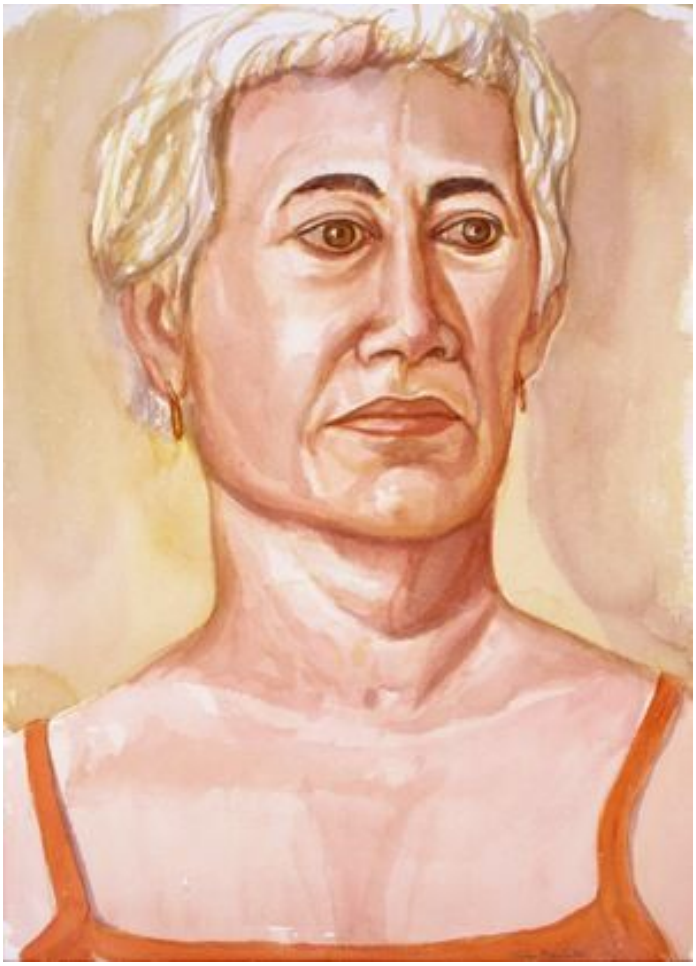
Musing: Sitting for a portrait by Philip Pearlstein

caption 1

1st sitting: August 23, 2016

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



Helene Verin, 2011

This, being my 2nd painting by Philip and first in his NYC studio; more planned, less spontaneous. The first portrait, which is a watercolor, happened at their NJ cabin on the lake. One morning while I was visiting, he said, “Let’s do your portrait.” I was blond at the time, and he decided I didn’t look like that anymore.

Think it was after my Andy Warhol portrait was in the “Pearlstein, Warhol, Cantor: From Carnegie Tech to New York” show at Philip’s gallery, Betty Cuningham.

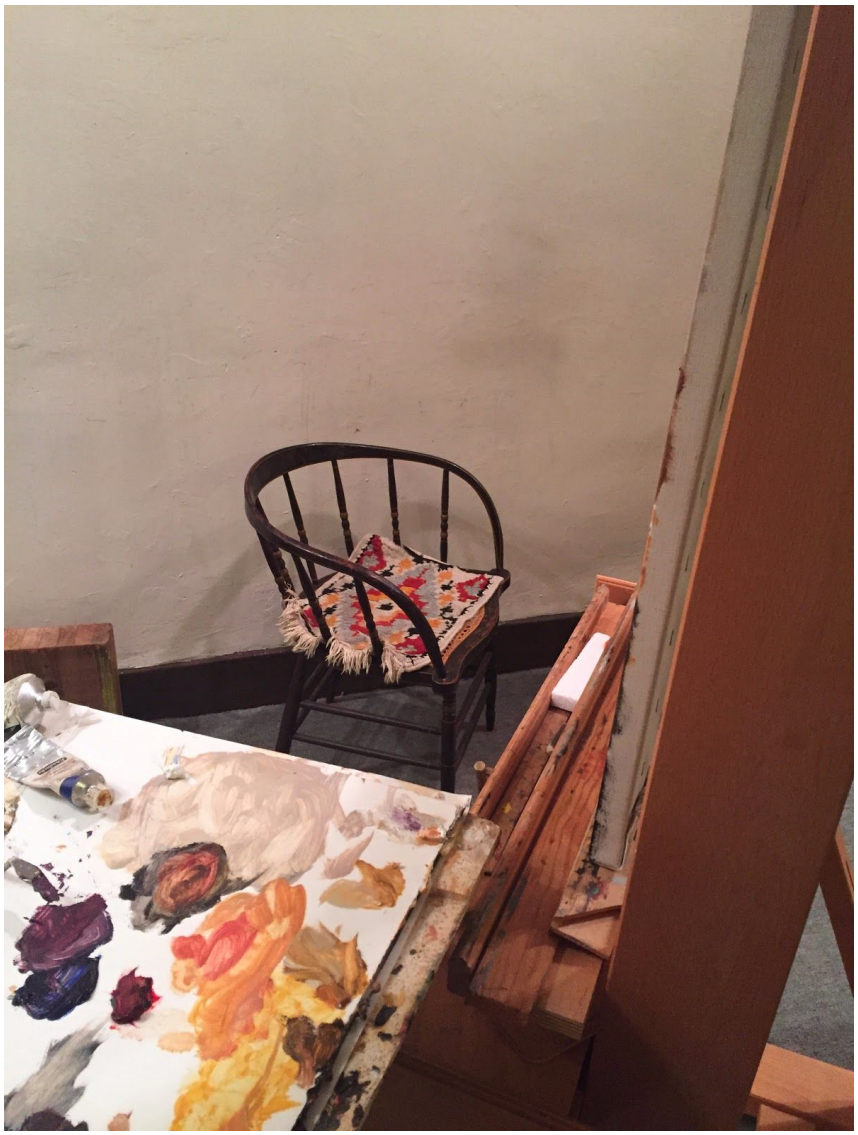
(December 15, 2015 – March 5, 2016)[1]

Warhol and Pearlstein grew up in Pittsburgh, went to Carnegie Mellon together and after graduation, came up to NYC to share an apartment.

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

1 http://www.brooklynrail.org/2016/02/artseen/pearlstein-warhol-cantor-from-carnegie-tech-to-new-york

Dorothy loved my white shirt; asymmetric pleats with a collar. Philip took me into his studio and said, "Do you want a head, body, clothed, or naked?" I replied, "you're the

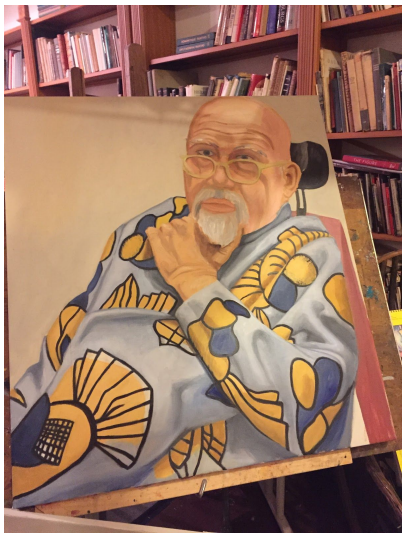


artist." He searched his prop filled studio and found a wicker-seat chair. "We need a pillow" and I, naively took something off another chair to which he responded "don't touch that, the model had it set up just right."

"What kind of music do you want?" "You decide." "I'm into impressionistic music at the moment" and put on Gabrielle Faure. Philip set up his easel less than a foot from me, his profile so close. He standing, me sitting. Hadn't realized the position I took would

be so important, my arms on my knees, leaning towards him. Not good, my scoliotic back complaining.

