

The Blotter

June 2004

www.blotterrag.com

Comprehension is Overrated



Summertime Savings Spectacular! Everything Must Go!
for your short little attention span, we present
A Special All-Poems-and-Pictures Issue!

Art by Joan Vandermeer, Jerry Kirk, A. A. Rucci, and Angi Shearstone.
Poems by Ian J. Holcomb, Shawn Pavey, Ava Morgan, Chris Frazier,
Craig Kirchner, Willy Donegan, and Dr. Heather Hoffman

The Blotter is:

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Cover art, detail of *When the Yellow Bus Came to Town*, by Joan Vandermeer, See pp. 4-5 for more from this artist.

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The Blotter is published monthly and distributed one weekend in the first half of each month. We enjoy a free circulation throughout the Triangle, and in select locations in NC, VA and Nashville, TN. Submissions are always welcome, as are ad inquiries and opportunities to cross-promote interesting events.

Subscriptions are available for \$25/year (in the US only). Send check or money order, name and address to The Blotter Subscriptions, 1010 Hale Street, Durham, NC 27705. Back issues are also available for \$3.00 each. Inquire about availability by e-mail: ediot@blotterrag.com.

This magazine may contain typos or bad words

Items Worth Mentioning from the desk of Johnny Pence

Poetry and Pictures?

If anybody actually reads *The Blotter* and has for more than a couple months, that person might recall that our December issue was a special all-fiction issue. Six months later, we have an all-poetry-and-pictures issue. Is there some theme here? Some plan? Some machination, scheme, or plot?

No, of course not, silly! It's weird; we just had a whole ton of fiction this winter and a whole ton of poems and pictures for this issue. Better to call it a "special issue" than an anomalous submission pattern—although you have to wonder if there's some circadian rhythm that makes people write fiction for the wintertime. Or poetry for the summer. The world may never know.

—ediot@blotterrag.com

I'm Not Corrupt

I'm a blank form
 to be filled out and turned in
 to the secretary. There is inside
 of me bony lungs a bag of air
 which I let loose befits
 in the area around me. It's befouled
 and shitten. I'm so happy when the air's expelled,
 then I'm empty of care:
 I can grin at the floor
 in front of me and pace up and down
 the halls with an empty look
 on my face to match the empty halls.
 When I'm empty inside there is no
 corruption; there is only purity
 and effacement. There is no voice
 of foul air barging its way
 out of my lungs. There is no air.

by Ian J. Holcomb

No Sleep

Edgewise, I look at you
 slantwise. I'm on my side.
 You're on my side, right?
 Lying on my side,
 I can feel my bones breathe.
 I can feel you breathe:
 lesser, greater, lesser.
 With each breath we're both
 lesser, greater, lesser.

Ian J. Holcomb contributed several-hundered insane poems to *The Blotter* early last year and then disappeared.

Chance Meeting

The room eases, in your presence.
I float over heads to yours
where I stop to notice:
eyes that are chatting with mine,
a spirit that doesn't want for wind,
and a bronze complexion that whitens your shirt and
flushes your lips (upon whose softness I make a mental
landing).
When I pour myself back into the body
that needs to make words for another,
I note that my brief trip to your land has renewed
my interest in travel.

by Dr. Heather Hoffman

Taxi!

"Those damn lesbians.
They get me horny.
I wreck my cab looking at them.
Truck driver yelled at them.
You know truck drivers say anything.
I got a girlfriend,
this whore stands in front of me half naked.
I had to ask her if she was cold down there.
I mean it was cold outside; she had to be cold down
there.
The Indians don't pay taxes.
The Indian asked the white man
who he thought was the real American.
'Do you pay taxes?
Well, I don't!' Hah, hah, hah.
Miss, that's a counterfeit twenty."

Dr. Heather probably just goes by "Heather Hoffman" in real life, but she happens to be a physician in some fairly interesting specialty if I remember correctly. I just think it's funny that we have a contributor with a real job.

She recently moved here from Austin.

The Blotter Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

They are filming a sequel to *Godzilla*, which will co-star Marilyn Monroe. She is to play a scientist, and will have a scene where she stands on a building roof, in her white lab coat, against a dramatic background of Tokyo in flames, and tells the monster in no uncertain terms that he's been very bad and should be thoroughly ashamed of himself. Mickey Rooney keeps hanging round the set, jumping on the running board of her car, and saying that he's going to marry her someday. She finds him annoying and creepy. *Godzilla* meanwhile is off somewhere stomping on trains.

