondered if there was a more exploratory approach to publishing and a more communal one that would allow a more open system of possibilities.

a whim. I had been working at a grueling full-time job and started up a conversation with a graphic designer friend at work about how we both loved books and should work on a book project together some time. We settled on a name, Futurepoem; a first author, Kalleberg, whose work I greatly admired; and the design, to be done by Anthony Monahan, who went on to design the first nine Futurepoem books.

I think if I had fully considered the challenges and financial commitment of sustaining a small press, I might have thought twice. I think my impulse to begin publishing was born out of a sense that there needed to be a fresh approach to publishing innovative

work and an outlet for a new generation of editorial leadership. I think I also felt that when I looked around at the time, a lot of presses appeared to be closed circuits of a set group of writers. I wondered if there was a more exploratory approach to publishing and a more communal one that would allow a more open system of possibilities. I didn't know it when I first began the project, but this quickly led to my decision to adopt the open call, rotating editorial panel, and other signature aspects of the Futurepoem series today.

How does Futurepoem operate? Who does the editing and production work? How do you go about selecting your manuscript readers? How does the process of selecting the manuscripts

occur? How do you afford to run the press?

We now operate as a non-profit with an amazing board of directors who are helping to take the press to the next level. We also have some fantastic people involved at a permanent editorial level. Chris Martin edits our new blog, Futurepost, which solicits responses to our books from the poetry community. There's Jennifer Tamayo, our incredible managing editor, and Ted Dodson, who has taken over the mantle of Futurepoem Presents, our events series, from Chris.

A fundamental aspect of the press from the third book on has been our rotating guest editor model and the open call for

manuscripts. Each year we invite three different distinguished peer writers, artists, curators, editors to help read the submissions and, with me or another permanent editor, select two books for publication the following year.

This year, for the first time, we shifted our guest editorial panel to L.A. and a previous guest editor and close friend, poet/translator Jen Hofer, led it. Though some would say that geographical location is somewhat irrelevant in this digital era, I think proximity still has a great deal of relevance in people's perceptions of the press. I think we succeeded in attracting a lot of submissions from west coast and other writers who we have never heard from before, and I believe we also slightly shifted the perception of Futurepoem as a New York City-centric press. We felt this was an incredible success and hope to try to host the open call in different cities in the future—maybe even in a non-U.S. city, though we aren't sure quite yet.

In terms of funding the press, it is partially funded by the generous support from The New York State Council on the Arts and The Council of Literary Magazines and Presses, but our grants don't nearly cover the expenses of printing two to three books per year and none of these grants cover basic operating

expenses. I think I've probably personally kicked in a healthy tithe of my salary, especially in the early years, but more recently we've been trying to move the press toward a self-sufficient model. Our recent successful Kickstarter campaign to fund the current open call has really energized everyone at the press, and we are hoping to move toward a subscription model like those used by other presses, including Ugly Duckling Presse, to create a more consistent funding base. Plain and simple publishing experimental literature rarely pays for itself and our wonderful distributor, Small Press Distribution, takes a healthy cut of every book sale that we make.

That's why we definitely will need subscribers and individual donors if we are going to survive as a press and continue to champion great new writers.

Is there a certain kind of manuscript you would say is a Futurepoem book?

I really don't think there is one kind of manuscript that we are looking for, probably because different people each year are doing the looking.

Quite simply we are looking for the work that is most successful at fulfilling its unique vision as a book out of the work we receive that particular year. That said, there is a through line, a trajectory of the Futurepoem series as a whole that is in the

Please see KIRSCHENBAUM page 3

Futurepoem books The First Decade*

- The Malady of the Century** Jon Leon
- Sherwood Forest** Camille Roy
- Late in the Antenna Fields** Alan Gilbert
- The Source** Noah Eli Gordon
- Delinquent** Mina Pam Dick
- Poems of the Black Object** Ronaldo V. Wilson
- Traffic & Weather** Marcella Durand
- Your Country is Great** Ara Shirinyan
- Threads** Jill Magi
- Murmur** Laura Mullen
- Mad Science in Imperial City** Shanxing Wang
- The External Combustion Engine** Michael Ives
- Ghosts by Albert Ayler** Merry Fortune
- The Escape** Jo Ann Wasserman
- Under the Sun** Rachel Levitsky
- Some Mantic Daemons** Garrett Kalleberg

*from most to least recent



And Forthcoming

- Anarch** Frances Richards
- The Crisis of Infinite Worlds** Dana Ward
- The Story of My Accident is Ours** Rachel Levitsky
- Swarms of Bees in High Court** Tonya Foster, (w/Belladonna)
- Troy Michigan** Wendy Walters
- Deadfalls and Snares** Samantha Giles

Steve Dalachinsky
Soho
creature dream minus the dreamer

at 126th Carmeela enters the bodega
asks what her name is
2 men approach her w/a 40 in their hands
speaking dots - she joins them
@#\$\$%&*#@ \$ como se llama ??????
?????como me llama ????

the mass become empty
the emptiness mass
both become finger prints
))))))(((((((a language all their own
a pretext for signing
sounding singing speaking writing creating
typos - me/se llama CARMEELA.

