

## Unusual life helped

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psychology. Her sister, Bella, is a famous fashion designer and her cousins, Matthew and Emma, are recognized media faces in Britain.

"I did feel that I needed to do something," she reflects. "I found some diary entry that was like, 'Oh my God, I'm 21 and I still haven't achieved anything! It's so terrible!' But at that age, most people have some sort of huge drama in their lives."

And, she adds, "I was an actress, and that makes you feel fairly hysterical anyway."

Now it's Freud's husband, also an actor, who gets to be the dramatic one in the family.

"I must say I appreciate writing so much," she says, "because being in a profession like (acting), it's, 'You didn't get the part as Anne Frank, well that's it, you've missed it.' Whereas you can write that novel without any trouble next year."

Besides, she says, "I probably do more performances as a writer than I ever did as an actor anyway!"

Of *Hideous Kinky* — her first book — Freud says, "I didn't think I'd have anything to write about, and then I thought, 'Oh yeah, I could write about that really unusual thing that happened to me.' I suddenly realized I actually had a good story to tell — but for a few years I actually was writing about, I don't know what, my love life! So I suppose having had an unusual life is helpful."

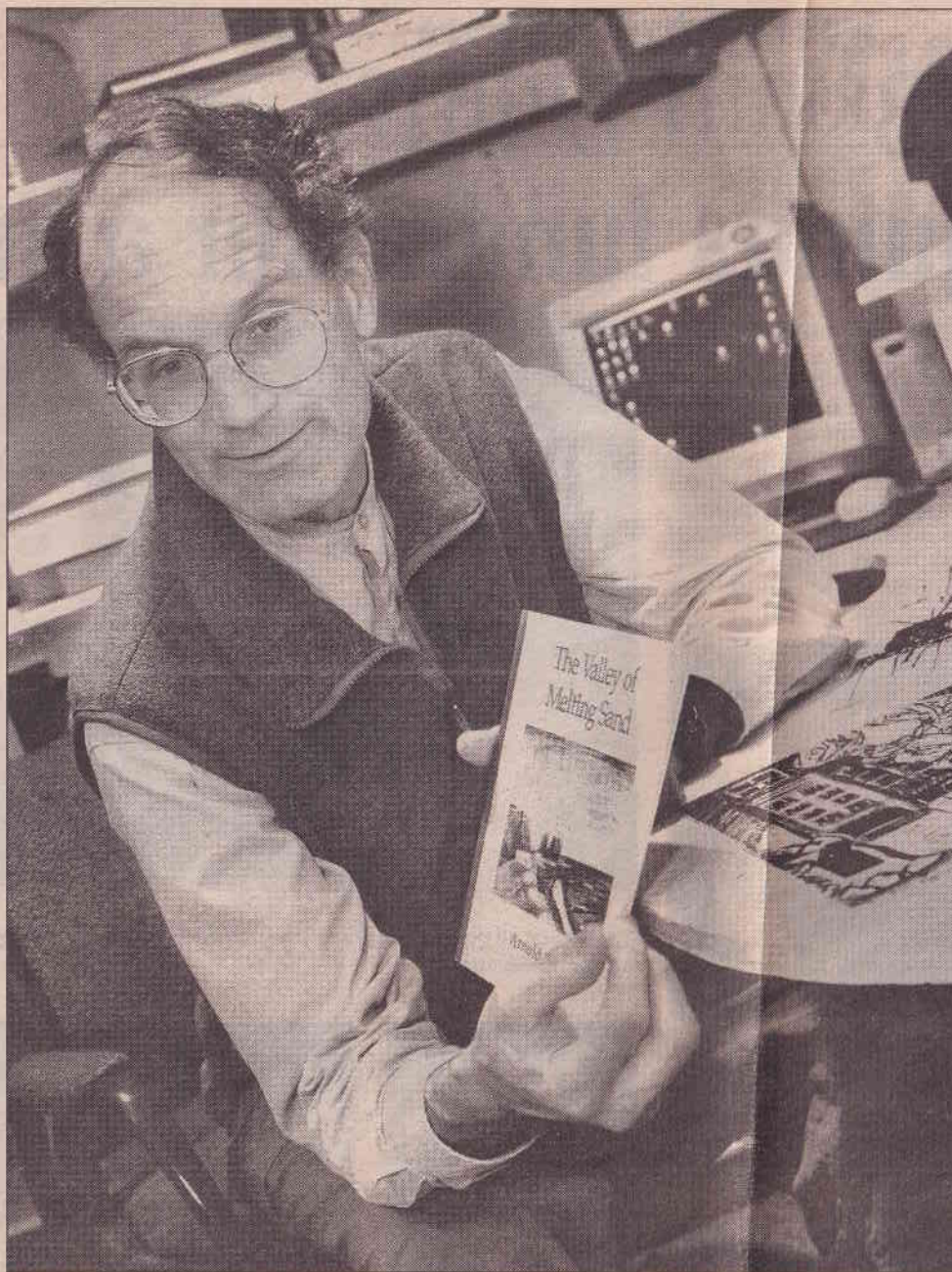
She didn't write the screenplay for the film herself, however. That role fell to Billy MacKinnon, brother of director Gillies MacKinnon.

Freud says she was "really pleased with what he did. He said he'd only take the job if I liked him, so he came to have tea with me and we talked about the book and the ideas, which I really appreciated, and I did like him. He was actually quite nomadic — he went to live in Morocco for about a year. He stayed in hotels and wandered around and ended up learning Arabic. He immersed himself so

much, I just could never have had that involvement with it."

"They consulted me about everything," Freud says, "which is just a polite way of saying they told me! But we seemed like really like-minded people, which is rare in the film industry, so I felt like I trusted them."

The film itself is "probably more real than anything ever was," she says. "The colours were so vivid and I felt quite shaken when I first saw it, by the intensity of it. But after I watched it for about the fifth time it was rather a lovely film. A lot of those things did happen, but not in two hours!"



NEWS photo Mike Wakefield

**ARTIST Arnold Shives used a desktop publishing program to produce *The Valley of Melting Sand*, a book of drawings created during the emergence of Silicone Valley.**

## Preserving silicone memories

Layne Christensen

News Reporter [layne@nsnews.com](mailto:layne@nsnews.com)

**THE advent of the computer age had an interesting role to play in the early artwork of Arnold Shives.**

The North Van painter and sculptor used a desktop computer to produce an independently published book of his drawings, *The Valley of the Melting Sand*, released Oct. 20 during a book launch. The title makes reference to California's Silicone Valley.