I was writing an informal proposal for a client, and then I turned the paper over, changed my handwriting, and used red ink to write a kind of anti-proposal. It went something like: "... and what if i decided to *create* problems for you? What if I devoted 40 hours a week of my life to causing problems *just for you*? What if the only thing I did during business hours was to *fuck with you* and *interfere with your happiness*?"

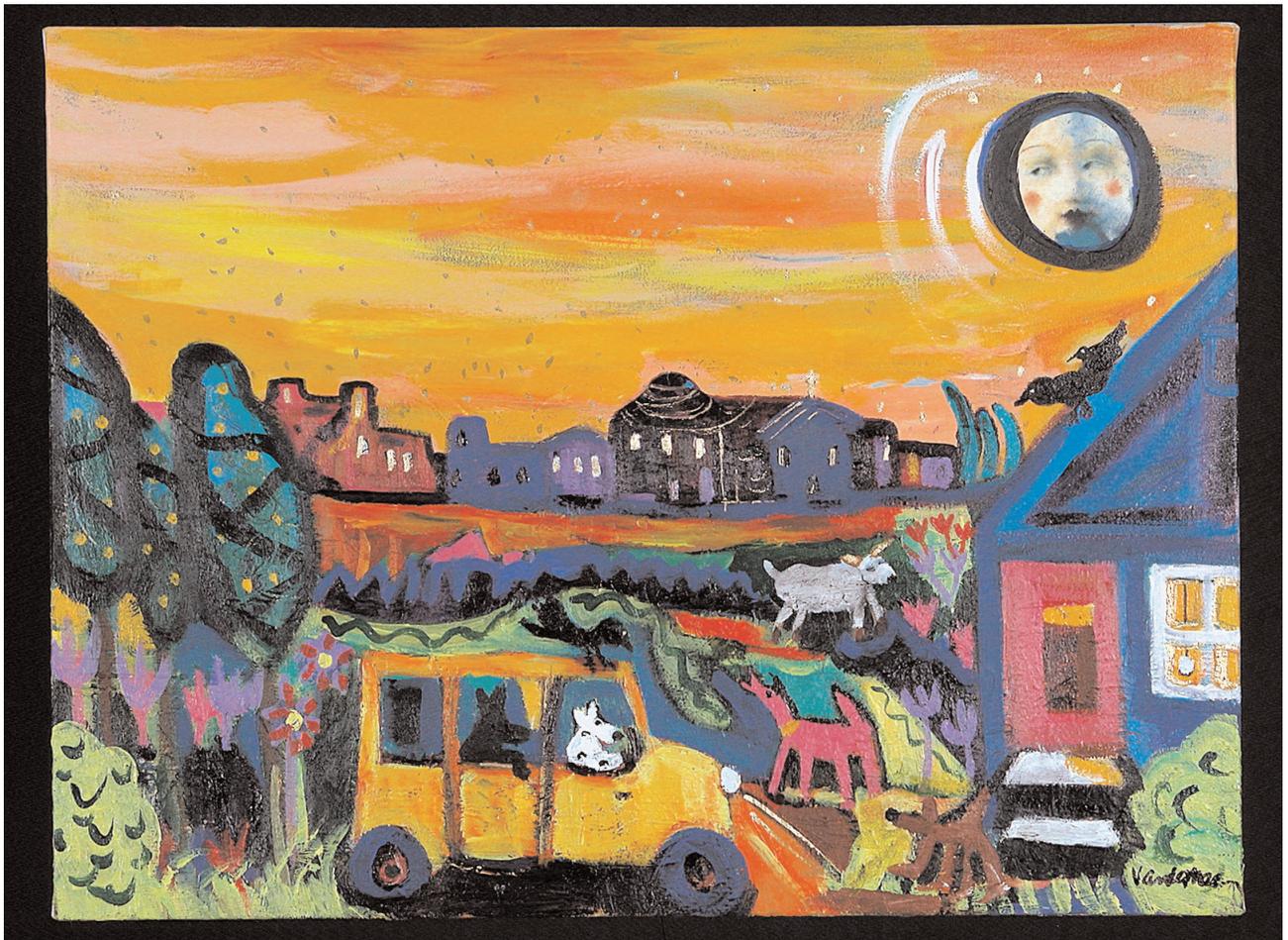
I was reunited with my old college roommate and we lived on campus in the special historic quarters reserved for exceptional students. I looked outside my window and a bunch of South-Carolina Gullahs were slaughtering hogs right outside the window. I asked them to slaughter their hogs somewhere else, since the smell would be so bad and we didn't have AC. They apologized and moved on, but there was already a huge mess out there. Fortunately my roommate and I had a lot of beer.