Russell's in Dreams, Voyage With Ballard

BY DOUGLAS MANSON

Dream-Clung, Gone

Lauren Russell

Brooklyn Arts Press

I read Lauren Russell's poetry. Then I read more of Lauren Russell's poetry. If I read Lauren Russell's poetry, I am surprised by the thinginess of words. They are flexible



I can relate to Lauren Russell's poetry when I read Lauren Russell's poetry.

"Some mornings someone steps onto the fire escape and empties a bucket or bowl / or bedpan or bamboo pot. I am always half-asleep, and myopic / without my glasses I cannot tell if the dumper is a man, woman, child, or angel." ("On Loneliness")

Russell uses a remarkable complexity of genres, premises and modes. With a chemist's tables at hand, a virtuoso's command of the instrument, and an insistent, post-romantic irony ... Lauren Russell gets on with it, and definitely gets it.

I once told Lauren I was very busy transcribing and editing an old journal of mine, turning it into a manuscript. "I can't ever imagine wanting to do that," she observed. I read Lauren Russell's poetry and see those old journals as cumbersome, monotonous and embarrassing catfish, and that I am standing silently and patiently on the side of a dreary lake, hoping one of them will impale itself on my hook. I read Lauren Russell's poetry and see that the poet's job is to get 800 pounds of soft and tawny, cruel and deadly mammalian tiger to open its hot, mineral-dissolving and stiletto-lined mouth, and carry in there one very nervous lamb all the way across the backs of a row of stampeding elephants without letting a single strand of its nighest, softest curl get bent.

Product details: Raised in Los Angeles and recently of New York City, Russell is writing poetry in Pittsburgh. Published by Brooklyn Arts

and promiscuous and willful and sharp and sometimes gummy.

When I read Lauren Russell's poetry I remember what I forgot to say and see that I forgot to look.

I read Lauren Russell's poetry and can't no more decide if all the language in my clothes or wrapped around my food is bad or good or not. Mucilaginous.

I read Lauren Russell's poetry and learn what it means to be a painter. I am not a painter.

Where there wasn't Lauren Russell's poetry there is now Lauren Russell's poetry.

I read Lauren Russell's poetry and have a literary critical hallucination panic attack.

Press, her 2012 chapbook *Dream-Clung, Gone* continues the joyous and wry exploration and exploitation of poetic forms as begun in her 2009 chapbook *The Empty-Handed Messenger*.

Each of the 15 poems in this collection stands alone as a unique artifact of precision and possibility. From the opening poem "Style," which combines terms out of a grammar handbook with a series of statements about hair, to the closing poem "I Slept in a Maze-Pacing Boat," Russell uses a remarkable complexity of genres, premises, and modes. With a chemist's tables at hand, a virtuoso's command of the instrument, and an insistent, post-romantic irony, *Dream-Clung, Gone* capitalizes on, well, dreaming, clinging, and going. Lauren Russell gets on with it, and definitely gets it.

Douglas Manson is a poet and writing teacher. He lives in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

BY GREG FUCHS

Waifs and Strays

Micah Ballard

City Lights Books

Micah Ballard will survive the media blitz and everybody's hunger for another superstar, because he's an artist in a way that's right old-fashioned. His new book, *Waifs and Strays*, smokes like chasing the dragon, but does not lull, contrarily, sends one to the library or lazily meandering wiki strands of the worldwide web. What must be recognized is that Ballard transcends bohemian cultism to be avant-garde and mainstream, while his poems go past a mere flirtation with death and pathology, beyond politics and pedagogy to get down to what is really human. "I shall lend them my body / but first put a hit out / on my predatory past..."

Giving yourself the time to be fully present with Ballard's poems will turn your dial to the right frequency of psychic interference.

If you'd prefer, tune your ears to Ballard transmitting the poems right on the mic at The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church, where he will perform Wed. May 2 at 8:00 p.m. You will give your mind and body the most traditional of medicines, like realigning chakras or wiping away third-eye grime, rare in our electronically saturated media age, sitting communally and quietly hearing a person string together aural gems of verse. This is real ancient alchemical magic: listening.

Ballard's poems incorporate the history of hip modern verse from Romantics to New Sincerists. You hear Gérard de Nerval and Charles Baudelaire, as well as John Weiners, Robert Duncan, the Serpent Power, feminists, Erica Kaufman, John Coletti, and Cedar Sigo. One of the truly lovely things about this book: Ballard is meeting the *Vanity Fair* articles and Sam Kashner columns, not with some slicked up tech-mech superproduction, but the finest garage band poetry yet in the 2010s.

Which is not to say that there's no poetic sophistication working here; it's just that it's gut sophistication, unfaltering instinct rather than the clammily cerebral approach of the old avant-garde. *Waifs and Strays* is a commanding collection, as opposed to demanding. You don't have to work to understand or like it, but you can't ignore it either. It refuses to be a bedtime story, stops the action in the room in the room that you

read in, and leaves its effects when you're finished.