The four dozen drawings contained in the book were produced when Shives, now 55, was a student in the graduate program in painting and sculpture at Stanford University. In the late '60s, Stanford was known to students as The Farm, for its rural setting in Palo Alto, California.

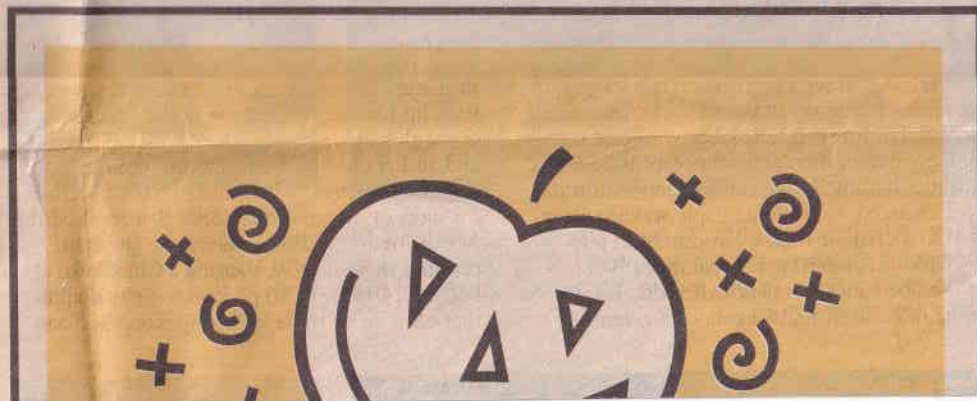
"It was an intense time of pursuing my painting," recalls Shives who, at the time, lived in a worker's cottage on vineyard acreage in Atherton — an area since transformed into Silicon Valley.

In *The Valley of Melting Sand*, he writes: "In the fall, the abandoned vineyard provided me with ample grapes, and in the spring of 1968 the glorious wisteria climbed in a towering cascade of fragrance 40 feet up one of the oaks."

Publishing the book of drawings has allowed Shives to preserve the results of this creative time in his career. The book was launched Oct. 20 at Vancouver's Mojo Room on East Hastings. Proceeds from the sale of the books and the raffle of Shives' silkscreen print *Landscape Blink* will support the North Vancouver-based Artists for Kids Trust.

Shives has exhibited widely in Canada and abroad over the past 20 years. He's currently preparing for a show of mixed media works on paper to be held in Cologne, Germany at the end of November.

Closer to home, his works are now available at the Jan Ballard Gallery in the Roots Lodge at Reef Point in Ucluelet on Vancouver Island's wild west coast.





# 1998 FANS award recipients announced

Layne Christensen

News Reporter  
layne@nsnews.com

**NORTH Shore visual artists Arnold Shives and Norman Tait share this year's FANS (Fund for the Arts on the North Shore) award.**

The award is presented annually by the North Shore Arts Commission to recognize and celebrate the creative achievements of nationally renowned North Shore residents. This is the fourth year for the award.

Shives' career as a printmaker and artist spans 30 years.

His works have been exhibited worldwide and are included in more than 25 corporate art collections. Shives, 54, also has work in a number of public art collections.

North Van City councillor Stella Jo Dean nominated Shives for the award. In her nominating letter to the arts commission, Dean wrote: "We are fortunate to have an artist of such a high calibre living and working in our community and who is so generous with his time and talent."

Tait is a Nisga'a artist who has created numerous monumental sculptures including

totems commissioned for the entrance to the Field Museum in Chicago, the Heard Museum in Phoenix and the Ethnology Museum in Osaka.

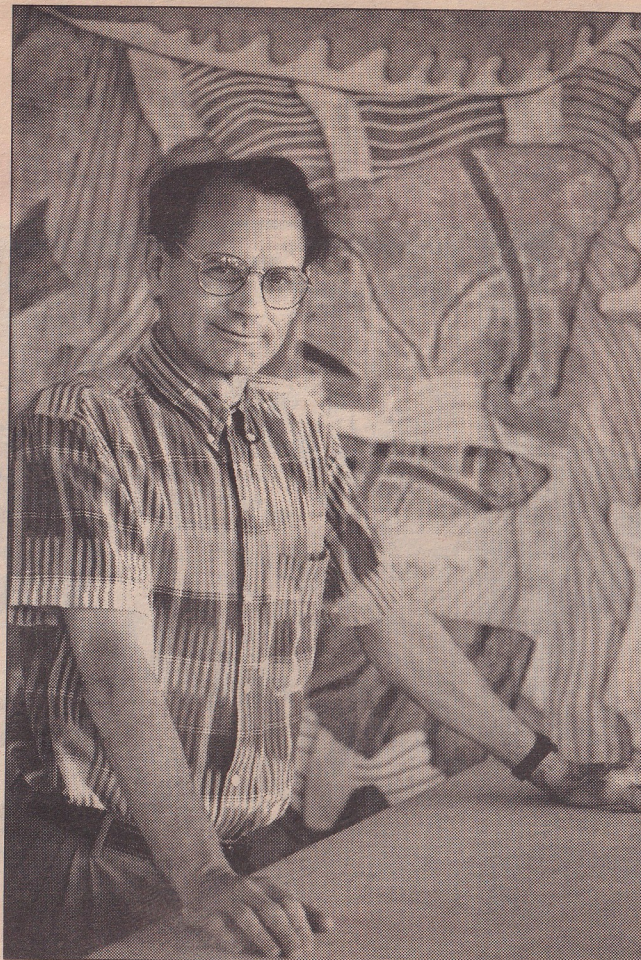
Closer to home, two of Tait's totems are installed in the foyer of Capilano Mall. Tait lives and works in West Vancouver.

Past FANS recipients include composer Jean Coulthard, singer-songwriter Roy Forbes and puppetmakers Luman and Arlyn Coad (all awarded in 1997); portrait artist Elizabeth Smily (1996) and actor Robert Clothier (1995).