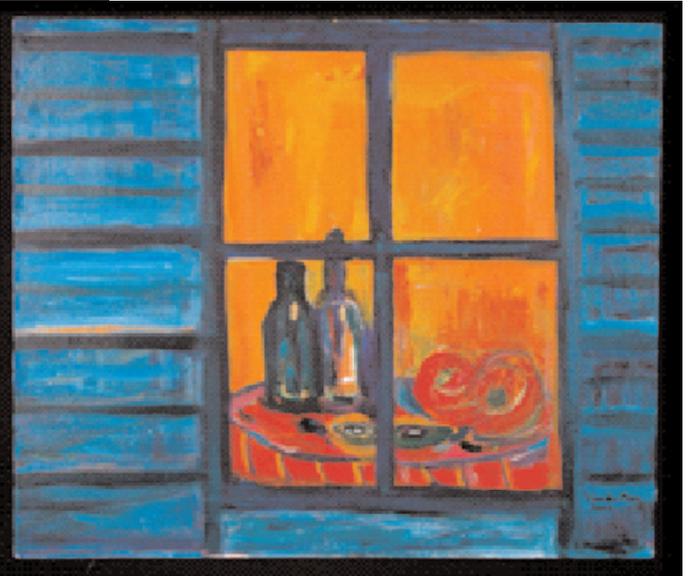
Please send excerpts from your dream journals to Jenny at mermaid@blotterrag.com. If nothing else, we love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.



Joan Vandermeer

Joan's joyful paintings can be seen at The Open Eye Cafe in June 2004; The Paws Exhibit at The Carrboro Branch Library in McDougle Middle School, from June 24 until October 20, 2004; in her studio in Chapel Hill; and on





Nightie Time on the Farm, The
Day the Yellow Bus Came to Town.
Toward Evening
in Beaufort, Table With Bottles and Fruit,
Where the Red Sky Meets the Road.

Submit

The Blotter

Needs and Wants Your Contribution

So Give It Up

We prefer e-mail submissions in all cases,
and they go to
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or paper copies can go to

Jenny Haniver
PO Box 175
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Send us:

Short prose (stories and nonacademic essays),

Poetry,

Photojournalism/-essay,

Journalism that goes beyond or beneath what you might find elsewhere,

Comix, and

Fine art that would reproduce well on this type of paper.

Guidelines and Administrativia:

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Lo-res images may be attached to e-mail submissions, but no other attachments. Paste all text into the e-mail body or send paper copies to the P. O. box above.

We will not type anything for you. Handwritten stuff is really not considered; we need an electronic copy of all text, and you have to supply it.

An e-mail address or reply SASE is required before we will respond.

Try to send stuff that is somehow resonant with what we have already published.

We strive to be apolitical. Bear that in mind.

You keep all copyrights but allow us to print your work one time. There is no payment yet.

Leonid Meteor Shower with James by Shawn Pavey

I.

Our bodies clothed against air cold
enough to freeze water where it stands,
James and I stand and look skyward, to the northwest,

sipping coffee in the dark of our yard.

Crazy enough, we two,
to watch rock burn in the sky
as the matter and the atoms of the matter

break down,
component parts reassembling
into something altogether new.

II.

This, we will not see again.
90 years will pass.

We will not see
this rain of rock
of fire of ash

mingling with the air we breathe.

We will not taste on our tongues burning
sky, crackling energy, as steam
from our breath swirls a silvered
motion away from our bundled up selves.

Big as fists, big as elephant's heads,
meteors

sizzled dark sky two hours before dawn
November's July 4th fireworks
raining bright fire

down on us,
incandescent particles
exploding into air connecting us
to all that is in this infinite expanse
where we spin in perfect symmetry.

III.

90 years will pass,
politicians will die.
Captains of industry will die.
Priests will die.

