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Black Mountain - 1941

Paris - Sue Weil - Blueprints

Earthworks

③ Black Mtn. (1949) - ASL - Quiet Distant - Blueprints

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Oct. 30, 1977

Letters

Black Mountain

To the Editor:

I sometimes wonder how many Black Mountains there were. Martin Duberman's curious account, "Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community," (New York magazine, 1972), evokes a place I think I should know, but it's not the place where I spent an enlightening year, in 1949-50. One quality of life at Black Mountain is vividly caught in Francine du Plessix Gray's article "Black Mountain, an American Place" (July 31), a recounting fresher than most because freer of adulation. But another equally authentic and pervasive quality of that life never seems to get described. "I finger my innards for the truth" seemed at that moment "visceral" and "reductive," but there the words would sit. The clever phrase became a code, which, voiced, satisfied the initiates. No pursuit, no probing, no unconverted child to query the Emperor's new clothes. The Black Mountain I remember is caught by a comment of Robert Klein, whom I found sitting disconsolately on the steps of the dining hall, summer 1950. "Rehearsals going badly?" says I. "It's the students," said Klein, "they'll philosophize about the play, but they won't learn their lines."

That's a side of Black Mountain too important to overlook. The freedom to create—painting, dance, drama, music, poetry—it was there. The discipline to sustain artistic work only rarely was. My own job there was to teach history, but what most students wanted was episodic stuff—the kinds of bits and pieces, "shards of culture," that might help to explain Pound's Cantos. I didn't know enough of my craft then to teach history as a creative art, an individual set of judgments based on solid evidence. Yet that would not have worked, either, probably because as Gray points out, the Happening was all. Spontaneity was all. Inhibitions must go. Like the poor child, a Connecticut girl, desperately insecure of herself, who lost control utterly in a wild dance in the dining hall. Beautiful, cooed the crowd, rubbing the soles of their feet.

For my wife and me, Black Mountain College was a revelation of the world of art and crafts. We lived in the house Josef Albers had used, and his influence remained strong, even though we chose to scrape the black paint off the kitchen window panes to see the mountains beyond. Gropius, Fuller, Goodman, Cunningham, Cage—all were there in their works or in themselves. New ideas stretched the callow young couple we were. But the outgroup ruled its tiny enclave in the North Carolina mountains as an ingroup, carrying us newcomers along. Fortunately, we already liked Bach and Bartok, Yeats and Proust, and we were open to radical sounds and colors and shapes. Had we not been, however, we'd have been excluded. Taste was narrow, deviation ridiculed.

We were there while I caught my breath between M.A. and Ph.D., and being at Black Mountain was exciting, as well as exasperating. Excitement characterizes Black Mountain; exasperation was part of it, too. By its nature, by inciting its members to go, like explorers, beyond the edges of the known world, Black Mountain attracted artists and craftsmen of all sorts. Some brought self-discipline, persistence, taste, and dwelt in the Land of the Blessed. Not many students profited the same way.

A. Z. FREEMAN
Williamsburg, Va.

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Black Mountain (RR)

Not at all comfortable at first. "I represented everything Albers hated most. Coming that way in mid-semester, his knowing I'd been in Paris, I think he assumed I was going to be some kind of showoff. I was willing to submerge any desires I had into his discipline, but he never believed that. I remained the outstanding example of what he was not talking about. He'd say 'This is the most stupid thing I've ever seen, I don't even want to know who did it' (imitating German accent). I had great respect for him, though -- if I hadn't, I could never have put up with it. Of course my social life was not improved by being Albers' dunce.

John and Merce - doesn't remember whether he met them that first time or later. "You were living in such isolation - occasionally somebody would remember it was Saturday and go to the movie. I kept track of Sundays because I was still going to church then." He went with a black dancer and model named Dolores, who got him in the back door of hers. (Albers noticed her too -- "He may have painted squares but he had quite an eye for what he called 'the hills and the valleys'").

Bob took weaving from Anni Albers, who was a board. Russian from Mme Goldowsky, singing from a Mrs. Yallowitz (this was later).