Each poem builds with an inexorable seethe, a penchant for intoxication and risk that never lets you forget you're reading real poetry again, at last. Meanwhile, every poem contains moments that go beyond elevated into emotional realms that can give you euphoria. In "Court Life," it's the "cool circle lines in notebook then read John Donne's sermons while watching the clouds change from cumulus to cirrus; skate down Divisadero and talk to Will for an hour about Mantic Reversals and Vanishing Made Easy." In "The Wind and More," Ballard's truly cosmic sequence of "Who enters / not into obscurity / but finds a space / within all..." and suddenly through that line you can actually hear him hitting his chest metronomically with his fist, leading into "I kept turning the dial but couldn't get the right interference." The philosopher's stone to the mysteries of *Waifs and Strays* is the poem "Just Sepia."

I refuse to settle

out of the true

choose to communicate

through pay phones and paper

out here in the country of McAllister & Steiner

we are the only Victorians left

& I wish I wouldn't have said

that one something that one time

when what I really wanted

was to finish cutting the okra for the gumbo

& read Baudelaire again

his *L'Invitation au Voyage*

backwards reveals all of the magic

in writing that one can endure

each line out loud resounds perfect

all week I've been thinking about printing

a pirated book of such, nothing grand

typed on the Remington, 3x4, no address

no copyright and fifty limited

for whomever I run into

Ballard's poetry in its ultimate moments touches deep wellsprings of emotion that few artists are capable of reaching, keeping alive youthful possibilities through stumblings of adult regret. With his wealth of promise and the most incandescent flights and stillnesses of this book he joins the ranks of people like Bob Kaufman, Jimmy Schuyler, Lester Bangs in *Creem* days, or the Alice Notley of *Mysteries of Small Houses*. It's that deeply felt, and that moving, a new Romanticism built upon the classical language of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, an affirmation of life so total that, even in the graphic recognition of death, it sweeps your breath away.

Greg Fuchs is an artist and writer living in The Bronx with his wife, Alison Collins, and son Lucas. Fuchs recently published a collaborative poem with Jason Morris as part of *Jess Mynes' Asterisk* series.

Photos: Russell (top) by Cameron Morgan, Ballard and Lorca (below) by Patrick James Dunagan.



VANITAS 6: Latinitas is out!

New poetry by Micah Ballard, Steve Dalachinsky, Mónica de la Torre, Clayton Eshelman, Elaine Equi, Alan Halsey, Derek Henderson, Bob Holman, Ron Horning, Geoffrey Jacques, John Latta, David Lehman, Joel Lewis, Gerard Malanga, David Meltzer, Stephen Ratcliffe, Ariana Reines, Raphael Rubinstein, Hal Sirowitz, Christopher Stackhouse, Tony Towle, John Tranter, Terence Winch, Jeffrey Cyphers Wright, and many more!

Featuring artwork by Juan Uslé and Rafael Ferrer, this issue takes in the spectrum of Latin worlds.



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BOOG CITY

counsel Ian S. Wilder

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BY JEREMIAH BIRNBAUM

Last year's correspondence from South by Southwest never got published, which is a shame, considering some of the references and predictions made therein. Shades of Occupy Wall Street (to say nothing of Occupy Austin), Birnbaum's subsequent unemployment, and a hint of the Homeless Hotspots hysteria, are included herein. Who knows what other predictions Birnbaum may have unwittingly made?

I am just back from South by Southwest; it's been an interesting few days. In the midst of a world full of bombs, flooding, wars, and nuclear fallout, in Austin people were dancing in the streets. Dancing on lawns. Dancing in their homes. At house parties. In the restaurants. In the clubs. There is something magical about Austin. There's a feeling there of being in the midst of a shared love, a shared narrative, a shared want to be free from the worry of the world, celebrating life, love, and music. On the way out of town, I asked my SuperShuttle driver, Brian, "What's your favorite part of Austin?"

"Harmony," he said to me, "This is what Austin is. It is a city of Harmony."

I told him about a unique and uplifting experience I'd had on a Saturday here. Instead of going out into the thick of things, I'd decided to jam with a whole crew of locals into the wee hours. We were getting pretty out there into this soupy psychedelic rock/blues, and the band took me further. My eyes closed, I played at a higher level, a higher plane, than I'd ever played in my life. In a house, with a handful of people watching, I reached this amazing transcendent musical place that I'd been searching for; it was overwhelming and lovely. We sang songs to the moon—closer to the earth than it had been in 18 years—and danced on the front lawn until 5 am. Everything had been arranged to suit this moment of lovely significance. Brian told me to hold onto that feeling, and to remember, if I took one thing back to New York with me, that Austin doesn't just play music—it celebrates music.