And monks.
And James.
And me.

Before meteors meet us again,
lighting a dark night with embers,
we will all die.

IV.

Bringing fire,
 meteors will shimmer a dark sky,
 they will pour upon the earth,
 spread dusts from places we have not seen,

They will come again
 out of darkness as before
 when earth still steamed in the chill

from its new birth.

They will bring with them
 fire, a breath

they will breathe into bones and dust and ash,
 they will breathe into the air, stain the sea,
 vapor into clouds a fresh mattering.

Who will stand in the cold dark then?
 Who will smell the fire in the night?

Will they coat themselves against frost and ice,
 drink the black coffee of morning before light,

will they delight in a spectacle of fiery mists,
 will they fix their eyes on heaven?

Shawn Pavey
 co-founded *The Main Street Rag*
 Poetry Journal and served as its editor for 3 years. He teaches Philosophy and Poetry at the NC Governor's School, and can often be found enjoying a fine single-barrel bourbon while listening to Tom Waits.

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**Serious
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(Sign-up for open spaces, 5 minute time limit for open mike readers)

Also at Branch's in the near future:

Monday, June 21, 7:30: Malcolm W. Campbell, Deron Nardo—*Play Hard, Rest Easy*. Tuesday, June 22, 2004 7:30 PM Mindy Friddle—*The Garden Angel*. Tuesday, July 13, 2004 7:30 PM Adam Braver—*Divine Sarah*. Sunday, July 18, 2004 2:00 PM: Karin Gillespie—*Bet Your Bottom Dollar*

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IS SHE TALKING TO ME?



SHE IS!!



SHE WANTS ME!



SHE WANTS TO RIDE LIKE THE WIND...



...TAKE LONG WALKS ON THE BEACH...



... DANCE ALL NIGHT LONG!



...MAYBE EVEN MARRIAGE!

HEY!

HEY, BUDDY!



I SAID, "COULD YOU PASS THE KETCHUP?!"

opposite:
"Ketchup"
 by Angi Shearstone

Angi Shearstone has a Master's degree in comic books, two cats, and a website: www.angishearstone.com. What the hell else could anybody ask for?

Flood
 by Wil Donegan

"Ah!" she shrieks, the mud and the plants
 and the fish sighing their way
 down the stacked rocks, inviting
 themselves
 for affectionate hugs with our shins
 and our bare feet.
 The collapsing dam finishes its
 descent atop
 a pulsing pump, the once vertical
 fountain now irrigation
 for koi gills.
 She stands agape mouthed, looking:
 to me
 the fish
 to me
 the fish, to me.
 Her eyes, a flash of pupils and worry
 and my eyes back.
 With toothpick fingers I pluck at the
 fish
 that burrows only deeper into the
 mud and debris.
 My mother, scarlet cheeked, sucks
 valiantly
 at the air and begins restacking
 rocks.
 Then she sends me for the hose.

Wil Donegan is a young feller from Pittsboro who'll be attending UNC in the fall. Keep your eye on him. There's more from him on the next page.



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Laundromats

The woman; fractured, fracturing, pieced together in unequal segments.
 Stands leaning over the washing machine, tearing wet sheets and blankets away, bubbled strips of whale blubber slick her hands with soapy slurry. Into the dryer, swirling and hot.
 Stands far back, arms full with lint, back from windows,
 from cars at the street.
 Their highway eyes invite too many, too soon, to pyres not properly extinguished.
 Her craters, stitched tight, are reopening in loads.

Driving by the Restaurant on Friday Evening

by Wil Donegan

In the car, my mother's car,
 I watch you at the table
 Placing glasses, forking lemons,
 The gummy hot road chasmed black on the lettered glass.
 I watch from my cabin, bound by leather,
 the white trough of your scalp
 Capsized in curling red waves.
 Your legs, hazy and hosed, I watch
 In brief moments beneath the drizzling tablecloth;
 Black and hot with plates and sunlight.

Ahead, the traffic,
 Inconsiderate line of wheel and fume, moves forward
 moves you, moves me
 and in my glass I watch my eyes
 searching, combing
 themselves for reason not to circle back
 and ask for seconds.

half-lives in conversation

Through moonlicked streets
 they retreat into the image of opinion,
 into an evening forever posturing
 and repositioning like a restless ego.