"The activity at Black Mountain was terrific. It may have had a lot to do with the way I've led the rest of my life. We were all each other's means of growth. That was the most beautiful part of it. I'm not sure I didn't learn more from just being there than from any class. Which doesn't mean it was always so smooth. There was always some super emotional revolution where people were either on one side or the other, so that every morning at breakfast half the student body would be in tears. The year before Sue and I came it was about birds versus cats -- the bird people wanted the cats out because they were killing birds. The year we came it was about communism. A lot of this came from the problem of isolation -- we couldn't mix with the local people at all."

Bob kept coming back, often without enrolling. It was possible to do that. There were some nightmare moments, periods of extreme loneliness even with Sue there. But it was a great idea.

in US, to escape from Germany - brought [illegible]

also distrusted use of art for self-expression - he saw essential ingredient of art as "training of consciousness." "Albers had never conceived of art as an incidental endeavor on the periphery of life, but rather as a process of sensitization and insight applicable to every facet of life, one that integrated all fields of learning. The Bauhaus had been far more concerned with rethinking the relationship between art and design, and design and use, than Black Mountain was, but central to both was a concern with the relationship between art and life." (62)

Albers' material studies - p.64.
His teaching manner - p. 66

"Combination" one of the key words in BMC art lexicon - p.68

"his presence was a vital factor in discouraging the sloppy, the casual, the makeshift." (74)

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"Black Mountain" ☐ Martin Duberman (1972)

"It is the story of a small group of men and women...who attempted to find some consonance between their ideas and their lives..." (p.11)

"The Alberses...she, quick, articulate, witheringly lucid; he, distrustful of words -- especially when analytical and in English -- and so mindful of his integrity that he constantly makes you feel threatened in yours own."(15)

John Andrew Rice was fired as professor of classics at Rollins College in 1933, as a man "disruptive of peace and harmony." His sharp tongue , his iconoclasm, and his indiscretion were pronounced. Many students worshipped him, many others found him cruel. Although officially vindicated of the charges against him by an investigating committee of the AAUP, he left and so did three others who took his side, Frederick Georgia and Ralph Lounsbury, and Theodore Dreier.

In August 1933, these three together with Robert Wunsch, the Rollins drama coach who had also resigned and gone to work in a Louisville high school, started a new college in buildings rented from the Blue Ridge Assembly of the Protestant Church, in beautiful mountain country near Black Mountain, North Carolina. The church used the bldgs only in summer.

Rice wanted to put the arts at the center of the curriculum. He believed that at birth "we are all artists, every one of us: we are free to create the kind of world in which we choose to live, and we're equal in that freedom."

No fixed regulations or requirements. No required courses, no exams. Students to have equal voice with faculty, and to shape their own education. Curriculum divided into junior and senior divisions; before passing from junior to senior, a student had to pass comprehensive oral and written tests, and in order to graduate he had to do the same. How long he stayed was entirely up to the student. (see p. 49)

Rice detested the equation between art and "self-expression." For him the key to the art-experience was the discovery of "integrity." (53)

Albers, on his first day there, barely speaking English: "I want to open eyes." Philip Johnson had been trying to find a position for him in US, to escape from Germany - brought him to Rice's attention. Albers also distrusted use of art for self-expression - he saw essential ingredient of art as "training of consciousness." "Albers had never conceived of art as an incidental endeavor on the periphery of life, but rather as a process of sensitization and insight applicable to every facet of life, one that integrated all fields of learning. The Bauhaus had been far more concerned with rethinking the relationship between art and design, and design and use, than Black Mountain was, but central to both was a concern with the relationship between art and life." (62)

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Black Mountain - 2

"Be intelligent!" - BMC watchword.

Rice was fired in 1938. Too abrasive, made too many enemies. And his affair with a girl student offended the place's oddly Puritan sensibilities. Irony that his dream of a free environment had run afoul of his own power over others. Unilateral decisions and neglect of his functions. He came back to the college for a while but was inactive, writing his autobiog, and finally left for good in June 1939. Wunsch was the new rector. But Albers was the real charismatic figure and authority.

In 1940 the students build a new home on land purchased by the college on Lake Eden, a few miles across the valley from Blue Ridge. Habitable by May 1941, in time for fall term.