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



Unfinished Chuck Close in studio

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

1st sitting outline

Pablo Picasso, “Gertrude Stein” 1905-6, oil on canvas

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

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

2nd sitting August 29th 2016

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

Detail of Philip's cd collection

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

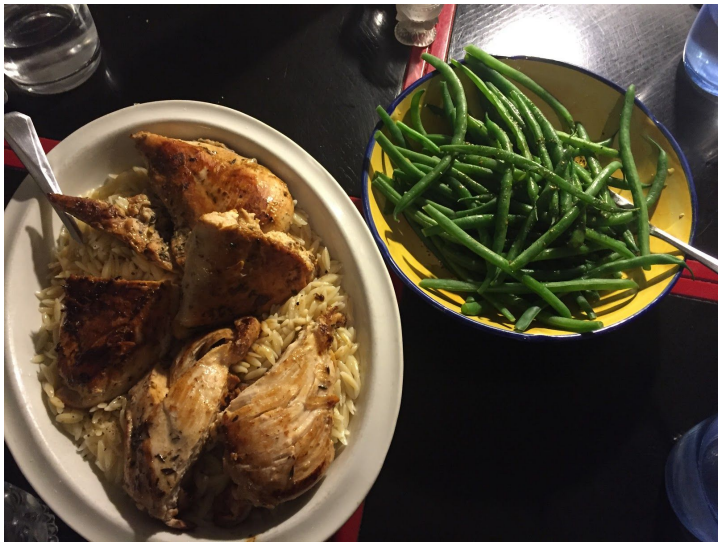
Model With Two Whirligigs, 2011

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

2nd sitting

3rd Sitting September 6, 2016

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



Went to work at 7:45 pm, tonight's musical selections were late masterpieces by Schubert and Mozart.

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

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

Rome, Vatican Museum, c. 30 CE

Philip and Dorothy had an apartment on the Lower East Side, on 13th Street and Avenue A, which was a small loft with the tub in the kitchen. “We had met a fellow, Ronald Strom, on our Fulbright grant in Rome. (I had taken a leave of absence from my job at Time Inc, doing editorial layouts for *Life Magazine*.) He was a linguist and upon return to the States called me and said ‘I have $2 in my pocket, enough to get to your apartment, can I stay with you?’ I told him Dorothy was coming home from the hospital with a new baby, but he said he didn’t mind. (not thinking that we might mind.) He ended up staying for five months. We would take turns with feeding Julia at night.”

My studio was on 10th Street, shared with Lois Dodd, her ex-husband, Bill King (who predicted pop art in his own art but was never given credit).

“One evening I was melting rabbit skin glue to prepare a canvas, and Dorothy was in the hospital giving birth to Julia. There was no heat and I was bundled up in winter clothes, listening to Mozart’s *Requiem* on headphones. When I plugged the hotplate into the only electrical outlet in the ceiling, and it burst into flames, I took the gluepot and kept dousing the flames with water. There were electrical sparks whirring around. Went downstairs to call the Fire Department and two minutes later the whole street was

filled with fire trucks. It was 1:30 am and all of us in these illegal workspaces (De Kooning, Philip Pavia, Lois Dodd, etc.) were on the street. Lester Johnson's studio was in front of mine and the firemen ripped down the bed sheets separating our studios.[2] The only light came from the firemen's flashlights. They were laughing about his work, then saw mine and slipped on the layer of glue that had splashed on the floor, and just like the Keystone Cops, began slipping and sliding." That was a big impetus to move."

Gabriel Laderman told me about a cheaper apartment uptown on the Upper West Side on 89th Street. There were no artists on the Upper West Side. We moved into the ground floor (usually occupied by the super.) It was under the sidewalk with a plate glass window with bars on it. Ronald helped us make the move. He also got me a job at Pratt because I had a background in graphic design and art history.

Mercedes Matter was teaching a drawing class when I was at Pratt and asked at the faculty lunch table if anyone wanted to draw from live models at her place on Sundays. She lived in Macdougal Alley with her husband, Herbert Matter and their son. Mercedes

Herbert Matter, Driftwood II, Mercedes Matter 1940

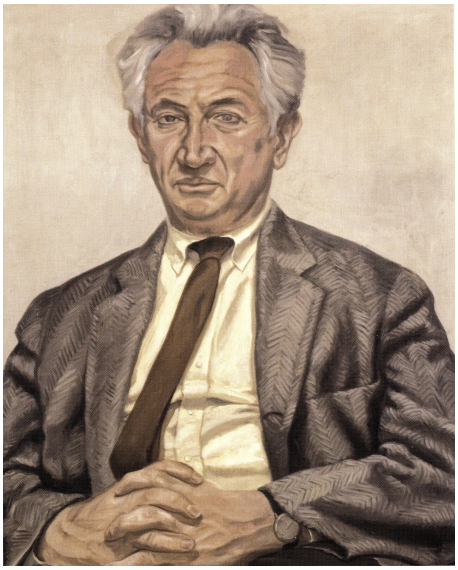
must have been dazzling in her youth which she spent between Philadelphia and Paris (her father, Arthur Beecher Carles was one of the first well known American abstractionists) She had affairs with Leger and many other artists in the 30s art scene. We met there for 3 years, including Philip Guston[3], George McNeil, Mary Frank, Jack Tworkov, Alex Katz, Charles Cajori, et al. The group continued for about seven

[2] "Lester was beginning to sell his work so I was in the back so his potential clients wouldn't see my work. Nobody liked my work at the time, I was painting Roman Ruins which were just as eccentric as the figure paintings. I studied at the Institute with his wife, Josephine Johnson."

[3] "Guston would draw with his eyes almost closed, brushes in both hands. They were open, elegant sketches."

additional years. The sessions were conducted in absolute silence and no one was supposed to look at anyone else's work. Everyone looked at mine because I was actually drawing vaginas and penises, and they weren't. Tworkov had a traditional Russian education and although he thought the exercise was nostalgic, he was a wonderful draughtsman and tore up all of his drawings after the session."

We spoke of his patron, Leonard Bocour, the paint manufacturer and collector who helped Philip and Dorothy buy their Upper West Side house while Dorothy was pregnant with their 3rd child. The problem was that Philip didn't have the $2500 for the renovations that were required. Leonard told him to put together 3 portfolios, a mix of drawings and paintings, and he would get four business associates to buy them for $2500 so Philip would have enough to start fixing up the place. "I was just becoming known as a figure painter and my dealer, Allan Frumkin said, 'let's see what you can do with portraits.'" I decided to do portraits representing people in the art world: painted him and his wife as the art dealer, Leonard Bocour as the paint manufacturer, Irving Sandler as the critic, and Alex Katz as the artist. Hilton Kramer wrote up the show with my portrait of Bocour reproduced large in the New York Times, calling it a "breakthrough painting" and a whole new way of looking at portrait painting. Leonard at the time was attending an art supply convention in Chicago and was overwhelmed with happiness. Leonard's son gave the painting to the Montclair Art Museum.