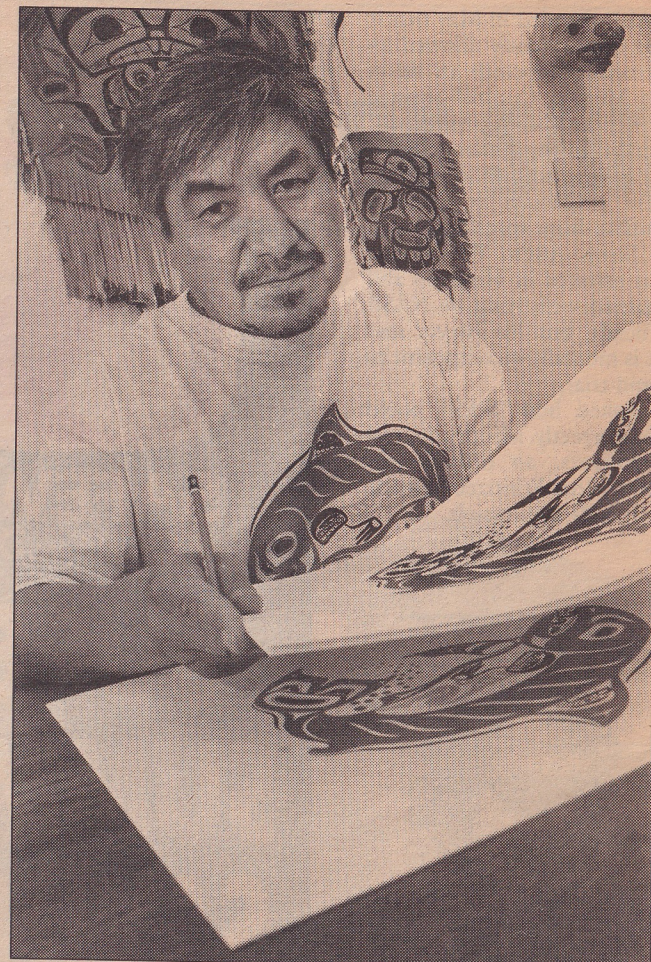
Tait and Shives will be honored Oct. 17 during the 1998 FANS Night at the Capilano College Theatre. Each will receive a glass sculpture designed by North Van artist Marina Papais.

An evening reception will be followed by performances by local artists, an auction and art exhibition. Tickets are \$30 and go on sale Aug. 15.

Proceeds from the evening will go to the FANS account, established by the arts commission in '95 and intended to support the development of the arts on the North Shore. The goal is to establish an endowment of \$20,000. About \$12,000 has been raised to date.



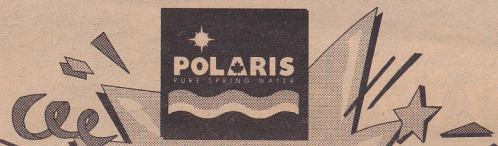
NEWS photo Paul McGrath



NEWS photo Brad Ledwidge

**THE North Shore Arts Commission has chosen to honor artists Arnold Shives (left) and Norman Tait with the 1998 FANS Award. The award recognizes the creative achievements of nationally renowned North Shore residents.**

**Catch the excitement of the**



**IT'S SURPRISING**



## awards

by Blanche Howard

When Norman Tait was growing up, there was an ancient carved canoe in the house that his father had rescued from the wilderness and dragged home before it rotted. Norman's mother and aunts were among the few who still knew what the carvings meant, and so early in life, Norman learned the half-forgotten myths of the Nisga'a tribe. Perhaps because he was a small child, or perhaps because he had the sensibility of an artist, or perhaps because the world was much quieter then, Norman says that even at five years old he knew and felt their lost power.

The kind of silence in which any sound is an intrusion is not easily come by in urban, mechanized societies. We have to retreat into a wilderness like the vast Nass Valley where the Nisga'a dwell, where Norman Tait grew up, and there we may hear for ourselves the power that silence-breakers possess. Bear crashing through underbrush, raven shrieking territorial rights from the treetops, salmon riffing the clear rivers and streams with silvery, shining leaps, all herald the mysterious dynamism that is life.

The artists of the Nisga'a were the interpreters. They carved in giant cedars and on alders the ancient tales of creation and trickery that grew around the silence-breakers.

The white man came with his sureness of the truth of his own beliefs, and pooh-poohed the magic of the Nisga'a, and so like all magic that is denigrated, it lost much of its power. The Nisga'a nation was left with nothing but distant reminders of the myths, and without its myths no society can survive. The Aboriginal peoples were robbed, for a time, of a sense of pride in their history, and of the paths laid out by story and example.

Now artists like Norman Tait are doing what all great artists do: reinterpreting his subjects through the filter of consciousness, and in so doing, helping bring some pride and a

# Silence-Breakers and Healers

Meet the talented local recipients of this year's FANS awards

sense of place back to the Native community.

Tait's and his assistant and partner Lucinda Turner's carved bowl *The Black Swan* is serene and tranquil, so that the viewer is awed, almost overwhelmed, by its focussed spiritual power. The black-washed alder bowl is an elegant combination of traditional and contemporary design. It was carved on Dundarave Beach and exhibited in New York and Chicago before becoming the former West Vancouver Wilp Tsak Gallery's signature sculpture in 1995.

Tait's mask *The Moon* is a remaking of an original, very old, moon mask found in the Nass River. Both are currently on display in the same case as part of the *Down from the Shimmering Sky, Masks of the North West Coast* exhibit, at the Vancouver Art Gallery through October 12.

Norman's giant totem poles (Capilano Mall, Chicago's Field Museum, the Heard Museum in Phoenix, the National Museum in Osaka, and Bushy Park in London, England) tell the story of his family and its legends. Carving a totem pole is a formidable task; imagine watching it. Tait and Turner have secured a giant old-growth cedar, and this summer on the PNE grounds they were scheduled to turn it before our very eyes into a majestic totem pole.