Second major schism came during war years, when faculty became predominantly European (German) refugees. A faction around young Eric Bentleywanted to liberalize the place, which meant mainly integrating the student body and faculty with negroes. Bentley's epater le bourgeois behavior disturbed the older Europeans, and Wunsch hated him. Bentley was accused of indoctrinating students with pro-Soviet, anti-British ideas. He and his supporters were also suspected of wanting to "take over" the college. Matters came to a head, and the Bentley faction quit en masse, taking a third of the college with them (1944).

Spirit of the school, singing at table - p. 219. (see also M.C., p. 294) Entire community agreed at beginning of school year what the guiding principles would be. "The student is the curriculum." Teachers free to teach any way they like.

Two goals of BMC: establishing a community, and creating a climate for arts to flourish. The incompatibility of these two became evident with arrival ofJohn Wallen, psychologist, in 1945. Clash between Wallen and Albers over this. The Wallen group lost, and left in 1948.

Natasha Goldowsky and her tiny mother ("Madame") who tutored in French and Russian - p.276.

Alberses came back in 1948 after a year's leave in Mexico.

Cage-Cunningham visit, April 3-8 1948 -- p.278 ff. Returned for Summer session that year -- p.281 - also Bucky Fuller, invited by Albers; the "Supine Dome" experiment. Cage's Satie festival and his denunciation of Beethoven (p288 ff). "La Piege de Meduse," p. 288, dir, by Arthur Penn.

Albers becomes rector, August 1948 - p. 303

Charles Olson comes to summer session of 1949, puts on "an evening that combined poetry, mime, music, color and dance" (p.317)

Albers quits, 1951. BMC becomes, for the first time, since days of its inception, "a decidedly American, and a decidedly radical environment."(324)

Paul Goodman and new sex standards - pp 330 ff

Olson - pp. 335 ff. BMC reflects new tendencies stirring in San Francisco and New York (beats, Pollock, Cage)

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Black Mountain - 3

Summer of 1952 - Rauschenberg (p.346)

Olson and the painter crowd considered Cage-Cunningham-Rauschenberg "somewhat precious and self-indulgent" (p. 347)

Cage at BMC - p. 348 ff. Reading the Huang Po Doctrine (349)

The Event (1952) - p. 350 ff

Cage on RR: "I have the desire to just erase the difference between art and life, whereas Rauschenberg... makes a mystery out of being an artist" (p.358)

"Just as Cage may be said to be the individual most responsible for the theoretical thrust that underlay the aesthetic of these men, Black Mountain may be said to be the place where that aesthetic received encouragement at a critical juncture... (see Cunningham statement here, p. 362)

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Sue Kirschenbaum (Weil)

Lives in brownstone on east 87th, now married to an architect.

Sue was a native New Yorker, who went right from Dalton to the Academie Julian. Came from a more sophisticated family than R., and "there wasn't any doubt in my mind about what I wanted to be -- I knew I wanted to be a painter." Says that when she met R. over there, he was "just sliding into painting."

Confirms that R. was very naive about art, art history etc, but that this made no difference really. Nor did his complete lack of adademic training. "He knew what was right for him and what wasn't." He seemed even then to have a great deal of assurance about what he was doing.

The instructors at the Academy were somewhat disturbed by R.'s work, which seemed surprising in view of fact that Matisse and others had been through the school. May have had something to do with the summer course -- not so serious.

R., Sue recalls, would get hold of something and then "loosen up" -- always loosening up his work.

At Black Mountain, Albers expected his students to behave like students -- i.e. subservient. This R. couldn't do.

Long before there were Happenings, Sue recals R. talking about doing a theater piece. He eveh made notes for it.

In their apartment on West 95th Street, there was a backyard garden with a wooden fence around it. R. spent weeks painting and doctoring the fence, cutting out sections etc. Made a work of art, which they had to leave.

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Susan Weil (Kirschenbaum) - 1/17/78 at ~~8ix~~ k80 Park Row

Born in NYC, then lived in New Jersey and Connecticut. Summers on Outer Island, which her parents bought when she was born (see her "Notebook"). Went to Dalton School. Studied art first with Rufine Tamayo, who was an awful teacher; the next year with Aaron Kurzon and Vaclav Vytlacil. "That was it." Kurzon opened that world to her and she never wantedk to do anything else.