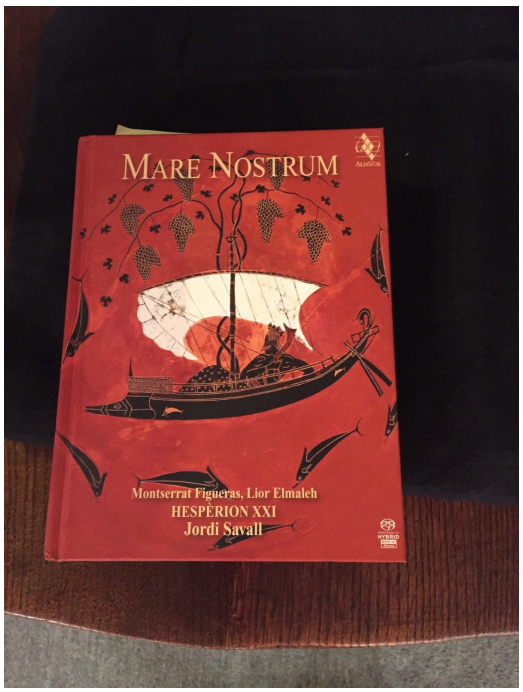


3rd Sitting

4th Sitting: September 12, 2016

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

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



The summer Philip was working with Warhol in his studio, he was also working for Saul Leiter. Philip told a story about his friend Saul Leiter, also from Pittsburgh and a very important photographer who also lived on 10th Street in a studio. Leiter was also neighbor and friends with Diane Arbus and "it was hard to tell who picked up what from who." He was a favorite of the Museum of Modern Art's photography curator, Edward Steichen. Known as a street photographer and a founder of the New York School of Photography, Leiter also worked a lot for *Vogue* and *The New York Times*. "Dorothy introduced Saul to Andy, and after they met, Leiter said that Andy was the strangest person he ever met. Warhol said exactly the same thing." Also, Al Capp's assistant on Li'l Abner asked Leiter if Capp could use him as a character in the cartoon and Leiter was very hurt by that. Saul was a painter as well, and Philip bought one of his small works which disappeared when the paint flaked off. Philip had asked Saul why he painted such small paintings, to which he replied "I want them to fly higher." (It was the time of the atomic scare.)

"One day in the middle of the summer, working with Saul in his 10th Street studio, *Harper's Bazaar* asked him to photograph a couple in the rain in his large backyard patio. I think he hired me because I had a car and he needed a special camera for this significant assignment. I found the Japanese camera, called "Miranda" way out of the city, so we drove to get the camera. The next day, a huge team from the magazine came over, including Art Kane, the art director turned photographer. My job was to make the rain with a garden hose on a 10' ladder. Leiter et al were very happy with the shoot and ran the film up to the lab to have it developed. The camera hadn't functioned! We drove back to the middle of nowhere and replaced the camera. Then we did the whole thing again with the entire cast of characters. Rush up to the lab again, and a technician had mistakenly dropped the film in boiling water! Had to redo it a third time."

"That same summer, Andy asked me to spend the month of August working on line drawings on a cookbook[4] he wanted to do, with Andy's mother doing the lettering and me doing the initial drawings. It was in his apartment on Lexington Avenue which he shared with his mother. Their place was full of cats that Julia Warhola took care of. Andy was never around and there were several chest of drawers, in each was a litter of kittens. Dorothy came to visit one day and at the end of her visit, Andy's mother asked her to "find Andy a girl, even a nice Jewish girl." "Andy's mother painted beautifully, hardly spoke English, a real peasant."

[4] "Wild Raspberries," Bulfinch Press, 1997

Portrait of Herbert Levine, 1969

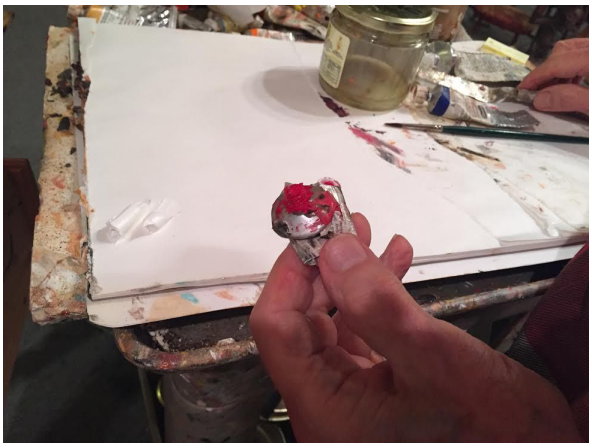
The first time I met Philip was at Beth Levine's (Dorothy's cousin and a famous shoe designer) and I remember expecting a big man because of the big paintings I had seen in museums. Philip told me that Beth finally took Philip seriously when he was working with Warhol. He sold his first painting, "Herbert Levine" to them from the Coop Gallery.

Philip was one of the early members of the Tanager Gallery[5]. Jasper Johns had his first group show there with "Construction of a Toy Piano" which he broke on the way over. Tom Wesselmann was the last member to be voted into the Tanager Gallery while he was teaching in high school. By the end of his first show, he was a superstar and joined the Sidney Janis Gallery. There were really low prices on everything and Philip wanted to buy one for $35.00. Philip told him his prices were too low for such good work so the gallery raised the prices and he couldn't afford the work anymore.

[5] http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/tanager-gallery-records-7221

4th Sitting

5th Sitting: September 20, 2016



Dinner was smoked ribs (from Long Island), corn salad, roasted potatoes.
Music was “Dancing on the Edge of a Volcano”, Yiddish and German songs from a cantor who Philip knows.

We move to the studio to do the work at hand. “Warhol is my claim to fame, how I’ll go down in history,” Philip says. I say that his work will stand the test of time and has an important place in art history. PP talks about his father being friends with Warhol’s

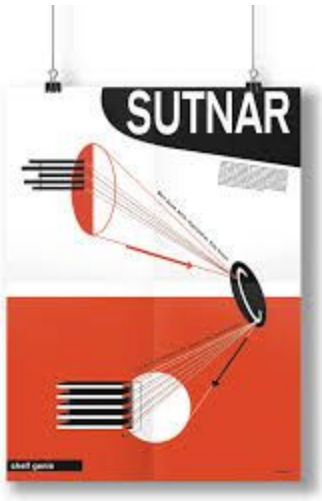
Photograph by Leonard Kessler, ca. 1948

brothers, “all hucksters in Pittsburgh” who sold fruit and vegetables from the back of a truck.

“Superman” 1952

“When Andy and I lived together, I painted a whole series of American Icons, including ‘Superman.’ ” We shared the loft with Francesca Boas, who invented dance therapy.

“Andy visited Dorothy and I a lot, he was walking distance from our first apartment. I



stretched his canvases for his first paintings; dollar bills, Campbell soup cans et al. (within a week of us coming to NYC he was a successful illustrator) Andy paid me because he knew I was on the GI bill. I was painting crazy paintings like the Statue of Liberty, the American eagle et al. I was painting because I wasn’t getting the illustration jobs. A year later, my boss was Ladislav Sutnar in his 36th Street office, who was associated with the Bauhaus. He thought I was more interesting than his usual Pratt students because I was leafing through one of his books on Van Gogh. He said that most art students weren’t interested in cultural history. He told me to go and study art history while I continued to work for him. So, I got into NYU’s Institute of Fine Arts due to the GI bill. We were considered 2nd class citizens as the other students were from upper class families, spending 15 years doing their doctorate and going into museum jobs. Our professors were refugees including Erwin Panofsky. I only survived because I was comfortable with their German accents, due to Sutnar’s heavy Czech accent. Karl Lehmann (worked on excavations of Samothrace) had a talk with me about my future and becoming an art historian because I aced the exams. He became angry when I told him I was a painter. I was part of the 2nd generation (Al Held, Norman Bluhm et al) of abstract expressionists. (the first group were all immigrants and had roots in Europe, using art as therapy as they had horrific experiences). They included Hans Hofmann, De Kooning, and Rothko. In 1956, Sutnar wanted to make me a junior partner so I left, knowing it would be the end of me as an artist.”

“The Library at Morgan Library is taking 90 small drawings from WWII into their archives. Betty (Cunningham) got Bruce (Weber) to put up 50% and she found

someone else to give the other 50%. It's a relief, like finding a home for your children. Otherwise I would have given them to the Archives of American Art where they would be warehoused."