I firmly believe that change happens on a small level; then grows. We've seen this in the revolutions in the Middle East, the results of like-minded people easily distributing information between them. It's the butterfly effect on a massive scale. The times we will soon be facing are unwritten, unpredictable; it's going to become harder for autocracies to exist. People have more power and slowly are beginning to use that power in all sorts of ways to change their worlds. I've been traveling my world a lot this last year and have seen a massive shift among people of my generation and younger. Some of us have adapted the utter idealism of the hippie generation, so lovingly and brutally dramatized in *Easy Rider*, and realistically implemented it into our daily lives. Whether it's folks running a groovy coffee shop in otherwise bleak Orlando, an airline reducing its plastics, local markets refusing to support factory farming, or massive city-wide recycling efforts, localized back-to-the-earth movements have combined with urbanism and just enough capitalism to make sure everyone can pay the bills. Austin, it seems, celebrates these notions; the Age of Aquarius ideals have taken root and firmly embedded themselves in this Texas town. People have moved to Austin and are in it together, trying to make change stick, trying to keep their city special. There's a refreshing lack of disparity in Austin—certainly there are poor people there, like anywhere, but I saw maybe three who resembled New York's or San Francisco's completely down-and-out homeless. Part of this, I'm sure, is due to Austin's propensity to take care of its own. It is simply easier to live there on a limited income, and the following fact knocked me off my seat: A resident of Austin who is a professional musician is eligible for free health, mental, dental, and vision care.

My glasses are three years old, bent out of shape, and scratched as can be. I work at a bar mainly to pay my health insurance and expenses and have little left over. I live simply and rarely go out. Still I can't afford to buy new glasses or to fix the busted heel on my Frye boots. I live in New York, one of the wealthiest cities in the world, and the ranks of the homeless, struggling poor, and unemployed are growing every day. Street crime is increasing, and instead of addressing it, police will soon crack down on smoking in the

Wading Through Art, Commerce, Music, and Dance in Austin and New York

parks. The city's public transportation, though relatively inexpensive compared to other metropolises, has increased in fare almost 80% since I arrived. Incomes haven't. I don't earn as much from bartending as I used to; people are going out less.

This is partly because Bloomberg's police have now taken a stand against music venues. Systematically, clubs are being invaded by authorities enforcing antiquated laws. The results? Patrons are less likely to return to a club the police are investigating. Musicians are less likely to play there, fearing their shows will be shut down. Bar owners and staff are less likely to welcome live music if it puts them at risk of fines and closure. But putting that all aside for a second: Do you know how it feels to tell people who are truly rejoicing in music, in moving their bodies as God intended, to stop dancing? To apologize to a musician for stopping a gig because we fear that someone might call the police?

I'm a musician and a man who loves to dance. I just spent a week in a city that prides itself on its dedication to arts, on its dedication to freedoms, to making the city a wonderful, open place to live, where visitors and natives alike were dancing in the street—and it was legal! To be forced to tell people to stop expressing themselves makes me so angry I can feel arrows shooting into my spine. If New York City is going to survive as a cultural capital, then certain "powers-that-be" need to treat it like one, and not just pay lip service to

our arts scene, which, despite these threats, still thrives. Every day I walk the streets and see some kid on the sidewalk playing a ukulele. That kid is getting cheated, because to play in the city, you have to be able to survive in the city. Artists needn't be forced into a second career to support their primary career when the infrastructure to support the primary career already exists, but the scrutiny we are now subjected to denies artists a positive way to make a living. As the working poor (the majority of artists in town) are faced with increased health costs, increased transportation costs, and a new clothing tax, the people who need the most resources

are the ones getting the least. This is unconscionable. New York is failing itself by going after the very people who keep it alive. And the ultimate slap in the face is New York failing itself by squelching people's desires to move their bodies, to celebrate. By making us live in fear. It's hostile and sour and hard wrong. And I am not going to take this anymore.

We have a lot to learn from Austin. From musicians-only loading zones to public funding and health insurance, there is so much we as a city can be doing to help foster music and to help our working poor. And I'm sorry, Mayor Bloomberg, but I want to fucking dance whenever and wherever I feel like it. We need to change. What has happened in Austin can be transported everywhere people live, work, and play. If New Yorkers are willing to learn, to give up a few profits for the betterment of society, to help others, to take care of our own, things can change. New York has a much larger population and more problems than Austin, but there is no reason why New York can't help itself grow into something with just a

little more heart. And there is no reason why our city, the scene of so many artists' lives and deaths, and the stage on which so many artistic endeavors have been set, should not allow us to truly celebrate our art, our music, our bodies, each other. In times of woe, war, hate, natural and man-made disasters, there's really not much you can do except celebrate, hope, and

grow. If we want it, we can have it. So let's want it, and let's have it. Let's dance. Let's dance down the streets and block traffic. Let's dance in the bars and the music venues. Let's dance in the parks, dance on the sidewalks, in the gutters, in the alleyways, in the rain, in the heat, in the subways. We'll dance in protest of the hurt. Dance in honor of the dead. Dance to make ourselves feel good, to feel God. Dance to make children smile. Dance to make things change. Just dance.