Graduated from Dalton in 1948, and went to Paris for the summer -- with three other girls whose parents had entrusted them to the care of an older woman for the summer. They happened to stay in the same pension where RR was staying, and Bob and Sue both went to the Grahde Chaumiere, so their meeting was inevitable. "Bob was not all that sure about painting. Of course he had all that vitality and intelligence, but he was trying to figure out whether painting was really for him." The summer session at the art school was not very serious - they got nothing out of it, except a place to draw from a live model. "Bob and I did try painting around the city, in train stations and things like that. Both Bob's and my paintings then were a kind of explanation of traditional painting, but with wild colors, like Fauvism. I was more used to looking at paintings than he was -- I think it was all kind of amazing to Bob, that modern painting really did surprise him."

Was Bob naive? "He's an awfully fast learner. Besides I was only 18, so he didn't seem naive to me."

Sue went to Black Mountain that fall mainly because Aaron Kurzon was there, and because she was determined to stay with painting -- her parents wanted her to go to college. Bob came there in Oct. because Sue was there, also because of GI Bill.

"My parents were both involved with the arts (see Notebook). They always encouraged me. They liked Bob, but they didn't like our relationship. Bob had a lot of trouble with my mother."

Sue had great trouble understanding Bob's father because of his heavy Southern accent. He'd say something and she wouldn't have any idea what it was.

Albers - He gave everybody a hard time, not just Bob. His attitude was that students should be humble, should think of themselves as students only. He taught that there was one way to do anything. Bob was not that bad a student, it was just that he and Albers didn't like each other. Albers also mistrusted Bob and Sue because they'd been to Paris. But Bob tried hard to do what Albers wanted, and his drawings (he was very good at drawing) show it. Once Albers had them do a leaf study. Because Bob had entered late, he didn't know what Albers wanted, so he painted a stone, stuck a leaf to it, then added tpuches that turned it into the image of "Pepsi," the campus dog - Albers was furious. Albers used to called them Wthe Bobbsey Twins." Bob really did try, though.

Sue was very happy at Black Mtn. 1948 was the year of the great schism, which was very dramatic and forced you to take sides. But it didn't feel like a wild place to her. It was immensely lively but not wide open. She and Bob both stayed out the year, until spring 1949, then came to NY. Bob got a loft on Willett Street on Lower East Side, a terrible place with rats and cracks in the walls; Sue stayed with her family on East 87th St.
They both attended A.S.L.

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They got married in 1950. At the time Sue's mother wasn't speaking to Bob, but the marriage ended that. Married on Outer Island, which was where Sue grew up. (Boat explosion when she was eleven; her brother, who died in it, was fourteen). Christopher was born a year later, June 1951.

Summer of 1952, a fire in the house on Outer Island destroyed all of Bob's and Sue's paintings (including those from Bob's show at Parsons), and all her father's writings. Sue remembers the Parsons show having black and white paintings, some with mirrors.

"When we were at the Art Students League it was like having a studio with a bunch of other people. The instructor came in once or twice a week, and if you wanted criticism you could get it. Bob was developing his own kind of things there. We were learning things together. Our work never looked alike - except at Black Mountain where it had to. There was a lot of influence back and forth. I certainly have always had a feeling about Bob's work, knowing where it comes from and how it got there...

Blueprints - Sue had done those as a child, small. It's impossible to say that one or the other invented the big figure ones. They did them together. Sue's little brother was the first model. The one in MOMA was posed by Pat Pearman, who came to NY for a while when they were first married. Life brought a professional model. Bob had also done blueprints for Bonwits window, before Life. The first one was done with natural sunlight, the rest using sunlamps.

After their marriage they lived in an apartment on West 95th Street, between Columbus and Amsterdam. Bob kept his Willett St loft for a while. Blueprints made at 95th Street.

In 1952 Bob was invited back down to teach at Black Mtn for the summer. Sue was there too. In the fall she came back to NY alone, and he went to Europe and North Africa. She says she hadn't been prepared for what happened, had no inklings before -- she was still just a kid really. Bob wrote to her from Europe, once sent back three drawings from the batch of stuff he was supposed to have thrown in the river. Recently she showed them to him (she wouldn't have wanted even to hang something he didn't like), and he was pleased. Also in Europe, he made Christopher a wonderful sort of smock, silk, with dozens of pockets and something in each pocket. "We always remained good friends."