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

5th Sitting

6th Sitting: September 26, 2016

Yummy dinner of Vietnamese pho with vegetable pancakes. Ravi Shankar and Philip Glass “Passages” on cd player.

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

Philip started the session, “I have to shave some of your cheek away.” He explained the standard ⅓-⅓-⅓ ratio of linseed oil, Damar varnish and turpentine which is used to thin paint and makes the paint very tough, like glass, which “turns to iron when dried.” Philip uses ½ refined turpentine, ¼ oil, and ¼ varnish. Vas says he likes being Philip’s sous chef when painting; his mother was an amateur artist and he helped her when he was a child. Philip was out of cadmium red.

“I had a Volkswagon bus and would drive everyone everywhere. Chuck Close, Alfred Leslie and I were invited to Penn State to speak on a panel about ‘3 hot young realist painters.’” Alfred was practically deaf as a child so he did comedy and stunts to attract attention. He was close to DeKooning, considered the crown prince to De Kooning’s king. I got sick and Alfred came to visit a lot, bringing old movies to watch. He always pretended to be stupid but in old age gave big pronouncements. Alfred moved to Queens to be near his dealer, Richard Bellamy, who had been the owner of the Green Gallery. So the night we were driving to Penn State (in the middle of the wilderness called Pennsylvania), we stopped at Philip Glass’ cottage (Glass was teaching at Penn

State and had been friends with Chuck Close at Yale.) Our work was taken into the collection.

Milton Brown, previously head of Brooklyn College's art department and attended the Institute of Fine Arts, became head of CUNY graduate department ten years later. He ate his lunches across the street at the Century Club[6] which was founded by the Hudson River painters. Out of that came the American Academy of Rome (White did that building as well.) "Richard Haas (now my neighbor on 36th Street) nominated me for inclusion in the Century Club. Richard's girlfriend developed cancer and it was considered inoperable. I had a collector who also collected Richard Haas who was a surgeon in Chicago and directed the surgery at Mount Sinai by telephone and saved her life. Since then we are family. She's a ceramicist. Will Barnet proposed me and Chuck Close, and was also influential in getting me into the Academy of Arts and Letters at a young age. Established by Congress , capped at 250 members from all of the arts, it's a lifetime membership, the only opening is when a member dies. Meryl Streep and Leonard Bernstein are honorary members.It is very important in the history of American art, the collection being second only to the National Gallery of Art. Stanford White did the architecture up at the Audubon Society. Designed the whole schmear up there. Edward Albee was also a member, we were in lots of committees together. Meryl Streep and Leonard Bernstein are honorary members. The Century Club and the National Academy of Arts and Letters overlapped, kind of the inner aristocracy of the arts. I was the president of the AAL for 3 years, doesn't get you anything."

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

Other stories from the evening:

"Sante D'Orazio was a student of mine and then a friend." We looked at the book, "*Pamela Anderson: American Icon*" that Sante gave Philip, chuckling about the quote, "The Taliban is after American bombshells." Philip recounted a story about when he was sailing with Sante and his model Grace Crowley and Sante said that I.N.R.I. stood for 'It Nailed Right In.' The sky immediately darkened, the winds were howling, and Grace, who had never been on the water before, thought it was because of the sacrilegious joke."

[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Century_Association

“When I was growing up, I lived with my parents, grandmother, and all these aunts and uncles in a 2 bedroom house in Squirrel Hill, near Greenfield. They didn’t have a pot to piss in, but were very funny. They used my bowl full of guppies as their spittoon and teased me about my interest in art. I would make theater sets on the card table I was getting my Hebrew lessons on. Even though we had nothing, theater was very cheap at the time and I would go see Julius Caesar by Orson Welles et al. Martin Friedman (who became the director of the Walker Art Center for three decades)

and I would walk to high school together, taking the long route past Schenley Park and Squirrel Hill past a tiny carousel. We had a great art teacher in high school, Joseph Fitzpatrick, who talked a lot about art history and the Carnegie Museum has a great collection. Martin and I would go there every Saturday morning to draw. I did a set for our never-produced play, ‘Murder at the Merry-Go-Round.’ I actually never forgave Martin for later writing, ‘the realists, like the poor, will always be with us.’ Anyway, that merry-go-round really existed and won me a first prize in Scholastic Magazine’s 14th annual High School Art Awards. (Reginald Marsh was on the jury.) It was reproduced in Life Magazine on June 16, 1941 and from then on, I was a big shot and my relatives didn’t laugh at me anymore.” Getting ready to leave I asked him what he’s doing for the Jewish Holidays, “I’m too old to sin.”

6th Sitting

7th Sitting: October 3, 2016

Oy. The best dinner ever for Rosh Hashanah and I forgot to take a picture. It was my chicken soup with matzoh balls and chopped liver on challah. Vas made an apple tart.

“Because of my high school prizes, I got a scholarship for my first year at Carnegie. But I was drafted, my birthday being in May, went right into the army on my 18th birthday, and got a deferment for the 1st year. After 3 years in the war, I returned to Carnegie and was in the same class with Dorothy. Her good friend, Eleanor Simon[7], had nurtured Andy through high school because he was obviously dyslexic. He couldn’t do any of the academic stuff and she encouraged him to make art. The four of us went out as a group.”

We talked about Philip’s early career when he was getting well known for painting expressionist landscapes, which were shown extensively. “The minute I started painting realist nudes in 1959 and critics hated it, I decided to keep at it. My first major show was at the University of Georgia in Athens, and Linda Nochlin wrote the catalogue. The fellow who was the curator ended up being kicked out of his job as a result. But the show traveled to Flint, Michigan where I had been scheduled to give a talk. At midnight,

[7] “Eleanor and her husband visited Dorothy and I in Rome in 1958 and we drove through Sicily in a beat up Volkswagen.”

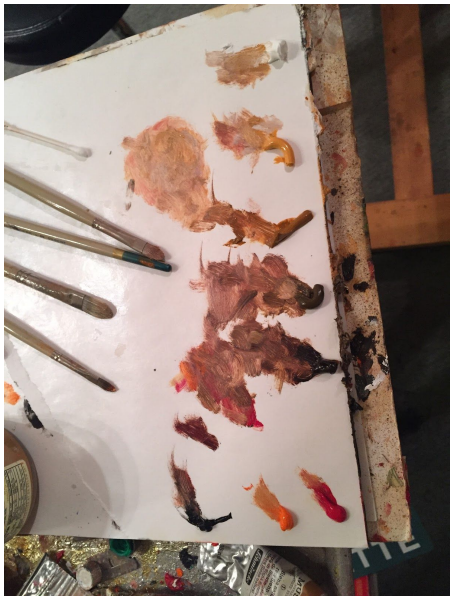
the night before the talk, I got a call telling me to cancel my plans. A police cordon had been put around the museum and you had to show proof of age to get in. They had removed 4 paintings which went into a locked room where you had to get special permission to enter. There had been no publicity about the the show."

"When I was the Acting Deputy Chairman of the art department at the Brooklyn College, I brought Louise Bourgeois in. Her husband, Robert Goldwater, was a great art historian who organized the study of African art at the Institute of Fine Arts. Her subject matter came out of his writing and she never acknowledged him. She led a student rebellion against me at Brooklyn College because I gave my students specific assignments based on art history and styles. At the time, nobody bothered with curriculum. She felt there should be no 'dictatorship' and everyone should do whatever they wanted. I didn't think that was an education."