Jeremiah Birnbaum works hard for the money, so you better treat him right. Read the extended version of his SxSW experience at jeremiahmusic.wordpress.com.

Systematically, clubs are being invaded by authorities, enforcing antiquated laws. The results? Patrons are less likely to return to a club the police are investigating. Musicians are less likely to play there, fearing shows will be shut down. Bar owners and staff are less likely to have music if it risks fines and closure.

Futurepoem's So Bright

KIRSCHENBAUM from page 1

back of our minds and we do think about the two books chosen in a particular year as a pairing. So even though two books may both be brilliant, if they are too similar to each other we may decide upon a pairing of two books that contrast and are in dialogue with each other in more interesting ways.

After 10 years, how do you feel the press has lived up to your expectations? What have you been most pleased with?

I'm not sure I had very defined expectations, or I might not have gone through starting a press in the first place. But I've been really pleased to see the books and the writers that we've published go on to receive attention for their work and further opportunities as poets.

And I must say the sense of accomplishment of partnering with some amazing designers to create beautiful memorable books and looking at them all lined up on a table or on our website is incredibly rewarding to me. We've put 16 amazing writers—and thoroughly unique books—into the world to date. That is also incredibly fulfilling

to me. And the dialogues with individual writers, being able to gain a writer's trust and help them positively shape their work in final editing and partnering with them to make key curatorial decision in book design, these things have been some of my fondest memories to date of being a publisher.

in some form, though maybe not as directly as I am now.

What are your hopes for the next 10 years of the press?

I think I'd like it to morph into something unexpected, a form I never envisioned it would take when I first started it. It has already begun to take unexpected directions with ventures like Futurepost and Futurepoem presents that go beyond the book to expand conversations around the work that we present and invite other artists to create satellite work inspired by our books.

I think one of the most important things I've learned is that if I want Futurepoem to continue to grow,

I have to let others in to contribute new ideas and to listen to those ideas and help enact them. So I think I want Futurepoem to continue to be something of an experiment in the poetics of publishing, not a fixed project but a framework, a room that can continue to develop in unexpected ways.

www.futurepoem.com

David A. Kirschenbaum is the editor and publisher of *Boog City*, a New York City-based community newspaper and small press of the same name now in its 21st year.



Do you see this as something you hope to do for the rest of your life?

Gosh I hope not. I've helped to create a great, vibrant press/publishing experiment. I see this as something that will continue to grow at some point (maybe very soon) either without me or with me taking on a more advisory role from a distance. Most of all, some of the publisher's that I most admire are ones who have been successful at cultivating their own writing and publishing projects—Lyn Hejinian, Leslie Scalapino. But I expect I'll always be involved in publishing

Schwervon Follows the Yellow Brick Road

Houston & Delancey: A Long-Time Resident Takes a Last Look at New York City

BY MATTHEW ROTH

On February 16, during one of his final solo performances as a resident of New York City, Major Matt Mason USA read his recently composed show poem at the Sidewalk Café. Here is a lightly edited transcription.

I was walking home last night and a delivery guy stopped me and asked if I knew where Houston and Delancey was. I looked at him kind of weird.

"I'm sorry, my friend, but that's impossible," I said. "Anyone who has lived in the city long enough knows that these two streets run parallel to each other."

He showed me a receipt; printed right there was Houston and Delancey. What a mean trick someone must have played on this guy. He couldn't speak much English. I had to just walk away saying, "Sorry, I can't help you."

I thought a little more about it. I flashed on my high school geometry class lesson about two parallel lines that never intersect. I imagined this poor guy riding his bike down a Houston Street that stretched around the globe, for the rest of his life, forever searching for its never-intersecting Delancey Street. I started to think of how different the things used to be on either side of these two streets, separated by a mere three blocks. Each year, the lines that they used to represent, like so many neighborhoods around the world, are being blurred and redrawn.

My friend Nick recently posted a comment that, after being asked four times in one day for directions and feeling he had adequately responded, he finally felt like a "real" New Yorker. His comment reminded me of one of my first visits to New York City. Through an odd chain of events, I ended up dropping acid with a girl

What I love about NYC the most is that it's never really what I think it is. It's hard to get too attached or sentimental about anything in New York, because things are always changing and moving. And if you live here long enough you actually learn how to occasionally get bored with that. It's kind of weird.

I hardly knew, and, among other things, getting totally lost in Macy's for two hours on a Sunday afternoon. At the end of the day, I recall bringing back one solid bit of information from my trip. I remember repeating it over and over to myself like a mantra to keep from freaking out as we ogled the melting glass display cases of jewelry and cosmetics:

"Power in New York City is knowing where you're going."

Power in New York City is knowing where you're going."

The streets were more hostile back then. If you looked like you didn't know where you were going, sooner or later, someone was going to



stop you and ask for change or try to fuck with you somehow. At least that's how I felt back then. I don't feel so much like that anymore.