The silent places are what inform the work of Arnold Shives as well. He is a painter and renowned printmaker about whose graphic works the Montreal magazine *Vie des Arts* notes "a near-Blakean spiritual intensity, a wild harmony and formal incandescence." Just as Tait

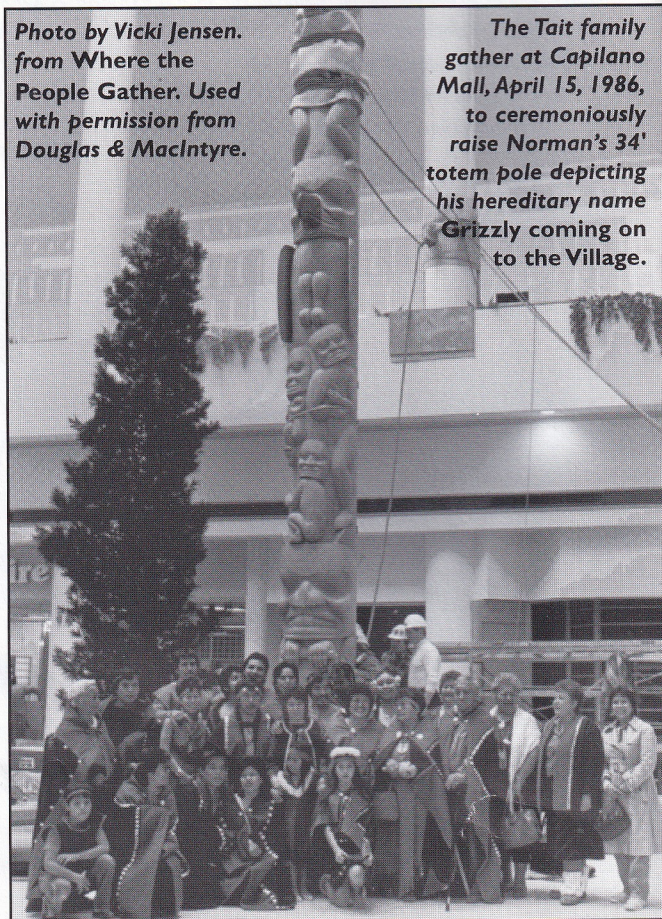


does, Shives steps back from the clutter of urban life, but with Shives it is not the silence-breakers he illuminates but the mute beauty inherent in mist, leaf, and mountain.

In his wonderful light studio on North Vancouver's Prospect Road, Shives showed me *The Healing Place*, a work done with plywood on a steel backing. The backing forms an integral part of the work, as well as framing it.

*Black washed alder Swan Bowl by Norman Tait & Lucinda Turner. Photo by Bain Stanley & Kai Svensson, 1994.*

*Photo by Vicki Jensen. from Where the People Gather. Used with permission from Douglas & MacIntyre.*



*The Tait family gather at Capilano Mall, April 15, 1986, to ceremoniously raise Norman's 34' totem pole depicting his hereditary name Grizzly coming on to the Village.*





Above: Arnold Shives in front of his artwork *Tangled Forest* (work in progress.) Birch plywood & oil. 48" x 34".  
Photos above & below by Cindy Goodman.

Below: *Above Terrible Creek* by Arnold Shives. Perforated steel, birch plywood & oil. 67" x 47" x 2.5".

The organic forms overlaying the backing give us a sense of the spatial and tonal relations that exist in nature. Sensuous brown colours stand, like trees or earth, in the foreground, the harbingers of life

and jubilation. In another of Shives' pieces, *Above Terrible Creek*, trees in the foreground over blue-patterned steel protect us from the river's turbulence and anchor the nearly vertical landscape.

When I ask Shives if he thinks the wild is truly a healing place, he says, "Doesn't everyone?" Well yes, now that he mentions it. Why else do we slog annually through mud and black flies, or abandon hot and cold running water for the joys of an outdoor privy? To be made whole again, or at least to attempt it, after the fragmentation wrought by noisy mechanization, instant communication, and our myriad superimposed environments. Shives' reputation until now has rested more on his beautiful paintings and prints than on these overlaid, almost three-dimensional works. Like them, his graphic art searches out the peace and spirituality inherent in the silent landscape. As does Tait, Shives translates the mystery of the ancient ways of the world into an art form that speaks with original intensity.

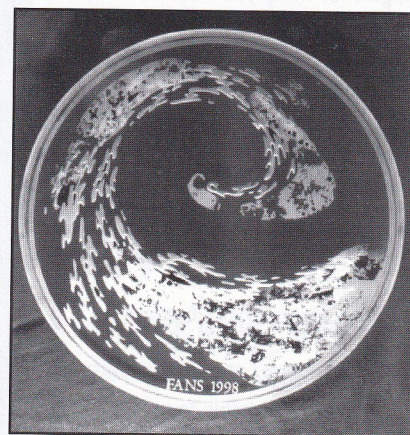
The North Shore, with its grand and accessible wildernesses, seems a natural home for both Norman Tait and Arnold Shives. The great sheltering trees of our rainforest can be both protective and fearsome, and it is easy to see how their animal inhabitants, filtered through the human consciousness, became imbued with special powers over earth, sea, and air. Although the North Shore is many miles south of Tait's childhood home in the Nass Valley, it is easy to imagine the impetus that would inspire the early artists to record on poles and masks the living silence-breakers of the forest. And similarly, the artistic sensibility that Shives brings to our perception looks for its birth in mountain and ocean, mist and leaf.

How fitting that we on the North Shore should have a venue to honour these two outstanding local artists! For the fourth year in a row, the North Shore Arts Commission is hosting a gala evening of food and entertainment in the new Birch Theatre at Capilano College on

## awards

October 17, for the purpose of raising money for the Fund for the Arts on the North Shore (FANS). The interest from this fund will aid emerging artists through scholarships and grants.

Each year we have also honoured outstanding North Shore artists whose works are nationally and internationally renowned, and this year Tait and Shives will each receive one of the beautifully functional etched glass bowls created by renowned North Shore artist Marina Papais. The United Nations has proclaimed 1998 as the International Year of the Ocean, and that is the theme of Papais' engraving. The FANS awards evening promises to be a fitting and magical tribute to these incredibly talented artists that live in our own backyard.



1998 Fans award.  
Glass sculpture by Marina Papais.

Pick up your tickets for the FANS evening October 17 at the North Shore Arts Commission, 148 East 2nd St., North Vancouver, or order them by phone by calling (604) 980-3559. ♦

Blanche Howard is an award-winning writer living in North Vancouver. Her novel, *A Celibate Season*, was co-authored with Carol Shields, and has recently been reissued in Random House's Vintage series. Howard is also vice-chair of the North Shore Arts Commission.



# Arnold Shives

by Toni Onley

From early childhood, Arnold's passion for exploring the mountains of B.C. was instilled in him by his father who took him for hikes among the North Shore mountains, just as my father had taken me on fishing trips to explore the rocky coast of the Isle of Man. These early rambles connected us with nature and influenced us to become landscape artists -- in this regard, Arnold and I are soulmates.