7th Sitting

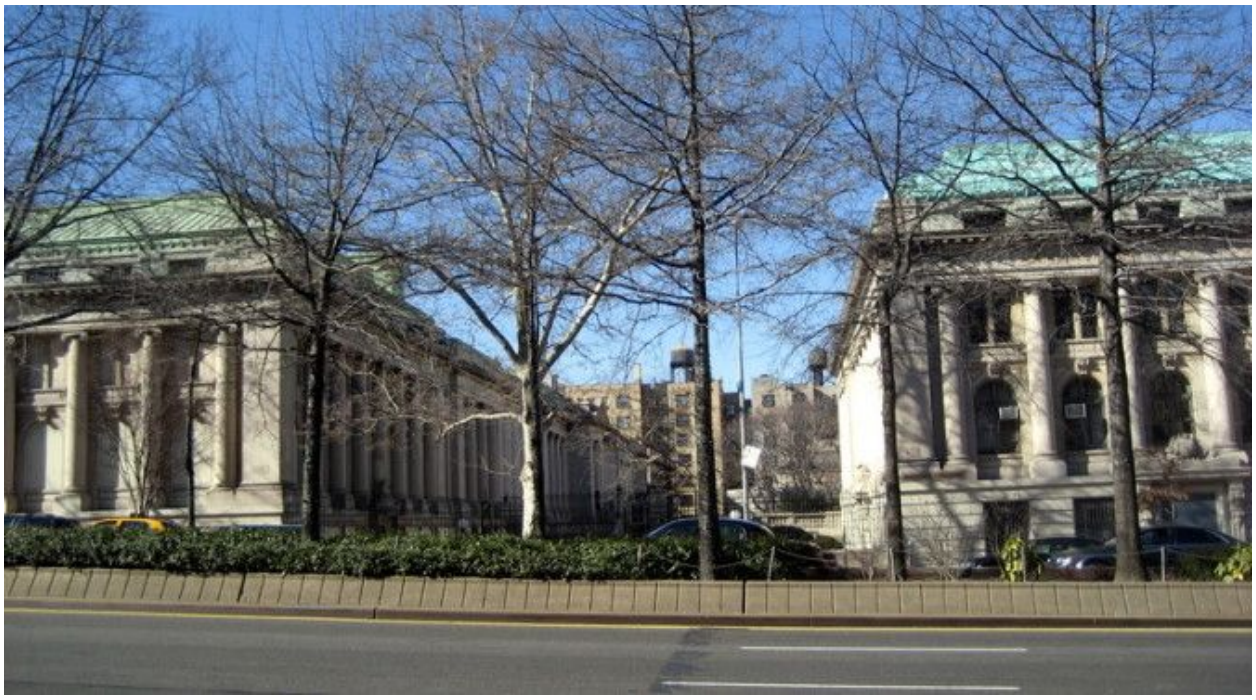
8th sitting: October 10, 2016

Dinner was spaghetti with Bolognese and fresh salad from the farm across the street in Jamesport. Philip said his oft-quoted “I get my highs by using my eyes.”



Philip told me he had a meeting with the other ex presidents emeritus at the Academy of Arts and Letters. The number of members was set by congress at 250. Since most of

the members are between 95-100 years old, every couple of weeks he gets a card from them announcing who died. (Edward Albee was the last one.) The current members propose new members that get voted on by department (music, literature, architecture, and fine arts). The 4 meetings per year are at their remarkable beaux art buildings, on 155th Street overlooking a beautiful 19th century cemetery.[8]



Another vital title of Philip's is that of a collector. His loft is full of kilim carpets, all kinds of vintage toys, Pre-Columbian artifacts and everything else you can think of. Besides being curious about all objects, Pearlstein uses them in his paintings. He started seriously collecting when he began lecturing as a visiting artist around the world. Considering the $1000 or so as "play money," not like his salary from teaching, which supported the family, Philip would use it to buy things. One of his students opened the 1st shop which sold Americana and folk art on Madison Avenue. After coming back from a lecture, Philip would run around town paying dealers. The most he ever spent on an object was $30,000 for a magnificent Pre-Columbian vessel in the shape of a parrot on its back.

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

[8] http://www.artsandletters.org/about.php

“I had an exhibition in London which was poorly attended because of the Irish bombings at the time. Lucien Freud did attend my lecture and whatever he said in interviews was based on what I said. “The first few years of my career superseded Freud’s by a few years and his first paintings (which got a lot of attention) were rip-offs of mine.”

David Hockney and Philip met when they were young. Hockney later wrote a book on extreme northern and renaissance realism, “Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the lost techniques of the Old Masters” which discussed how the camera obscura and lucida changed the direction of Renaissance art in Europe. From Vermeer to Degas and Eakins, he writes about realists using the camera. Philip wrote about Eakins and Eadweard Muybridge’s influence and use of photography. Duchamp’s sensational painting, “Nude Descending the Staircase” was shown at the 1913 Armory show which came out of a demonstration at Muybridge’s studio where he demonstrated a sequence of motion and projected the negatives onto slides. Degas, Seurat and Rodin were in the audience.

A billionaire had once bet Muybridge that horse’s feet always had one hoof on the

Muybridge's *The Horse in Motion*, 1878

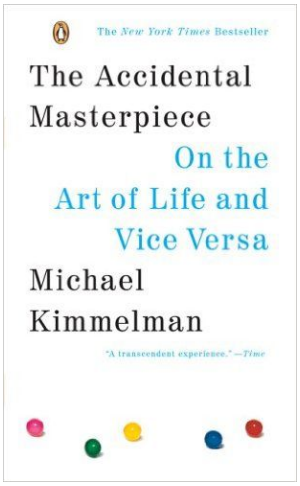
ground while trotting. Muybridge set up wires to a horse which triggered a camera and won the bet. Then he and Eakins were invited to the University of Pennsylvania to photograph athletes and coaches in motion.[9] Muybridge later became famous for shooting his wife who he found in bed with a lover was acquitted and moved to South America. (where he took photographs of landscapes for the Hudson River painters.)

[9] Pearlstein owns 30 works by Muybridge.

“Hockney invited me to speak at a 2 day seminar at NYU about the theories put forward in his book. Chuck Close and I were the only practicing artists to speak, and I represented painting from direct vision. How I work from what I see in front of me but I

Linda Nochlin and Richard Pommer, 1968

set up what’s in front of me. Linda Nochlin made a sensation by showing the dress she wore for my wedding portrait of her. Someone asked if I ever work from photos, and I



said no but always take a picture of the set up for the IRS to show how I spend my money. It was the only laugh in the seminar. Michael Kimmelman from the New York Times was at the conference and invited himself to my studio everyday for 2 months to watch how a painting develops. Michael Kimmelman’s book, “The Accidental Masterpiece,” 2nd chapter is a description of his visits.”

We finished the session by talking about the continuing influence of Dada; how the found object is being made into art. How the juxtaposition of unexpected objects is basic to Italian Futurism which is all about speed; going fast is a drug, “maybe that’s why speed is called speed.”[10]

Umberto Boccioni, “Charge of the Lancers”, 1915

[10] P.P.

8th Sitting

9th Sitting: October 17, 2016

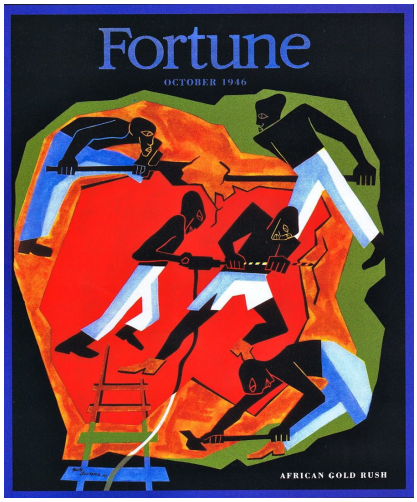
Chicken and corn barbecued on grill with salad.

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

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

Self Portrait/Portrait of George Klauber, 1948-1949.
Casein on masonite, 25 x 18 x 1/4 in.