I don't really know at what point all the seemingly same looking street corners started taking on their particular characteristics, or how I learned, when exiting the subway, to immediately sense which way was uptown without having to look at a street sign anymore. But it happened. I watched landmarks come and go, the biggest being The World Trade Center, my beacon home as I traveled downtown back to my neighborhood. Eventually, I learned to not need that as well.

In about a month, after 18 years of living here, I'll be moving out of the city, and it just so happens that for the past 15 years I've lived on a street that intersects Houston and Delancey. I started to make a list of all of the things that I will miss about New York, and I have to admit after about five items I realized that most of the things that I miss about New York are already gone. I know that sounds kind of harsh and cynical and bitter, but I don't really feel that way, because I think that's part of the point of New York. Maybe this is its biggest lesson. What I love about NYC the most is that it's never really what I think it is. It's hard to get too attached or sentimental about anything in New York, because things are always changing and moving. And if you live here long enough you actually learn how to occasionally get bored with that. It's kind of weird.

If you want to act like a New Yorker after living here for just one week, you can. If you want to write a song about it or a poem, go right ahead. You are standing on the shoulders of giants who were standing on the shoulders of giants. And before you know it, you're up there with the skyscrapers, at the top of The Empire State Building. Pretty soon, you learn that there's really nothing up there but tourists. Real life happens at street level. This has always been my favorite part of New York City. I guess it's why I prefer the parts of town where the buildings are slightly shorter.

I'm sure I know more about this city than some people who have lived here their whole lives. In turn, someone can come here for a couple of hours and discover something special that I will never ever see. That's New York. So, sure, unlike Nick, I still grapple with the idea of calling myself a "real" New Yorker. But what I do know is that wherever I go, to some degree, I'll probably always feel like that delivery guy: living somewhere, lovingly, between those parallel lines of Houston and Delancey looking for my place where they intersect.

Matt Roth makes his living as singer/songwriter Major Matt Mason USA, and as head of The Olive Juice Music Studio. After nearly two decades over two millennia, Roth is moving back to Kansas.

'If I Have to Walk I'm Going Just the Same' Nan Turner is Off to Kansas

INTERVIEW BY JONATHAN BERGER

Nan Turner, East Village stalwart, co-founder of Bionic Finger, one half of the musical dual dynamo, Schwervon!, and proud partial owner of the evil cat Gummo, is abandoning New York to explore climates further West. She answers some questions.

What inspired the move out of New York City?

It was a combination of things: our lack of finances played a big part in knowing we had to do something. Matt's recording work was drying up over the past year, and I've been unemployed or bouncing back and forth with temp jobs to keep afloat.

The main thing though was that we were getting to the point with our band where we really wanted to do more touring in the U.S., and it is such an overwhelming prospect to try to do this while paying to live in NYC. A friend said recently, "If you live in New York, you are beholden to the city." It was a good time for us to leave and just go for it more with Schwervon!, really dig in full-time working on it and make our home base Kansas City where we can live cheap. Well, a suburb right outside of K.C. where Matt grew up called Shawnee, in the basement of Matt's dad's house. We're going to buy a van once we're there.

Between Schwervon!, solo Nan performances, solo Major Matt Mason USA performances, and Olive Juice Music, the two of you take up a lot of space in East Village music scenes. What's been the reaction to your imminent departure?

It's been a mixture of excitement for us tinged with a little sadness. It's good to know we'll be missed! Most people, especially fellow musicians and artists, have been super supportive and understand this is the right

move for us. However, there have been some people who've expressed shock about our move and are having a hard time with it, people like Jon Berger. To him I quote the '80s wunderband Glass Tiger: "Don't forget me

Embracing uncertainty is part of living your dream. If you take a risk, you will often find what you're looking for ... and if you don't take that risk, you'll just wonder about it for the rest of your life.

when I'm gone ... my heart would break".

Farewell shows are great, because then you get to see a lot of people in one place and hug them and it's very cathartic and celebratory.

What kind of work do you think you'll do, outside of New York?

Playing music! I'll cross the bridge of menial day labor if I get to it. Hopefully, I won't get to it.

How much touring will happen?

So far we have a two-week midwest tour planned for May. Also we'll be back in the Northeast end of June/early July. Then a European tour is in the works for October/November. After that we'll see where the wind blows! You know anyone in Brazil? We'll go there!

Do you anticipate continuing your solo projects?

I think these will both continue, though maybe not with the frequency as they've been occurring in N.Y. For the indefinite future we are concentrating on Schwervon!, and have a busy tour schedule coming up so it may take us a while before we start playing solo gigs. Matt has a strong network of musical friends out there, though, so the chances of some solo gigs and collaborations are pretty good.

Will you ever come back to New York?

Of course we'll be back on tour; don't know about coming back to live ... too soon to tell.

What do you expect to see out in the great world?

A lot of America. A lot of good barbecue. A lot of love. We plan on touring our asses off all over the U.S., and playing everywhere we can ... DIY house shows, clubs, community centers. We are hoping to make enough cash on the road to cover costs and keep sustaining ourselves. There's a lot that's uncertain about something like this ... but embracing that uncertainty is part of living your dream. If you take a risk, you will often find what you're looking for ... and if you don't take that risk, you'll just wonder about it for the rest of your life. So, we're going for it!