There is a party tonight.

Guests arrive bearing coats
 and compliments for the host.
 How fantastically modern! How kitschy-cool!
 The cochlear staircase, the coffered ceiling,
 the magenta vase stemmed with dried life.

People throng the place as if in a train car,
 some sitting with coy skirts,
 others standing with painted mirth.

Around the room a simian chatter grows,
 and there is pleasure felt at another's misfortune.
 The coffee pot politicians shake hands
 With the Brollo bourgeois,

and Friday evening quarterbacks
 launch Hail Maries over the conversation.
 Some push the latest score,
 others the actor's couture,
 everyone agrees
 the party will be talked about.

There were so many faces kept on ice tonight.

by Chris Frasier

the unbearable smile

Craig Kirchner says, "I'm a consultant on the East Coast but consider myself a hobo of the universe. I write about what I know best and yet least—myself—in an effort to remove those labels.

Ava Morgan (opposite page) lives in Cary, NC with her guinea pig Imagery. In her spare time she likes acting in local theatre, hanging out with her boyfriend, and going to concerts.

Chris Frasier is a regular at our Serious Literary Events, held once a month at Branch's Chapel Hill Bookshop. Y'all should come check it out.

You were seven when you smiled the unbearable smile,
 stretching it across the glossy tableau of forever,
 your teeth a festoon of lanterns in an endless night:
 You could fool eternity before your mother.

You played happiness to a firing squad of cameras
 each riddling you with snapshots of misquoted youth.
 At seventeen, you wanted to grow a beard to hide the sadness
 because those around you were scared of the truth.

Then, in your twenties, smoking in the umbrella light
 of a lamp on the side street of consciousness,
 watching the brake lights of others stuck in wine bottleneck traffic,
 you discovered, momentarily, your frowning bliss:

We do not have to smile for the camera.

Baghdad Dream by Craig Kirchner

He's dancing alone,
naked, but with helmet and
bayonet.
The music is loud like Polka.
The ballroom is full of gawking
pinstriped figures
standing barefoot on the hard-
wood floor,
but he's twirling
too fast
to see their faces.

He bolts, ashamed,
booted now and fatigued,
down a Persian-rugged hall,
to steps that get steeper as his
legs shorten
and the music fades.
He comes running
too quickly
to a gold-gilded roof,

where chilled with a surge
of cool night air, silver with
smoke,
sweet with the smell of rotting
meat,
the bends suck the oxygen
from the blood in his head,
leave it stagnant,
too heavy,
like limp slaughtered flesh,

Comfort Behind the Jukebox by Ava Morgan

He was hiding behind the jukebox listening to Nancy
Sinatra singing, "These boots are made for walking"
And he was taking these words, grabbing them and
Placing them into his soul.

He was squatting behind the jukebox, shaking a paper
Nervously and trying to figure out the meaning and
The reason of this hit song. He cleverly smiled up
Ahead and made his thoughts race again.

He became very disgruntled behind the jukebox slurring
His speech and spitting on the floor, weeping into the
Speakers. Started making strange noises like he was
Speaking in tongues and pulled his pants down.

He was still hiding behind the jukebox singing that
Nancy Sinatra song, "These boots are made for walking"
Wondering what song was going to play next, frowning
Began grabbing Nancy's notes and twiddling his thumbs.

and the gristle binding his
bones
melts, feigning marbling in fine
beef,
pretends it will make savory the
aging,
but collapses him quickly
to skin-dotted, full-dress bones,
open-mouthed, thick with craze-
eyed flies
too fresh
from naked Dachau dancers.