“George Klauber was the reason that Andy and I ended up in New York. He was a year ahead of us at Carnegie and was working as an assistant to the art director of Fortune Magazine, Will Burtin. Those were the days when they’d put artist’s work on their



Jacob Lawrence *Fortune* cover

covers. George convinced us to visit him during our last Easter vacation in Pittsburgh. The 3 of us slept in his bed and he persuaded us move to New York. When we got there, George gave us his Rolodex of all of the art director's secretary's contact information, telling us to use his name. We decided that Andy should visit the art directors first because he was a shoe-in for illustrations; his portfolio was so charming. I would go next, my portfolio were training aids I made for the Army and illustrations of the U.S. Constitution. He was also the one who introduced Andy to New York's underground gay world. Later, one of his students from Pratt was Robert Wilson, who cast George as an ostrich in his first production."

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

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

"At the time, Andy was making money as the highest paid illustrator. For us, it was unthinkable amounts of money. He was doing I. Miller shoe advertisements. I got him a job at *Life* Magazine about the use of drugs in high school. At the time, he and Dorothy talked on the phone for hours about their lives (mostly his)."

9th Sitting

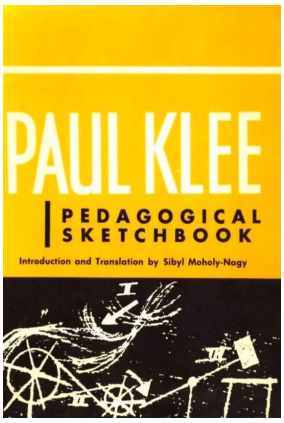
10th Sitting: October 24, 2016

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

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

He tells me a story about Andy trying to help him in the early days of television. It was 1949 and he had met the woman in charge of education at NBC. He told her about a project I did in college about the U.S. Constitution and set up a date for her to meet me. She had an office filled with 19th century posters, including original Toulouse Lautrecs. "I was very impressed, so she was equally impressed with the fact I knew these artists. She couldn't do anything with the project but had an idea. The Broadway singer,

Lorenzo Fuller, who sang 'It's too Darn Hot' in the original production of 'Kiss Me Kate' wanted to do a show about early U.S. history. I would draw illustrations in lemon juice on newsprint in real time not showing up on camera. After that, I'd trace the lines in charcoal (it was before the time of magic markers.) Because Fuller was black, the bosses at NBC said he had to be an Uncle Remus type. She found it so insulting that the project didn't happen. She visited us in our loft a few weeks later and said she was dying of cancer. She did die within the year, but hooked me up with the man who wrote "Daniel Boone." The Daniel Boone guy sang while I drew. The verdict at NBC was that it was the most boring thing they ever saw."



"A year after Dorothy and I were married, I started out at the Institute of Fine Arts. We used the library at the Metropolitan Museum. One of the books I came across was Paul Klee's Pedagogical Sketchbook. It was essentially the course he taught at the Bauhaus. The Bauhaus mission was to teach art to people who were going to be designers or architects, not artists. It's about 'taking a line for a walk.' I rewrote a version for the woman at NBC. She liked it. Leonard Kessler and his wife, Ethel were working on a summer camp program for children. I introduced him to her, he was a charming and outgoing. He used my script with his illustrations. Everybody loved it! He called it, 'I Made A Line.' I gave him whatever rights I had. He ended up being a famous children's book author. By then I was deep into art history and my own career as an abstract expressionist."

"The first major article I published was called 'Figure Paintings Today Are Not Made In Heaven.'[11] The first line is 'De Kooning did not go to heaven to see Marilyn Monroe.'"

[11] Pearlstein, Philip. "Figure Paintings Today are not Made in Heaven." *Artnews*, Summer 1962, pp. 39, 51-52.

“When we went to Rome for the Fulbright fellowship in 1958, it was supposed to be for a year. It was a terribly cold winter and we only stayed 3 months. It was too cold to ask a model to pose so I only did self portraits. (After we were there, they renovated the building and put in a heating system.) While in Rome, I read “The Great Roman-Jewish War” by Flavius Josephus. It was about the destruction of the Temple. Josephus was a Jewish soldier who was captured. While a prisoner he became a confidant of Tiberius.”

Philip Guston was very elegant. You would assume he was gay but he wasn’t. I really liked him. Apparently Mercedes and he had an affair. (Who didn’t have an affair with Mercedes?) Harold Rosenberg, the critic also had an affair with Mercedes. His wife, May Natalie Tabak wrote a revenge novel about the art world in East Hampton, “But Not For Love.” It’s about the art world at the time and she identified everybody. Even then, I was an outsider. One of my collectors rode in a taxi with Harold Rosenberg and Natalie, his wife who went on a tirade against me. Rosenberg didn’t like Tanager Gallery because we put on our own shows with artists we thought should be exhibited, usurping the power of the critics. When the collector defended my work, Natalie said ‘you just insulted one of the great minds of America.’ (meaning Harold Rosenberg) Rosenberg hated my work and that I had the presumption to write about art. Clement Greenberg liked my work. He would curate shows called ‘Emerging Talent’ which Ad Reinhardt called ‘Emergency Talent.’ (Ad was instrumental in getting me tenured into Brooklyn College. We were once stuck in an elevator and he said to me, ‘you’re going to be responsible for the souls of all the people that you’ve painted.’) He was deeply religious and would spend 2 weeks every year in a monastery that practiced silence. I said, ‘they’re not people, they are paintings.’ “

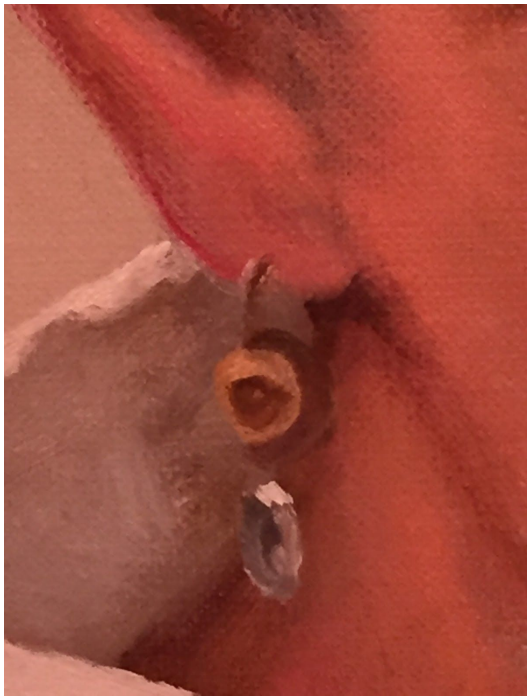
“We lived on Avenue A in a loft. There was a storefront on the ground floor and a loft

upstairs. Directly across the street was a place where many writers had lived, referred

to as ‘Paradise Alley.’ (501 East 11th Street) On the north side of Tomkins Park were elegant townhouses.

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

I got a lot of attention but everyone hated my dealer, Alan Frumkin. I got well known due to all the negative, which, I guess, worked to my benefit. The trouble is I had training as an art historian and I was applying it to myself and my work. What else can you write about besides yourself?”



Detail, earring

10th Sitting

Philip in studio

11th Sitting: October 31, 2016

Halloween night. I made chicken marbella with sauteed cherry tomatoes for supper. Music selection was Ravel and Colette's opera, "L'enfant et les Sortileges" which is the scariest Halloween music Philip could find.

"The first time we went to Israel was to make prints." Philip was the first artist to be invited to work at the University of South Florida's Graphicstudio in 1969. "The fellow who started it, Donald Saff, was a former graduate student of mine at Pratt. He's the one who made Rauschenberg internationally famous. Bob moved to South Florida to be close to Donald." He continually made prints there, culminating in his masterprint in

1987, ‘Jerusalem: Kidron Valley’ which is 40” x 119”.[12]

[12] http://www.graphicstudio.usf.edu/gs/artists/pearlstein_philip/pearlstein.html

While in Jerusalem, he would climb down into a 50’ underground water well in a valey to work on a watercolor of a Roman tomb.