We often cover the same ground in search of subjects. When I had a ski-plane, I used to fly to Garibaldi Park and land on Sentinel Glacier; now Arnold reaches the same glacier by climbing up to it. But where I could do a few watercolours and then fly home for supper, Arnold has to dry out his socks and boots and spend a cold night bivouacked on the mountain. Arnold travels light, often carrying only pen, India ink, and a sketch book, and he relies on wilderness skills and endurance to reach his landscape.

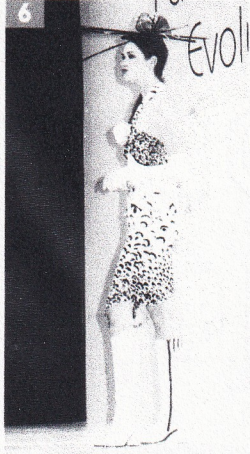
We see the same places but come up with very different imagery. We often tread in each other's footsteps, but at different times. However, on a few occasions, we have painted together. In 1988 we joined the Octagon Artists' Expedition to the Comox Glacier on Vancouver Island. A group of artists from across Canada were flown onto the glacier by Canada's Air Sea Rescue as part of one of their exercises. We all camped on the snow for a couple of nights. The second day I was perched on a rock at the edge of the glacier with my feet dangling over a 3,000 foot cliff that dropped into a little jewel of a valley, when I heard a voice grumbling on the wind. I looked around and I was alone. I then looked down at what looked like a thousand feet below me, sitting on a narrow ledge, was Arnold. He had dropped his pen which had lodged in a narrow crack in the rock. I suggested that he retrieve it by wrapping some tape around another pen, sticky side out, and pulling his pen out with it. "How did you learn to do that," he called out as he recovered his pen. Our Airforce hosts kept a close eye on Arnold's wandering, not realising he was a very experienced mountain climber.

Arnold is one of the most original printmakers Canada has produced. The sheer variety of his imagery is impressive, and is well illustrated in his portfolio Mountain Journal. I have followed Arnold's work with great interest for the past forty years. Over this period I have collected almost fifty of his prints, eventually donating them to the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

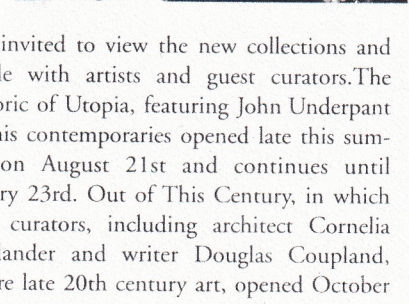
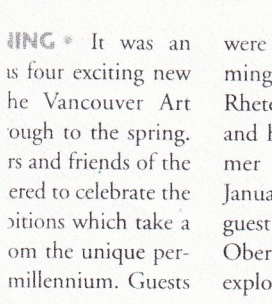
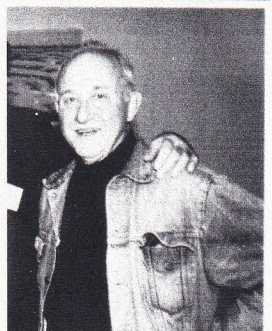
Arnold has called his works "Wilderness Sacraments." As a highly religious man, this sense of landscape comes naturally to him. He reminds me of the early Christians who survived for almost a hundred years by clinging to places like Skellig Michael, a pinnacle of rock 18 miles from the Irish coast, and my own rock where I was born, the Isle of Man. Arnold, too, will survive to see the day when our museum curators will once again suffer from Stendahl Syndrome, the illness that comes from being overwhelmed by the beauty of art.

January 20, 2003





1 Julia Molnar, Janet Taylor, Glen McPherson, Joan Gusola, Jacqui Cohen, and Stu Jackson at Meet the Grizzlies 2 Curator Cornelia Oberlander and Mina Shum get applause at the VAG opening 3 Geoff Ballard chats with artist Arnold Shives 4 Spar Street, Naomi Smith, Jib Street, and Laurie Street at the Four Seasons Hotel 5 Friends gather with Ed Varley at the Vancouver Art Gallery 6 One of the innovative designs at the Fashion Evolution show 7 Grizzlies Coach Brian Hill and Anders Thorsen at Meet the Grizzlies 8 Merla Beckerman and Deputy Minister of Education, Charles Ungerleider celebrate the opening of the VAG's four new exhibits 9 Cam Watt and Karen & Julian Bannister at the Meet the Grizzlies party 10 Models on the runway at Fashion Evolution 11 Monica Thiessen, Jason Soprovitch, and Ian & Fiona Wilkinson at the Grizzlies bash 12 Michael Bibby with his cute son 13 Charlene Luedke, Charmaine Crooks, Ellie Harvie, and Christine Lippa at the Four Seasons 14 Claudia Beck, Tom Cone, and Andrew Grupt at the VAG reception 15 Artist Arnold Shives and Jan Ballard



**MEET THE GRIZZLIES** \* It was an is four exciting new he Vancouver Art ough to the spring. rs and friends of the ered to celebrate the itions which take a om the unique per- millennium. Guests

were invited to view the new collections and mingle with artists and guest curators. The Rhetoric of Utopia, featuring John Underpant and his contemporaries opened late this summer on August 21st and continues until January 23rd. Out of This Century, in which guest curators, including architect Cornelia Oberlander and writer Douglas Coupland, explore late 20th century art, opened October

23rd and runs through to February 27th. Visions of Paradise: Varley in British Columbia, presenting over 40 years of work by Group of Seven founder Frederick Horsman Varley, opened October 16th and continues to February 27, 1999. Recollect, which explores how contemporary art has been shaped in Vancouver and abroad and features artwork from the Gallery's permanent collection, also

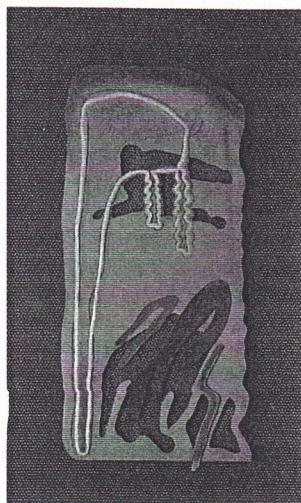
opened on October 16th and closes October 23rd. Be sure to check out these exciting exhibitions this winter; it's a great way to spend and get out of the cold weather.