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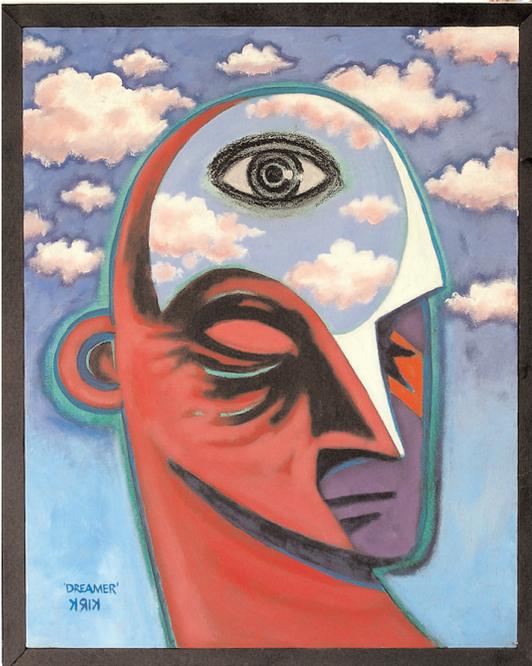
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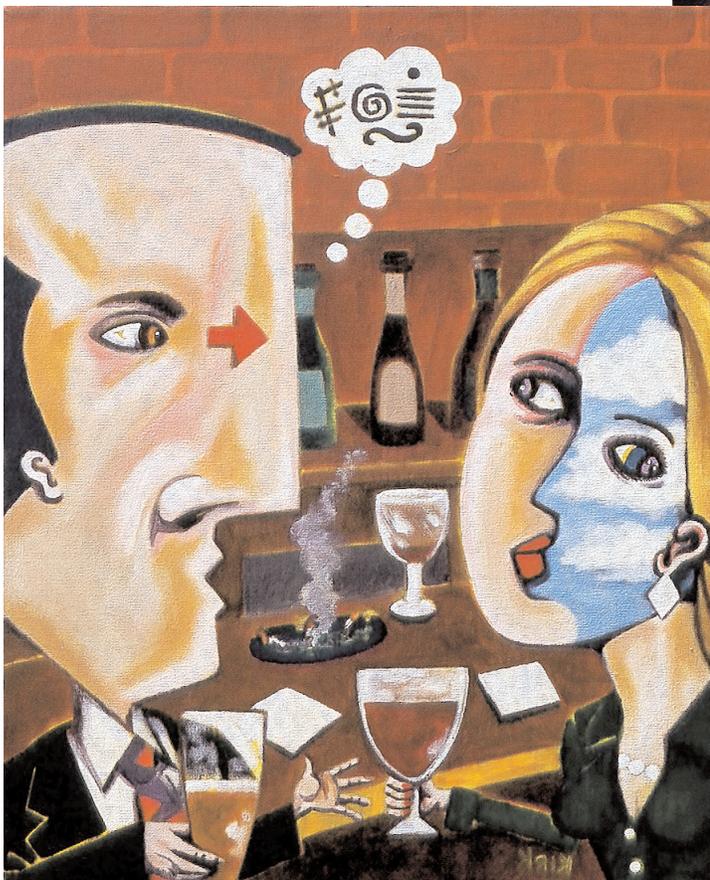
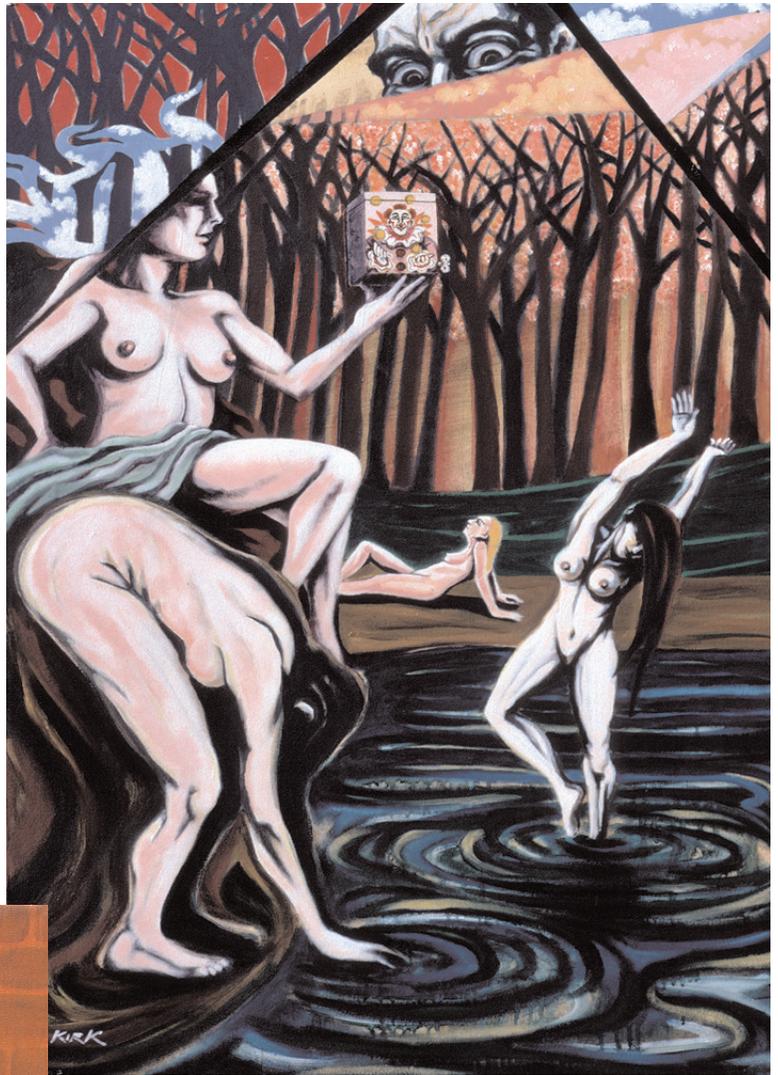