Fame "I think he would have gotten it whatever field he'd gone into. But that comes out of his special energy and drive, not because he had a thirst for fame. It changed him some. So many people making demands on him. Bob is very open, he makes a lot of mistakes because he didn't change enough, maybe. But the Bob I knew thirty years ago is still there; he does still have the same response to things. People get very weird toward Bob because he's become a myth - it must be very confusing.

Bob never drank in the early days they were together - they never even bought a bottle. His drinking bothers Christopher a lot, with result Chris doesn't drink at all.

Cage - "He was an influence in the best sense, an interesting mind and point of view."

"Bob is not as unread as he sometimes lets on. But he does absorb things in his own special way.

His photographs - they were always just another way of working, never an end in themselves. Carnal Clock photos all in one.

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Donald Droll - lunch 6/14/78

Droll was at Univ. of Michigan when he read an article about Blac k Mtn in The Nation, and decided he wanted to go there. It changed his life. He went in the summer of 1949 and stayed through the next year, until Albers left. De Kooning was there, and arranged for Droll to work for Charles Egan (not a real job - he just sat in the gallery while Egan was out).

Met Sue first, then Bob. Says they were both exactly the same as now. Bob very self-confident and obviously ambitious, with enormous energy. Knew just what he wanted, and could manipulate people to gain his own ends. Droll didn't really like him - was Sue's friend. Remembers the two of them driving around in the garbage truck - job they volunteered for. They were always finding things in the garbage that they could use in collages. They were very much a couple.

But Bob was quite obviously gay at Black Mtn. Droll once saw him in bed with a guy in the men's dormitory. He thinks Sue didn't know, or kept from knowing.

Broll and Sue were the only ones who paid full tuition at Black Mtn. that year. The GI Bill was keeping the place alive.

Sue's family may have felt that Bob was free-loading off them, "which he was." They didn t oppose the marriage though. Droll was best man, really for Sue's sake. Bob's parents came up for it, and his sister. About seventeen or eighteen people at the ceremony, on Outer Island.

The marriage broke up on Outer Island too. Sue's mother caught Bob in bed with Cy. The parents insisted on a divorce -- Sue probably wouldn't have. They were very powerful, and she fell in line with them. It was very difficult and bitter for a while afterward.

Droll remembers before this, Bob's leaving to go back to Black Mtn. when Sue was sick and had just had Christopher. Sue didn't seem to think there was anything wrong, but Droll was offended.

It's true that at first everyone thought Sue was the one with talent. Droll was amazed that Betty Parsons gave Bob a show, and later that Egan did. He couldn't see thebwork at all.

Egan - had been in jail for a stretch as a young man. Gave the impression of wanting to be an artist himself. He couldn't run a business. The Poindexters were collectors, wanted to get more involved andbecome dealers. They and Egan didn't get along, and he was forced out. The gallery was on 57th.

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INTERVIEW WITH DONALD DROLL April 1978

Droll first met Susan Weil and RR at Black Mtn, in the Fall 1948. Droll was friendlier with Sue- he always found RR somewhat obnoxious since he ahd to be the center of attention. Droll was studying with Anni Albers, but also took Josef's color classes. He agrees with RR in finding Albers a miserable man.

Droll, Weil and RR all returned to NYC after the Spring semester of 1949. Sue and RR lived at her family's brownstone house on 87th St (between 5th & Madison). Droll continued his relationship with them.

In the late Spring of 1950 they were married at her family's estate on Outer Island, Conn. It was a small, but very elegant wedding. RR's parents and sister came up from Louisiana. For their wedding night, Droll reserved a suite at the Sherry-Netherland. RR and Sue went there, but decided not to stay- they felt it was too fancy. According to Droll, they stayed with some friends on the lower East Side. Droll was the Best Man at the wedding (Sue has photographs of the event).

Christopher was born in July 1951. According to Droll, Bob was not around when Chris was an infant. He was back at Black Mtn. Sue stayed in NYC. The marriage broke up right after Chris was born. Droll says that Sue's mother found Bob in the bushes on the grounds of the Outer Island property with another man and insisted that Sue divorce him.

Droll says that Sue and Bob were always collecting junk from the streets. Also, Bob would make outlandish costumes (especially hats) for them to wear to parties.