**MOJO ROOM** \* It's the place to go for live music and a great time any night. On October 20th, the Mojo Room at the Hastings was the place to be for a great evening. The Mojo Room hosted a party for Jan Ballard Galleries with a special presentation for the local organization, Artists for Kids Trust, where partygoers were invited to enjoy some wine and have a few nibbles while listening to Juno award-winning and Juno award-nominee Brad Turner. The highlight of the evening was the launch of local artist Arnold Shives' new work on hand to sign his latest work, a book titled *A Valley of Melting Sand* which features a material collection of his early works from his time at Stanford. The evening was a great success for both Jan Ballard gallery and fans of Arnold Shives. Proceeds from the sale of the book went to benefit the Artists for Kids Trust.

**MEET THE GRIZZLIES** \* Kickin' it this season of basketball, fans and friends were invited to an exclusive Tip Off party on October 28th at the Four Seasons Hotel. Meet the Grizzlies in person and bid on one-of-a-kind items, including autographed jerseys and basketball players, at a silent auction. The evening was a great chance for fans to meet and greet the team players as the 1999/2000 Vancouver Grizzlies were introduced to the city. Fun activities, such as a basketball clinic, and fans could test their skills at the hotel. On the other hand and the Rumba Calzada Band and Bahia Dancers entertained the audience with their exotic music and dance. The evening was a great success and proceeds benefited the Vancouver Grizzlies Foundation. Let's hope this will be a great start for our Vancouver Grizzlies.

**FASHION EVOLUTION** \* Exciting fashion hit the runway as Vancouver's premier fashion event premiered the Fashion Evolution show on October 24th at the Vancouver Convention centre. Models walked the runway in creative and colourful designs by local designers whose inspirations reflected a modern attitude in West Coast fashion. The show also entertained the audience with live music and singing. The theme of the evening was the evolution of fashion, 'the transformation over time, from ancient to modern, from traditional to contemporary, and haute couture to ready-to-wear.' Hundreds of fans turned out for the afternoon show and the gala evening show which was followed by a VIP reception to meet the designers.





Arnold Shives, *Homage to bp*, 1995,  
oil on plywood, 63 x 47 x 3".

color, and reflected a mystical relationship to nature. In his first acrylic on plywood, Shives turned to similar themes, evoking his experience as a mountain climber in the wilderness regions of British Columbia and the Yukon.

"From the Heart of the Wild: New Works from the Healing Place," 1995, Shives' latest series of plywood paintings, create the same illusion of depth he achieved in his earlier works, but here the use of prefabricated industrial-steel grids suggests he is after something other than pictorial illusion. The grids lend a concrete physicality to the work, drawing our eye back to the organic lines, shapes, textures, and colors woven beneath and through the grids, thus heightening the interplay between the illusion of spatial depth and the attention to surface. The regular patterns of the grids themselves link Shives' natural landscapes to a planned, man-made environment, bridging the gap not only between forest and panel, but also between panel and industrial grid.

*Trail beyond Crown Mountain*, 1995, depicts a mystical gathering of clouds and shadowy tree forms in the North Vancouver region, as well as waters of Howe Sound. Some works present an intimate view of a particular scene, while others show an aerial view of the terrain. In yet others, organic shapes gouged with a router and stamped on the wood arch toward the sky. *Mosquito Lookout, Yukon*, 1995, is based on a trip in a Cessna plane over the ice fields near Mount Logan in northern Canada. The quasi-geological striations, incised points, and repeated circular motifs painted over in ghostly whites and pale yellows give this work a tentative, ephemeral character as if the shapes and patterns could all change in an instant.

The elegiac *Homage to bp*, 1995, is less a myriad series of sensations and impressions than the presentation of a complete cycle. Its archaic, anomalous shapes are composed of wood, oil, and beeswax, and then set onto a grid painted black. As the title suggests, this work is an homage to Shives' longtime friend, the poet bp nichol. For all its apparent formalism, *Homage to bp* addresses the way we find symbols or archetypes in paintings, poetry, or in the world around us. A yellow line runs up one side of the piece, continues around the top of the canvas, then plunges down the other side. This continuous line evokes, in a painterly way, bp nichol's concrete word poems.

In the most recent piece in the show, *The Owl in Winter*, 1995, Shives begins to vary the placement, shape, and size of the grid and there is a more sculptural aspect to some of the surface forms. Raising questions about how we perceive the world around us, Shives uses the grids to call attention to the tension between surface and illusion in his work, to his map of humanity's relation to nature.

—John K. Grande

TORONTO

ARNOLD SHIVES

DELEON WHITE GALLERY

A painter and renowned printmaker, Arnold Shives has recently turned to working directly on plywood with a power router, sander, and jigsaw. His earlier abstract paintings were a sophisticated and whimsical mixture of pattern, form, and



## Two Rivers Gallery

# Delving into Nature : Arnold Shives exhibit at Two Rivers Gallery

by Tracy McCall  
This Week Staff

Painter, sculptor and print-maker Arnold Shives has been exhibiting his work for more than 25 years. He resides in North Vancouver but until July 13 you can see his work on display at the Two Rivers Gallery.

A naturalist and respected climber, Shives's love of the wilderness is self-evident in his current show, *Delving into Nature*. Although the outdoor lifestyle is in his genes — his grandfather was a mountaineer and his father a forester — Shives explains his personal fascination with nature. "It's the multiplicity, variety and unbelievable richness." Most of his pieces, like *Nass River*, relate specifically to places on the West Coast.

A prominent British Columbian artist, he has been referred to as a contemporary descendent of Canada's Group of Seven. His choice of subject matter, colour and use of line are definitely comparable, but his work contains a stronger industrial design element.

Several of the pieces on display combine carved, painted plywood with manufactured perforated steel while utilizing soft backlighting, which essentially makes the work glow. It's an unlikely pairing of natural images with man-made material that creates a unique contrast and tension in both colour and texture.

His works range from being rich and rugged to soft and inviting, yet all the works have a quality of strength to them. Many of the pieces incorporate a playful style of illustrated pattern on to them. It is mainly through the shape and illustration that one can see a Californian influence. He studied in California in the '70s and '80s at the San Francisco Art Institute and Stanford

University. The influence of Canadian art forerunner Jack Shadbolt is visible in the shape and colour of Shives's more vibrant pieces.