Jerry Kirk

Chaos is Easy

Jerry Kirk is a recent transplant to Raleigh from Charlotte, where he was a gallery owner.

www.sanctuaryart.com



Opposite, Top Down: *Elvis and Jesus Go Grocery Shopping, The Dreamer, and Chaos Troubador*
This Page, Top Down: *Prometheus and Pandora, Miscommunication*

THE LUMBERTON BARRIER— Preliminary Research Data

by A. A. Rucci

Lumber River, SW of Lumberton, North Carolina (population 20,795)

Donald Jones—Lumberton resident who initially discovered a concrete road barrier (now known as the LUMBERTON BARRIER) in the Lumber River while casting for catfish from his dock. (February 10, 2003) Mr. Jones called the Lumberton Police Department who suggested he contact the North Carolina River Research Institute who in turn directed him to the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). The NCDOT promised to remove the barrier within 10 days. Mr. Jones was found dead in his home on November 28, 2003. At this point in time the barrier had not yet been removed from the riverbed behind the home of the deceased. (Information courtesy of Mabel Jones, niece of the deceased. April 17, 2004)

Michael and Rita Mincey—Bought the property formally belonging to Donald Jones on March 1, 2004. Michael Mincey called the NCDOT Maintenance Office on March 3, 2004 and spoke with

Robert Odette who agreed to come out and look at the barrier. Initially skeptical, Mr. Odette was surprised to see that the object in question was indeed a NCDOT Class F Standard Concrete Barrier.

Mr. Odette informed the Minceys that his department would remove the barrier within 30 days. The full cost of excavation to be responsibility of the property owners. Mr. Mincey, unsatisfied with the response time and unexpected expense called the North Carolina Fish and Wildlife Commission to try to determine who was responsible for the barrier and its removal. (The barrier was situated in the Lumber River, a waterway controlled by the local commission).

Three weeks went by without a reply from the NC Fish and Wildlife Commission. Mr. Mincey called the NCDOT and asked for Mr. Odette who had in the meantime retired. Ms. Edna Shecker told Mr. Mincey that there was no record of a visit by Mr. Odette to the property - but she wondered aloud if there was a connection between a case of a missing Class F Standard Concrete

Barrier (Report: NCDOT & North Carolina Highway Patrol, June 9, 2002) and that referred to by Mr. Mincey. Ms. Shecker along with Chuck Newcomb from the North Carolina River Research Institute visited the Minceys on March 30, 2004 only to discover that the barrier in question had already been pulled out of the river by Norbert's Towing and Salvage, a local company hired by Mr. Mincey.

The aggressive removal of the Lumberton Barrier from the Lumber River essentially destroyed any and all evidence that Ms. Shecker and Mr. Newcomb had hoped to gather. Later the same evening, Mr. Newcomb mentioned the day's events to a friend and former archaeologist colleague, A.A. Rucci. Mr. Rucci, enjoying an extended vacation in the United States volunteered his services for investigation of the site, analysis of the Barrier markings and determination of the provenance of the object. (March 30, 2004)

On April 3, 2004, Mr. Rucci, serving as a freelance investigator for the NCDOT, the North Carolina Highway Patrol and the North Carolina River Research Institute, began conducting preliminary studies on the Barrier. With the approval of all parties involved, arrangements were made for the Barrier to be moved to a neutral site to conduct the analysis and testing. Norbert's Towing and Salvage was hired to provide the transport. The Lumberton Barrier was brought to Lump Gallery/Projects, Raleigh, NC on June 4, 2004.