When's the Bionic Finger reunion show?

Whenever we decide it is. The world isn't ready.

How's Gummo taking the move?

He is ready for Kansas mice!

Jonathan Berger will miss Nan and Matt—for at least a week.

Clarity Haynes

Sunset Park, Brooklyn

Clarity Haynes holds an M.F.A. in painting from Brooklyn College and a Certificate in Fine Arts from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Her work has been exhibited at diverse venues including The Smithsonian The Museum of American Art, The Allentown Art Museum, The 'temporary Museum in Brooklyn, and Artist's House gallery in Philadelphia.

Awards include the William Em-lin Cresson Traveling Scholarship from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, The Charles Shaw Award for Excellence in Painting from Brooklyn College, The Lee-way Foundation Window of Opportunity Grant, and The Brooklyn Arts Council Regrant Award. She has been a visiting artist at the New York Academy of Art, Maryland University, and The College of William and Mary, and teaches drawing and painting at Adelphi University and Brooklyn College.



Kate 30" x 36", graphite on paper, 2009, \$1,200



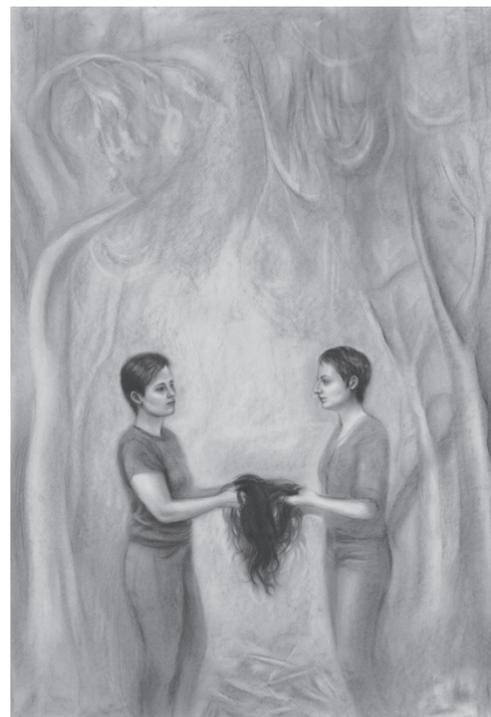
Hustler 38" x 50" (not incl. frame), charcoal and pastel on paper, 2007, \$2,400

Artist's Statement

I work with soft drawing media on paper to create large-scale, archetypal portraits of women. I am concerned with psychological and emotional states and the tensions within them—rage and tenderness, confrontation and concealment, empathy and autonomy. I am fascinated by the history of portraiture in painting and by the ways in which changing conventions reflect ideas about gender. My portraits playfully refer to the past but explore contemporary reality, seeking to subvert traditional expectations and to convey a sense of freedom and fluidity of identity.

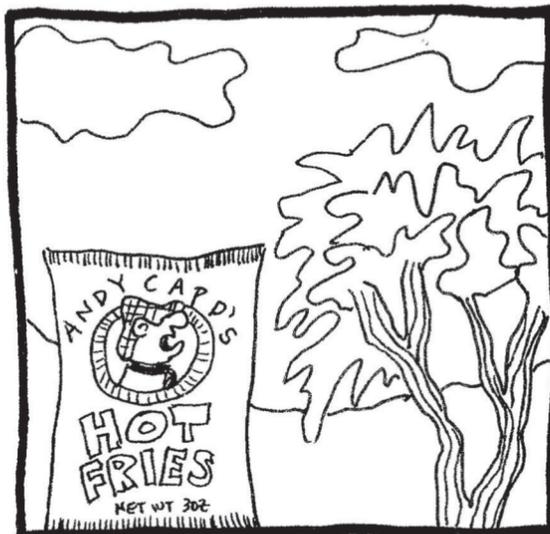
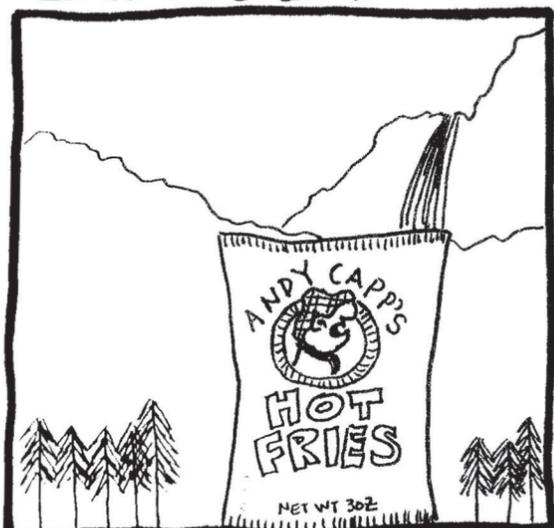


Hope 38" x 50", charcoal and pastel on paper, 2007, \$1,900



Hair Burial 30" x 40" (not incl. frame), charcoal on paper, 2007, \$1,500

IN THE WILD



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Hartland, Wisc.