He uses oil, and encaustic (bees wax and pigment) on routed and carved wood as well as a large combination of other materials and techniques. One must see the show to appreciate the variety.

Shives comes from a print making background. He explained this sculptural, dimensional compilations began in his mind while he carved into lino and wood while making prints. "For a number of years I thought about how to transpose those images into sculpture. There's a sculptural aspect to carving and cutting into wood." He's obviously found an answer but who knows if he's satisfied with it. Like many artists, Shives is very self critical. He reflects on his work and wonders if it can be

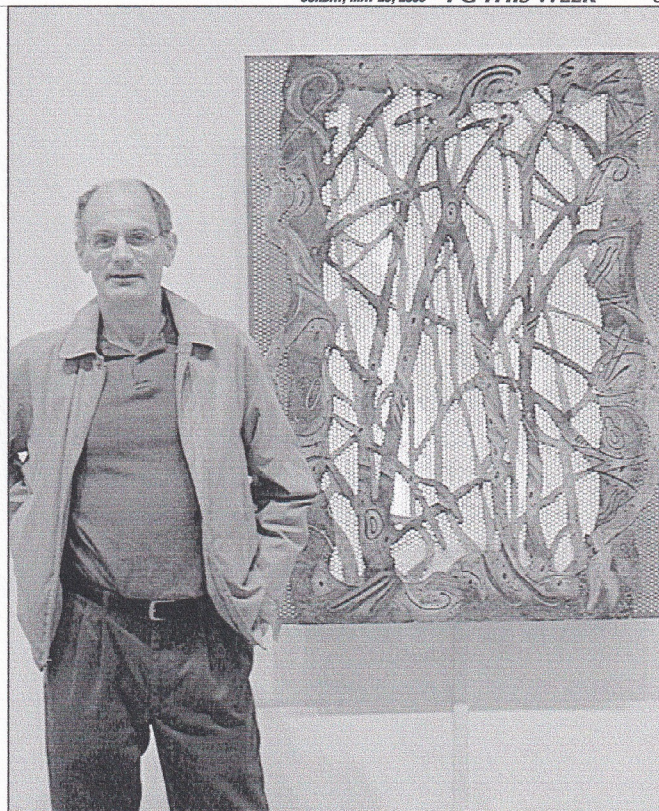
improved.

"Sometimes artwork springs full-blown off the drawing board. With me that's not the case. It's an evolving situation. One thing leads to another," he says. "Viewers should be cognitive of the many stages of the work."

That being said, he balances his criticism. "The artist does want a response but he can't over-interpret. He has to guard himself against overreacting."

Shives believes that to progress, the artist must push himself and experiment. "There has to be a certain amount of anxiety. You have to be on the edge, not knowing if it's going to work out."

Regarding his show in Prince George he says he feels a kind of distant connection — his father lived here as a small boy. "It's edifying for me to have the show here and it's a beautiful space."



Tracy McCall photos

Artist Arnold Shives stands beside *Red Mountain* (1996), a mixed media backlight work.



*Nass River 1999*  
Oil, encaustic, steel on board



*Taiya Waterfall I*  
Oil, encaustic on wood



*Taiya Waterfall*  
Oil, encaustic on wood



## ART

# A Graphic Cocktail Party

ACHENBACH FOUNDATION FOR GRAPHIC ARTS: New Acquisitions, Part II: 1940-1984  
California Palace of the Legion of Honor  
Through June 9

BY ABBY WASSERMAN

**M**oments after I entered the Achenbach Foundation's galleries, downstairs at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, my overload warning system went off. Not because the exhibited works I could see weren't interesting and enticing — they were — but because there were so many of them, about 100, by 70 artists. Here was a veritable cocktail party of artworks, a hundred fascinating individuals, as it were, and because of their numbers and my time constraints, I wouldn't be able to get to know any of them well.

Exhibitions such as this one are tough to describe. It's much easier to interpret a single artist through many examples of his or her work. It's fairer, too, and more natural. A retrospective is ideal: gradually, a picture of the artist will emerge. But show me anyone who got acquainted — really acquainted — at a cocktail party. It rarely happens. How to discern the voices of individuals above the din of a crowd?

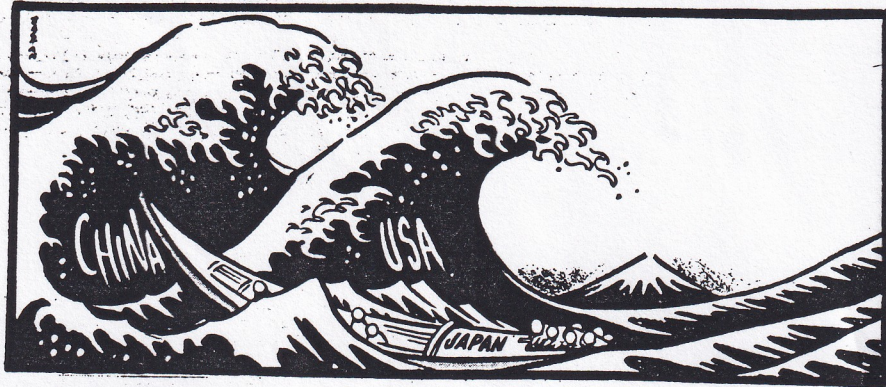
But then, the goal of this exhibition is not to forge lifetime friendships; it's to make introductions. The foundation's last show of new acquisitions left off at 1940. This one features works made between 1940 and 1984. There are 14 drawings, variously employing pencil, inks, watercolor, charcoal, oil base pencil and collage. The rest are prints, ranging in media from cliché-verre (where the image is carved onto glass and replicated onto photo-sensitive paper by exposure to light) to etching, woodcut and serigraph.

The Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts is the prints and drawing department of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. It is the only branch of the complex actively collecting contemporary art. Works in this show come from the United States (including many from the Bay Area), England, Japan, Canada, Germany, Austria, South Africa, Italy, France, Switzerland and Argentina.

It's an eclectic bunch, and well-known artists share wall space with some you've never heard of. Comic art, represented by R. Crumb's satirical serigraph, "The Weirdo Makeover," and posters by David Lance Goines and Lance Hidy, are treated with the same respect as Grant Wood's 1941 lithograph, "Family Doctor," and other venerables.