According to a report filed jointly by the NCDOT, the NC Highway Patrol, and the North Carolina Office of the Attorney General, on June 8, 2002 a Class F Standard Concrete Barrier was unlawfully removed from its location at

The barrier was 1 of temporary barriers spanning the east end of the road. The time of the crime was estimated to be between 01:30 and 03:24 a.m. on June 8, 2002. None of the other adjoining barriers were (re)moved.

Preliminary form and dimensional comparisons between the production date of the Class F Standard Concrete Barriers which were temporarily installed at the aforementioned location and the Lumberton Barrier strongly support that they belong to the same group.



Class F Standard Concrete Barrier (specifications):

LUMBERTON BARRIER CLASS F (Type B) SCB

Height: 30 in. (88 cm)

Width: _____

Length: Variable

Weight: Variable

A total of 30 probes 1.875 in. (4.8 cm) were taken from the base of the Barrier:

1. To determine the chemical composition of the concrete (along with the shape and size this enables one to identify the manufacturer).
2. To test the impact and tensile strengths of the barrier.
3. To analyze the minerals, clays, and algae that have penetrated its surface.
4. To reconstruct a timetable of events (especially time underwater).

Preliminary Findings:

Barrier Analysis (May 14, 2004):

The high concrete-to-sand ratio and the unusual lack of rock aggregate in the Lumberton barrier probes are typical of curbs and barriers produced by the J.E. Baylor Company for the NCDOT from 1984 to 1991. The J.E. Baylor Company was also the manufacturer of the Class F standard concrete barriers which were temporarily installed at _____. *The impact (1600 lbs./sq. in.) and tensile (1320 lbs./sq.in) strengths of the Lumberton Barrier probes are significantly lower than the manufacturers specifications (4000 & 3000 lbs./sq. in., respectively) published in the J.E. Baylor Company materials and products catalogue. In fact, the Lumberton Barrier stress tests yielded results at levels that have been determined to be unacceptable by industry and government safety standards. (Note: this has led to a call for further investigations into the NCDOT contracts with the J.E. Baylor Co.)

The formal laboratory analyses of the minerals, clays, and algae that have penetrated the entire surface of the Lumberton Barrier have yet to be completed at the date of publication (May 15, 2004). However, as expected the red-brown discoloration which has seeped into the outer layers of the barrier's surface up to



1.56 in. (3.96 cm) deep matches in consistency and hue the clays which are found in the upper regions of the Lumber River.*

*The Lumber River is a winding black-water river that originates in the Sandhills region of North Carolina then flows freely through the south coastal plain and into the Pee Dee River in South Carolina, eventually to the Atlantic Ocean.

The greenish-black discolorations and growths are assumed to be common with the indigenous algae/molds of the river. The unusual material composition/ratios of the Lumberton Barrier make it difficult to determine how much "seepage" would occur yearly but a range of .08-.25 in. per year is reasonable. The average to deepest, penetration to year ratios of the Barrier probes are .21 to .44 respectively. The penetration levels seem to confirm that the Barrier was in the river for 1-2 years.

Samples were taken of the surface paint traces to determine the vehicle makes and models that had come into contact with the Barrier. A material and color analysis of the rep paint markings on Side_A yielded results consistent with the color Scarlet #43 from the 1978 import production of a Datsun 240Z.*

Conclusive is also the identification of the yellow and white paint markings found on Side_C: Identical to the road-striping and curb paints required by the NCDOT from 1974 to 2003. Other surface markings are common to those normally occurring during use on roads with a speed limit of 45 mph. (The speed limit at ____ is 30 mph.) The unspectacular markings seem to rule out a collision resulting in a death but the preliminary evidence suggests that foul play was involved: The Lumberton Barrier is indeed that which was stolen from the site on June 8, 2002 but the motive for its displacement and eventual deposit in the Lumber River remains unsolved.

A. A. Rucci will be showing *The Lumberton Barrier* at Lump Gallery/Projects, 505 S. Blount Street, Raleigh, NC.

Opening Friday, June 4th 7-11 p.m.

Show Run: June 4-27, 2004.
Gallery hours: Sat. & Sun. 1-5 p.m.

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