Tomb of Zacharia , 1986 Lithograph 29 x 36.5

The man at the bottom of the valley ran a concession stand selling cold soda to tourists. “He sold me a gold coin of St. Helen, which was genuine.” Joseph conquered Jerusalem because of this underground water supply.

Back in Florida, with all of the changing humidity, the paper kept expanding and shrinking. There are 18 color separations in the print! Donald Saff invented a way of transferring images by using my work on mylar to make positive transparencies, coated the blocks with his own formula so that the sun did the first cutting in a field.[13] Spending 2 weeks correcting it, they printed 60 copies, kept 20, gave him 1, the others were destroyed. “When it came out, it wasn’t what people wanted; after all, the Dome of the Rock is in the center. There were no Jewish buyers. The other problem is that they had to be shipped in a crate that was 10 feet by 3 feet, which isn’t easy.”

[13] “Pearlstein travelled for the first time to Jerusalem to make the 10 foot long watercolor for this monumental print. At Graphicstudio, a new process was being developed specifically for this project, photographic woodblock or "heliorelief," which utilizes sandblasting rather than hand carving for the making of woodblocks. The artist transferred his watercolor to mylar sheets which were then used to make the blocks. Pearlstein further refined the imagery by hand working the blocks with a roulette. The print is made in two sections from ten sets of blocks of different woods -- birch, walnut, cherry and gumwood. The transparent colors and white paper retain the feel of the watercolor as source for the print.” http://www.graphicstudio.usf.edu/gs/artists/pearlstein_philip/pearlstein.html

Sofi Kozyreff: Halloween

Vas with dragon

Vas' daughter, Sofi stopped by to show off her costume on the way to the parade.

11th Sitting

12th Sitting: November 7, 2016

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

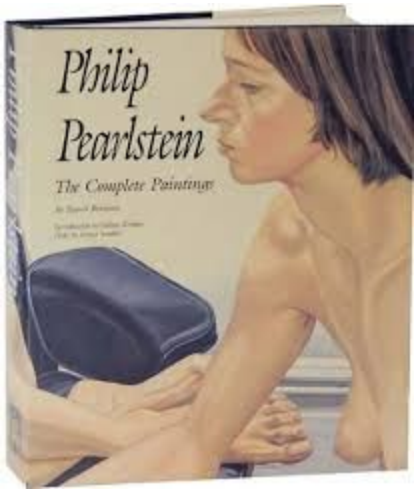
Philip worked that day on a portrait of his friend's, (Kurt Gitter, a well-known ophthalmologist) wife, Alice Rae Yelen. He had met him earlier when their children were little. Many years later, when Dorothy's eyes began to go and he got her to a clinic that helped. They became collectors of Outsider Art and Japanese screens from the Edo Period. "Alice is a well-educated person but honestly thought that all artists educate themselves and learn nothing in art schools. I was the exception because I studied art history at the Institute of Fine Arts. She didn't understand the patronage system, i.e., that the Popes of the Renaissance came from wealthy banking families and that in the low countries it was the wealthy merchants who commissioned paintings. Rembrandt survived on commissions. Gericault was from a wealthy family but gave up his family wealth to live in abject poverty; he was one of the first documented Bohemian types and set a pattern for European artists without patronage."

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

“I did a portrait of Gilde Buchbinder in 1976. ‘She was very skinny, wearing a Missoni

dress which looked knitted on her. Her daughter, Leslie did a film on the Hairy Who of

Chicago. During the same time period, I did a portrait of Cardinal Krol which I thought was also a great painting. He, however, thought it didn’t reflect his spiritual side.”



Philip's "heavy book" is another wonderful story.[14] "The publisher went bankrupt, lost everything including his wife, and it was remaindered before it came out. The Strand ended up distributing it. One day I was on my Catamaran with a friend on the Great South Bay in Fire Island. He mentioned that his father was a printer of *ArtNews* and turned over the business to his brother as he wanted to buy a house in Connecticut and have people come to use a kit which would turn a Volkswagen bug into a Cadillac. There was a lull in the wind and he asked whether I ever thought of changing my career. I replied that painting is what I always wanted to do. He asked, 'what would make your career better?' I said I'd like a big important museum one-man exhibition in a major city with a big book. He said he had a publisher for the book: a guest in his neighbor's house who used to work with Harry Abrams but wanted to start his own company publishing coffee table art books. We came back from sailing, went to the man's house and it was a done deal within 3 hours of mentioning it. But we would need a scholar to write it. At home, I remembered a young man who was at a cocktail party at the Buchbinder's in Chicago who asked my permission to write his doctoral thesis on my work. I called Gilde and asked if she recalled the man's name. She explained that it was Russell Bowman who was now working in the education department at the Art Institute of Chicago. I called him that night and he told me that he had just been appointed to be the Assistant Curator at the Milwaukee Art Museum and had used the beginning of his dissertation as a sample for his application. He agreed to write the book as the catalogue raisonne for a show. Things should always happen like that."

[14] "Philip Pearlstein The Complete painting, Russell Bowman, Alpine Fine Arts Collection, 1983

12th Sitting

13th Sitting: November 14, 2016

I made French lentil soup accompanied by Taleggio, sopressata and bread from Eataly. We joke about the portrait that will never be finished because Dorothy and Philip adore Vas' and my cooking.

Put on Bach, "The Art of the Fugue." Andy and Philip took lessons in college on Bach. Their teacher thought they were not serious and the only piece Philip learned was an arrangement of the opening fugue of the second book.