Big, trumpeting works — such as John Buck's 1983 color woodcut, "Beirut," featuring a bright red, stylized Tree of Lebanon, superimposed on a dark ground alive with faint images, and Mary Pacios Humphrey's bold and passionate "Bereaved Woman" (1984), a hand-colored linocut — are hung in the same room as piccolo-like works. Examples of the latter are Marilyn Hagberg's "Farm Near Tadlow, Cambridgeshire," a study in precision and serenity, and Lucian Freud's quick charcoal drawing, "Painter's Mother in Bed," from 1983.

If the show as a whole communicates any single theme, it is curator-in-charge Robert Flynn Johnson's ambition for the Achenbach. He wants to continue building an important contemporary collection, and he knows that there is no sure way to predict what will emerge as "important" decades from now. He therefore looks for works of high quality, representing a wide range of artists' achievements and concerns in our



Robert Bastian: "The Great Wave" (1961)

times. In the show, known and unknown artists mix like so many Bingo numbers, so it's best, at first, to ignore identification labels. Johnson has arranged things this way for a purpose: Let the works speak for themselves.

Innocence is a great help in looking at art. We see poorly when we're experiencing a conflict between what our eyes tell us and what we think is "right" to see. Innocence lends openness and freshness. Years ago, I learned that if I stood long enough in front of any piece of art, I would receive the artist's intent. Artworks throw out messages — visceral, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, informational, and it is more interesting to comprehend what an artist wants to communicate than to get tangled up in matters of taste.

Sometimes, of course, the messages are trite, shallow, mediocre or offensive. I did not perceive much depth in Jeanette Bately's 1981 serigraph, "Torn Paper." Her idea — to introduce torn colored paper, with its pleasing irregularities, to the flat, gray surface of graph paper — was fine, but it didn't translate effectively to silkscreen. The colored shapes appeared as flat as the graph paper. John Kacere's 1964 pencil drawing, "Metamorphosis, A Series," metamorphosed, under scrutiny, from a playfully erotic sketch to an annoyingly erotic one. Ultimately, it seemed a very private drawing, almost out of place here.

Other works gained interest as I looked. The Austrian Ferdinand Penker's 1980 etching, "Untitled," may be the show's most subtle work. Two flat, linear forms about the size of toothpicks seem to be deciding whether or not to

make a move towards each other across a wide expanse of gray, delicate crosshatching and lacy patterns. Surprisingly, the piece holds its own between two very large, vivid works — Buck's "Beirut," with its lambent red, and Miklos Pogany's lyrical abstraction, "Klarika."

Tetsuya Noda's "Diary: March 8th '83 in Ueno," a woodcut and serigraph, also grew on me. Its surface suggests the subtle textures of memory. From a distance, it is a stark horizontal composition of black and white. Close up, the dark flat roofs of apartment houses reveal myriad details. This work is part of Noda's "visual diary," a personal document of photographs rendered into graphic images, begun in 1968.

**S**ome images reveal their secrets at a single glance. Lucian Freud's drawing of his mother has this immediacy. Its message, concerning the struggle to understand what life has been about, and the stoicism to bear its continuance, resides in the drawing's simple lines.

Richard Allen White's "Confrontation Series" from 1950, three color lithographic monoprints, had the opposite effect on me. I had to stay with them awhile. They are rather ghostly images dealing, I think, with what in our lives may remain constant, while things change around us. I didn't "like" White's images, but I found a good deal in them to ponder.

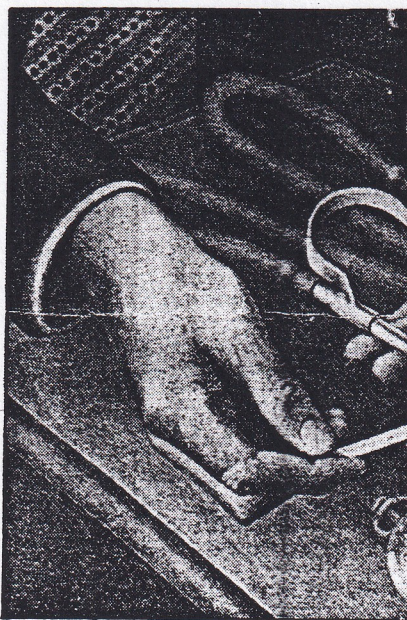
Tomoe Yokoi's color mezzotint, "Two Graters" (1982), deals with mysteries of density and illumination. Her small round graters have paper messages stuffed inside. Carla E. Golder's "Ribbons," also a color mezzotint, seems to deal with the same formal concerns. A pile of glowing ribbons emerges from dense black space.

Arnold Shives, a Canadian, has achieved a wild harmony in his 1981 color linocut, "Harbour View." The work has some of the power and poetry of landscapes by the late Lawren Harris, one of Canada's famous Group of Seven, painters of the '20s and '30s.

Philip Michelson's *tour-de-force* collage, "Kite Series #1" (1983), has such an elegant, meticulously fashioned surface that it took me a few moments to realize it deals with imprisonment. Three Japanese kites are caught on a folding metal gate that stretches across a storefront plastered with peeling political posters.

"Alienation Avenue II — High Fashion" (1981), an etching/aquatint by Herbert Holden, comments with harsh irony on social facades. Holden is a local artist who brought work into the Achenbach during one of Robert Johnson's print-viewing sessions.

There's a beautiful Diebenkorn in the exhibition, done with Japanese printmaker Reizo Monju. Entitled "Ochre," the woodblock has the transparent feel of watercolor. Diebenkorn sent his watercolor painting to Reizo Monju, who cut the blocks and made



Grant Wood: "Family Doctor" (1941)

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the print, with Diebenkorn consulting, so the result is indeed a collaboration. It's good to see both artists being given credit.

An adaptation of another kind hangs opposite: The late Chronicle editorial cartoonist Robert Bastian's incisive ink-and-gouache drawing pays tribute to Hokusai's famous woodcut, "Great Wave," as it comments pungently on U.S.-Japan-China relations.

In good gallery installations — and this is one — each work gains resonance through its place in the order of things. It calls attention to itself, while commenting (politely) on its neighbors and works across the room. As you make your way through this installation, you will see themes, colors and forms repeating and echoing one another. When surrounded by so many personalities, it's a relief to be able to recognize such connections.

As artistic cocktail parties go, then, this one is a success. But try to spend time alone with a few individuals anyway, maybe in a quiet corner.

Abby Wasserman is a freelance writer, critic and painter.

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