Droll says that when he first met them, Bob was painting portraits (meaning figures) in an Expressionist manner closer to German Expr. than AE. He also commented that RR's first exh. at Betty Parsons was really terrible. (Most of the paintings were destroyed by fire).

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spirits—*e.g.*, Charles A. Beard and Thorstein Veblen—could not conform to the Stanfords and Columbias of their day, and they were joined by scholars who were restive at such places.

The most recent and suggestive secession was the founding of Black Mountain College in North Carolina during the 'thirties by teachers fired from Rollins College in Florida when they protested the denial of "academic freedom" to John Rice. Significantly, Rice espoused no particular heresy—it was his general nonconformity and nuisance value that was condemned. He and his friends formed, really, the first Beat School—and its graduates have been leaders in this kind of art and culture. The teachers often went unpaid, but they continued because the school was theirs; it had no trustees and no administration. When I taught at Black Mountain, I found it very feeble in traditional culture, but nobody hindered me from teaching more scholastically. It was a justified boast that students who dropped out of the Ivy League could still get some kind of education at Black Mountain College. The school lasted nearly twenty-five years and then, like a little magazine, folded. But its spirit survives.

nd out that everything was going
here."

49, spent rest of summer at the
d, off Conn. coast -- painting.
Vytlacil and Kantor. "Kantor's
' had been 'What?' I'm always
of toleration, and I remember
ehind a group of women in the
sible justification there was
as doing -- they were referring
e white numbers that's hanging
id he didn't see any reason why
. It wasn't his sort of thing,

his time, near Sue's family's, for $4 wk.
msburg Bridge, with other ASL artists.

R. and Sue were married in June,
ented with blueprints.

ground floor apartment on West
hris. They had been working during
larger and larger sheets
ly houses, after part of roll
p could be used as the light
-- it became like painting rather
o make some money, R. went to
Life magazine with suggestion that their blueprints might make a
"Speaking of Pictures" dept. (*lower) Life was interested, sent a photographer
and a model around to get shots. R. learned that the model was making
$25 an hour, while all he would make was $100 for the idea. He
got mad and sent a large bill, which Life ended by paying. It appeared
in the April 9, 1951 issue. R.'s friends saw the blueprint
pictures as fertility symbols inspired by Sue's pregnancy; said he ought to do
something with them for money. Did job for Bonwit windows, for Gene Moore: $500 (see later on)
(R. had become interested in photography while at Black Mountain. The
college had an outstanding photography dept., with such
people in it as Aaron Siskind, Irving Penn and others.

In January 1951, R. took a bunch of his paintings and went to see
Betty Parsons (see page following)

stay arranged by best man. They were
out even though it was already paid for, and went to Willett Street.
Police came that night, and there was difficulty explaining -- just
married in Conn., honeymoon at Sherry-Netherland, but wanted to come to
this squalor. The wedding itself was large and festive - neither Bob
nor Sue wanted to leave the party,

Soul-mates? "People who, no matter what the circumstances, just fit.
There've really been only a few rough moments, around the divorce.
I'm sure there isn't anything in the world thatwe wpuldn't do for one
another." What went wrong? "I think I was too immature for the res-
ponsibilities, the way they were laid out. I started to feel too married.
I think Sue did too."

student
She'd been Vytlacil's favorite pupil at Dalton. I think our split may
have a lot to do with my restlessness -- I've always had a great
sense of survival."

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Josef Albers 8 North Forest Circle New Haven 15, Conn.

Art Students League

"While I was at Black Mountain I found out that everything was going on in New York, so I decided to come here."

Left N.Car. in the early summer of 1949, spent rest of summer at the home of Sue's parents on Outer Island, off Conn. coast -- painting. Entered ASL that fall, studying with Vytlacil and Kantor. "Kantor's attitude was 'why not?', where Albers' had been 'What?' I'm always so touched by the slightest evidence of toleration, and I remember how encouraged I was when I came up behind a group of women in the class who were asking Kantor what possible justification there ~~was~~ ~~in~~ could be for the kind of work I was doing -- they were referring specifically to that painting with the white numbers that's hanging on my wall right now -- and Kantor said he didn't see any reason why I shouldn't be doing that sort of work. It wasn't his sort of thing, but his attitude was, well, why not?"