Streets Paved with Gold

deregulating failure is an option
 in the special interest nuclear reactor
 harassing the middle-class
 insisting on warm weather in february
 government is inherently big
 though each human being is much bigger
 as big as galileo's heresy
 as big as a farmer murdered
 for refusing to sell his family homestead
 as finding a cure for breast cancer
 in the u.s. post office
 all you need is looking up willingly
 at the snowbank
 unenvious & sparse
 reconciling intelligence
 the prophetic turmoil
 caused by the handiwork of contempt
 guarding its posts
 an endless canto of space
 you didn't know was doing well
 like a box of packer gear
 headed for goodwill
 a bird calling in winter
 like a rummage sale opening
 on grassroots planets similar to ours
 like a bus system emancipated with riders

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Jamie Gaughran-Perez

Baltimore

The Wicked and the Dead

Sleep is for

Foolish consistency is for

Idle time is for

Yesterday's paper is good for

And good for various kinds of analysis – qualitative, quantitative, verbal, specific, numeric, etc.

"I didn't intend what I said to be real"

And / or

"I didn't mean that as fact"

And / or

"I was trying to be true"

Or True or the Truth

Does the Answer play for Boston?

The Answer. The Truth. Beast. Big Man. Timmy. Yaz. The Iron Man. Dr. J.

Nicknames are the best. They're the real deal.

Dear sirs and madams,
 Bees, in fact, don't have knees

Sleep is not for meth addicts
 When they are in the throes of the demon synthetic

Reminder: Organic solvents were what used to make decaf coffee a bad idea and dry cleaning iffy

But I love a good hook like everyone else

I really don't believe there is a hidden meaning we should be looking for, but I struggle to take that feeling all the way to the ground

Sorta like ground and round have no connection outside of a butcher's shop

Well, more likely a butcher's counter in these parts

And French for ground and French for round have even less connection

Less than no

You know what I mean

And that I mean it from one way – the kind of way that leads you to have your minions excise the excess words from Shakespeare's sonnets

I mean, how foolish is that?

How foolish is every tree? Every dogwood. Every skyscraper.

I am really starting to think I'll never get to visit an asteroid belt in this lifetime – and I've never really thought there'd be another

At least I believe that you're you

And you're not out to get me, no matter what time it is or what dumb-assed thing I've managed to say

Dear OED explorer trawling the web. I hope you find this note and add "shit-ton" to the dictionary. It is such a great phrase-cum-word. It does such a great job of conveying an idea, an attitude, a cultural moment. What more do you want? I know, right? I don't doubt Google will show off its popularity and utility if you have reservations.

If you already have it on the docket. Excellent! I should check that OED more often (aka ever aka Little Johnny One Note aka the Brockton Bomber aka Sweet Cheeks aka the best damned cat I've ever known).

Sleep tight Spooky. Sleep tight Zelda. And sleep tight all the other animals great and small that I've loved and who have shed their living selves. You guys were awesome.

About the Poets Steve Dalachinsky (cover) is the author of *The Final Nite and Other Poems* (Ugly Duckling Presse). **Jamie Gaughran-Perez** plays bass in the band Sweatpants. **Tom Hibbard** is the author of *The Sacred River of Consciousness* (Moon Willow Press). **Elaine Kahn's** books include *Customer* and *Radiant Bottle Caps*. She co-curates the LOOT performance series at Flying Object. **Megan Ronan's** poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *West Wind Review*, *SpringGun*, and *Shampoo Poetry*.

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Elaine Kahn

Northampton, Mass.

All Natural

It goes in with a shape of its own
& comes out as
real garbage

Bloodsucker
off the night
Homer of your bod

I have water up my nose

What gives you to me:

Your ballet slipper, pink
your brain, your bubble
pink your junk
it works its mouths
all natural—
if we are the plastic
so we are the bug

That eats the puzzle
that has the disease
that doesn't watch

Question. What makes shit nature?
Answer. Nature shits

Does nature warm the earth?
I care
to dig your natural warmth
your natural highs
& love the shit
you make with your mind/body shit

Your body, a story the mind tells itself

Your mind, made out of body

Plastic body
body body blah
blah blah

Oh baby, baby
even maggots must be cute
to a maggot lady

Megan Ronan

Washington, D.C.

When We Met

A sink hole in a sentence,
a meandering nonrestrictive:

so many crevices. One kind of love
is like feature recognition:

the way we read—
each physical dimension,

lines and curves,
calling out to memories of themselves.

It was on the neighbor's new wraparound porch,
Yes, she told my mother,

he molded the balustrade himself.
He looked proud as my eyes traced his shapes.

* * *

So many crevices. One kind of love.
Like an h or an n or an f

creating a hollow for shelter
under a waterfall,

an awning for sliding down,
serifs for dangling off,

crossbars for hanging the wash.
My brain a flaming comet:

I recognized him—I mean—
I was in love.

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