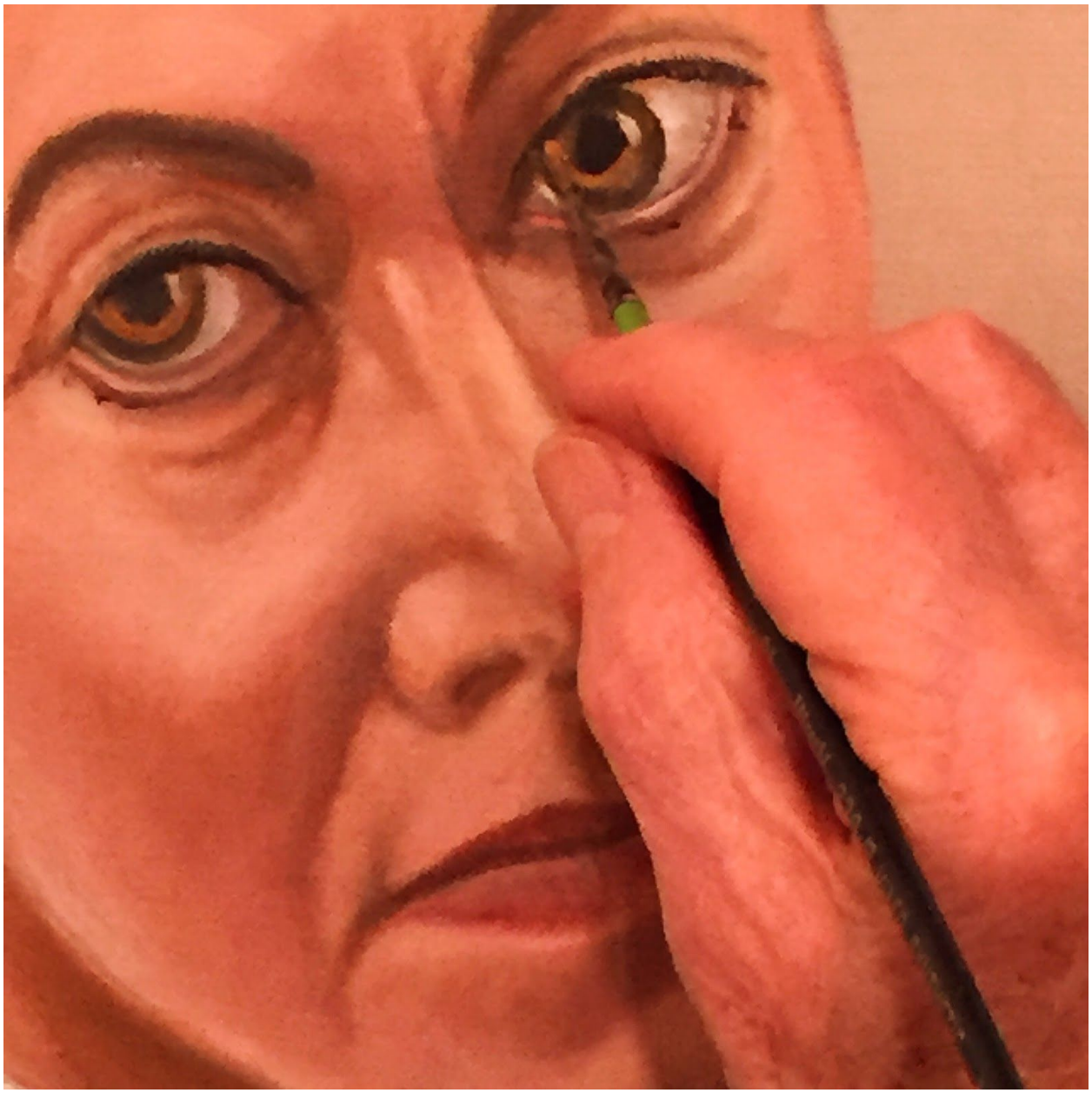
We begin the session with Philip telling me what's left to do in the painting. "Need to sharpen your chin, heighten the whites which becomes transparent when it dries, and get rid of any brush marks, in other words, not show 'the hand.'"

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

ideas. Dorothy and I were busy having 3 babies in a row. Later, De Kooning[15] had a child not by his wife, but with the mistress of Franz Kline."

Studio shot

[15]" De Kooning liked our son, William, because they shared the same first name."



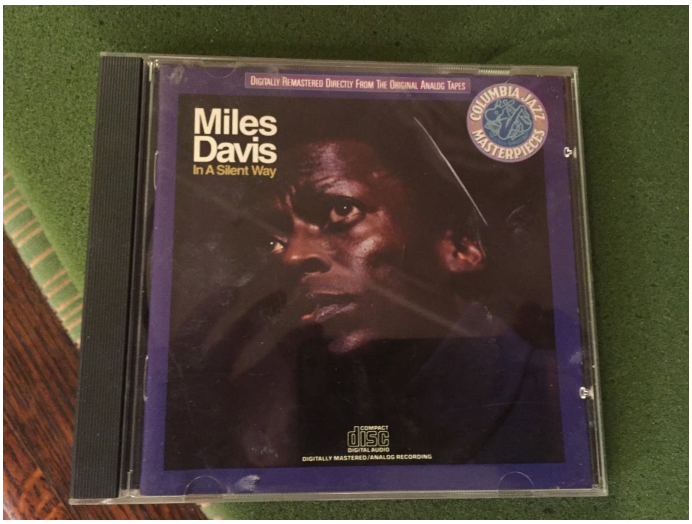
Applying eyeliner

“I picked up my discipline for the Institute of Fine Arts when I worked with Sutnar. I learned his method of constructing charts of ideas and thus jumped from a schmucky dumb C student into someone who can think and construct ideas. At the time, I met a fellow student, Lucia Sherwin (completely made up name) who was married to Dolph Sherwin, the display director of Kaufmann's' department store in Pittsburgh. She offered to teach me French for free. She had lived in Paris and I went to her apartment on 79th Street one day a week. She was quite pretentious but could carry it off. I learned from her that all language is a construction, like architecture. One built phrases, clauses, tenses. In my second year at the Institute of Fine Arts, I was especially turned on by a Professor, Jose Lopez-Rey. The course set me on fire! Most of the other people in the class were bored but I LOVED it. The basic idea was the comparative and parallel development between Picasso and James Joyce. They’re practically the same age, born 5 months apart. The reading material was James Joyce. For example, Picasso’s Blue Period and Rose Period compared with Joyce’s The *Dubliners*. The beginning of cubism corresponds to *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. The move into surrealism was *Ulysses*. We all took turns reading Joyce aloud which was the first time I ever spoke publicly.Among the slides he showed images of early Dali, nothing to do with the slick later work. Gertrude Stein figures in all of this, I read all her books and poetry, playing around with language. Her work, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is basic reading for the understanding of 20th century art. In it, she gives recipes for fudge and brownies made with cannabis. Along comes Picabia, his wife, Gabrielle Buffet and Duchamp. They became a trio playing word games. Picabia was a brilliant poet as well. All of the Futurists and Cubists didn’t need to make money, they came from wealthy families. (Severini, Boccioni, Marinetti et al.) They loved the idea of war and pushed fascism. Apollinaire was their critic.

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

13th Sitting

14th Sitting: November 21, 2016



Dinner was skirt steak with mushrooms; green beans on the side.

Listened to Miles Davis, “In a Silence Way” with Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea.

“Where’s my victim?” Philip asks. Tonight is touch-up. We talk about his life as a collector. “Every Time I needed money, I sold things for a profit. Never sold anything for a loss. One of the pieces where we didn’t get a great gain is worth a great deal now. A weathervane griffin (half dragon and half eagle) with a coiled tail ending in a huge point, made by Fisk, It’s American, supposedly there were two, but only one survived. Ed Marrin, a Pre-Columbian dealer had bought it from a dealer who got it from a convent in NYC. I went to see the exhibition at his gallery and draped over my arm was my winter coat. After admiring this griffin I heard a loud metallic crash behind me; my jacket had caught on the tip of its wing, it fell to the floor, and the wing broke off. Feeling guilty, I asked ‘how much?’ It was $10,000. My salary at Brooklyn College was small, but my lecturing paid for my collection. Ed allowed me to pay on time. Brooklyn College liked the publicity I would get from lecturing and the press I received. Marin was a terrific person and would have experts lecture once a month at his gallery. We would go and he became a personal friend. He bought my paintings which scandalized his religious father and brought shame to the family. I bought the griffin, it took me a year to pay it off. You can’t believe how beautiful it was; lightning had struck it and it was covered with gold leaf which had bubbled up, caught the light, and the whole thing

glittered. I had it on the ground floor of the playroom with a 19th century floor lamp as its base. A collector came to look at my work and wanted to buy it. I wouldn't sell. Had it for ten years, sold it back to Ed for $25,000. He then sold it for $50,000. My dealer, Stuart Feld at Hirschl & Adler was so impressed that I had owned it, he had new respect for me."

Picabia show opened at MoMA this week. "My thesis interpreted everything sexually. I translated every fucking poem of his. It didn't fit in with the Museum of Modern Art's concept of Dada. Picabia was so persuasive in the talks he gave, his theories became dominant in American arts education."[16]

"How's my patient/victim holding up?"

Julia and Steven come to deliver Thanksgiving fixings. "I think he's done," I tell them. "Daddy, the hair isn't purple enough, needs more ultramarine (I'm a Pearlstein!) "

16

http://www.artnews.com/2016/11/18/francis-picabia-art-world-jailer-philip-pearlstein-on-one-of-the-prime-movers-of-modern-art-in-1970/

14th Sitting