R. had a room on East 87th street at this time, near Sue's family's, for $4 wk. Later moved down to Willet St., near Wmsburg Bridge, with other ASL artists.

Spent summer of 1950 on Outer Island. R. and Sue were married ~~this~~ in June, 1950, in Stony Creek, Conn. Experimented with blueprints.

Came back to NY in the fall and took a ground floor apartment on West 95th Street -- Sue was pregnant with Chris. They had been working during the summer with blueprint paper, using larger and larger ~~sheets~~ sheets which they got (opened) free from blueprint supply houses, after part of roll had been used. R. found that a sun lamp could be used as the light source, and this gave them new freedom -- it became like painting rather than shadowgram. Also cheap. Hoping to make some money, R. went to Life magazine with suggestion that their blueprints might make a "Speaking of Pictures" dept. (over) Life was interested, sent a photographer and a model around to get shots. R. learned that the model was making $25 an hour, while all he would make was $100 for the idea. He got mad and sent a large bill, which Life ended by paying. It appeared in the April 9, 1951 issue. R.'s friends saw the blueprint pictures as fertility symbols inspired by Sue's pregnancy; said he ought to do something with them for money. Did job for Bonwit window, for Gene Moore: $500 (see later on)
(R. had become interested in photography while at Black Mountain. The college had an outstanding photography dept., with such people in it as Aaron Siskind, Irving Penn and others.

In January 1951, R. took a bunch of his paintings and went to see Betty Parsons (see page following)

stay arranged by best man. They were
out even though it was already paid for, and went to Willett Street.
Police came that night, and there was difficulty explaining -- just
married in Conn., honeymoon at Sherry-Netherland, but wanted to come to
this squalor. The wedding itself was large and festive - neither Bob
nor Sue wanted to leave the party,

Soul-mates? "People who, no matter what the circumstances, just fit.
There've really been only a few rough moments, around the divorce.
I'm sure there isn't anything in the world thatwe wpuldn't do for one
another." What went wrong? "I think I was too immature for the res-
ponsibilities, the way they were laid out. I started to feel too married.
I think Sue did too."

student
She'd been Vytlacil's favorite pupil at Dalton. I think our split may
have a lot to do with my restlessness -- I've always had a great
sense of survival."

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Josef Albers 8 North Forest Circle New Haven 15, Conn.

* Life, Apr. 9, 1951. Spread strips of blueprint paper on floor, put down ferns, etc., then nude model. "Although the Rauschenbergs make blueprints for fun, they hope to turn them into screen and wallpaper designs." (Life)

R once made a collage of toilet paper, then daydreamed it in gold leaf. The illusion bothered him, so he threw it away.

* Donald Drell

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Marriage etc (RR)

"Her father was always writing a play." Both parents had money. Father extremely handsome, and very gentle (tender). His side of family came from the Adler branch of Sullivan and Adler (Chicago); hers from New Jersey wealth. The opposition to Bob was very simple — they just worried what people would say about Bob and Sue being always together though not married. Bob proposed to her father in a soda shop - father had asked to speak to them , mentioned the problem, and Bob instantly proposed marriage as solution. "I'd love to," said Sue. Bob was living then in a tiny room down the street from their East 87th St. apartment.

At the Art Students League, Bob and a couple of other students had idea of finding a condemned bldg and talking landlord into letting them work there in exchange for fixing it up. This they did in a loft on Willett Street, under the Williamsburg Bridge. As it happened Bob and Sue spent their honeymoon there (see below). "It may have been the grimmest neighborhood I've ever lived in. It seemed frightening to be inside, and even more frightening to be outside."

Sue's mother was an extremely interesting woman. "She was admittedly a practicing witch." Being associated with such a family was incredible for Bob, whose experience had been Port Arthur and the Navy. "Salad on salad plates? Libraries, and pianos, and important people dropping in all the time."

Outer Island was spectacular. One whole side was big rocks, the other was trees. Two houses - fish house on beach where Bob and Sue stayed, after they were married. Honeymoon started with Sherry-Netherland, stay arranged by best man.* They were miserable there, decided to move out even though it was already paid for, and went to Willett Street. Police came that night, and there was difficulty explaining — just married in Conn., honeymoon at Sherry-Netherland, but wanted to come to this squalor. The wedding itself was large and festive - neither Bob nor Sue wanted to leave the party,

* Donald Oenslager

Soul-mates? "People who, no matter what the circumstances, just fit. There've really been only a few rough moments, around the divorce. I'm sure there isn't anything in the world thatwe wpuldn't do for one another." What went wrong? "I think I was too immature for the responsibilities, the way they were laid out. I started to feel too married. I think Sue did too."

She'd been Vytlacil's favorite student at Dalton. I think our split may have a lot to do with my restlessness — I've always had a great sense of survival."

As for myself, after hearing tonight intensively for 10 years abroad and for 27 years in this country, and mostly in extra large classes — and being a visual type — I remember faces easier than names and stories. therefore, if you want to know my relationships to my students, as grandpa or internals, I suggest to ask my students.

And in case of Rauschenberg, he may remember especially our "material" lectures at Black Mountain.

Wishing you the best of success with your portfolio sincerely yours, Wingfield

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Blueprints - Sue and Bob had spread in Life,* tried to peddle idea but no luck. They were supposed to have a fifteen page spread in Portfolio, a new mag edited by Alexis Brodovich, but it folded beforehand. Sue was pregnant. They were living on ground floor on West 95th -- and Sue's inheritance was so tied up by unsympathetic members of family they were quite poor. The one job they did get was with Gene Moore for Bonwits, which was the start of that resource. * Apr. 9, 1951 - said a 10-yard roll of blueprint paper cost abt $1.75

While at ASL, Bob was doing lots of collage at home. Too shy to show them, but Kantor asked to see and was quite excited. Bob did 22 The Lily White in class. His collage work was not an educated response at all. He and Sue were painting five ptgs a day then, and he just overflowed into collage.

"Night Plants" - these were just before the all-black and all-white ptgs, done at Black Mtn. "They had to dox with roots at the bottom, the light at the top, and the earth in between. They were made of three colors -- red lead, black, and enamel white."

Pieces for Parsons show -- sort of serial form of static animation. Like movie stills. One called "Garden of Eden" was a series of black lollipop shapes, one of which turned to red and then disappeared. Not one that Betty and Clyfford Still picked was not painted over before show. Bob didn't know who Still was.

Pat Pearman - came to NY about time Bob and Sue married. She had a job with UN, and contracted a very unpleasant marriage. Used to hide out from her husband in their apt. She posed for one of the blueprints, which was the only one Bob didn't destroy, because of his attachment to her. ("There were times when I felt so discouraged I just wanted to destroy everything").

teacher's memory, with regard to the number of his students (often innumerable) and the years of his teaching (often for a lifetime), will find that it naturally leads less to assembling of personal recollections than to summarizing groupings and viewpoints.

Consequently the easier and richer source for personal recollections are, as a rule, with younger memories.

As for myself, after teaching tonight intensively for 10 years abroad and for 27 years in this country, and weekly in extra large classes - and being a visual type - I remember faces easier than names and stories. therefore, if you want to know my relationships to my students, as groups or individuals, I suggest to ask my students.
And in case of Rauschenberg, he may remember especially our "material" sessions at Black Mountain.

Wishing you the best of success with your project, sincerely yours, Hofmann

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Josef Albers 8 North Forest Circle New Haven 15, Conn.

VII. 9, 63

Dear Mr Tomkins,
your letter, re profile on Rauschenberg has invited me to think about students and teachers memories. It came to this:

Any memories of a student-teacher relationship may appear different from either side.

Normally, younger minds are inclined to look up to their older mentors, with a positive special interest, expectation, curiosity.
And, as for a student the number of his teachers is relatively small, and their influence of a limited time, his early memories about his teachers are usually quite intensive and lasting.

Now considering the different extension of a teacher's memory, with regard to the number of his students (often innumerable) and the years of his teaching (often for a life time), will think that it naturally leads less to assembling of personal recollections then to summarizing groupings and viewpoints.

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As for myself, after teaching together intensively for 10 years abroad and for 27 years in this country, and mostly in extra large classes - and being a visual type - I remember faces easier than names and stories. therefore, if you want to know my relationships to my students, as groups or individuals, I suggest to ask my students.
And in case of Rauschenberg, he may remember especially our "materials" studies at Black Mountain.

Wishing you the best of success with your profile
sincerely yours, Josef Albers