

“Charlie is one of the most important artists of my generation. I wouldn’t be the artist I am today if it wasn’t for him.”

—Robert Longo

“His mind is an endless source of free-form improvisation and inspiration.”

—Cindy Sherman

“Charles Clough smears paint with brilliant New York-style flair . . . Clough’s painterly performances are virtuosic.”

—Carter Ratcliff, *Art in America*

“Clough keeps alive the painterly tradition, flattening the impasto of Hans Hofmann and making opaque the transparency of Henri Matisse.”

—Charles A. Riley, II PhD,
Color Codes: Modern Theories of Color



 Published by Floating World Editions



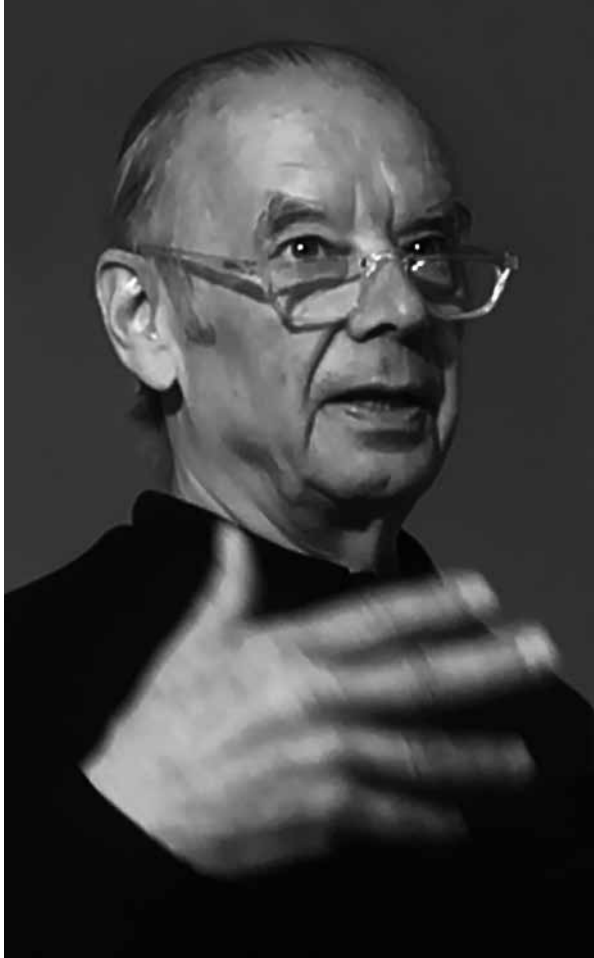
Charles Clough
ART WILL

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A Fifty-year Odyssey from
Hallwalls to the Roycroft

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**A Fifty-year Odyssey from
Hallwalls to the Roycroft**



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*For my family, especially my wife Liz Trovato,
my sons Edward and Nicolas,
and grandchildren Vincent, Veronica, and Louis.*



image of an arrow

The Arrow

At the beginning of 1971, within the extended moment that I came to understand myself to be an artist, I felt the need to produce “an outward and visible sign of my new-found inward and spiritual grace”—in order to convince both myself and the art-loving public of Buffalo that I was, in fact, an artist. Immersed at that time in the work of Claes Oldenburg and the minimalists, I conceived the **image of an arrow** piercing the wall of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

It would take me until the night before Halloween of 1972 to execute my prank. Friends assisted with the placement of the sculpture I had produced in my studio at the Ashford Hollow Foundation. I was pleased that the *Buffalo Evening News* and its affiliated television station noted my gesture at the time of its execution. The following day the museum removed and discarded it.

The museum recreated it (as seen on the cover) for its 2012 exhibition: *Wish You Were Here: The Buffalo Avant-garde in the 1970s*.

Publisher's Note

This pocket edition of *Art Will* heralds the full-sized version to be published in 2021, available from ACC Artbooks (www.accartbooks.com/us) or your favorite bookstore.

Most of *Art Will* was originally spoken and may be viewed on YouTube.

Additional publications by Charles Clough are available at cluff.com.

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Lackawanna, 1989, enamel on canvas, 120 x 60 inches

Foreword

Walter Robinson

Clough first came to my attention as part of the great return to painting that marked the dawn of the 1980s. He was one of the Postmodernist abstract painters associated, in my mind, with the school of Collins & Milazzo in New York, and was also associated with the group of artists (Cindy Sherman, Robert Longo) who emerged from the Hallwalls art scene in Buffalo, N.Y. He showed his work downtown, in SoHo and the East Village, and lived in a small apartment in Little Italy with his wife and two small sons.

Back then, I might have said that Clough was a Neo-Geo artist, but in a completely contrary way, since his work is not in the least bit “geo.” Rather, his paintings are explosively formless, like a volcanic eruption or a storm during sunrise. Clough’s paintings are extravagantly colorful, suggestive of nature at its most dramatic, whether roaring tempest or expansive pastoral. His canvases make an almost magical abstract claim to the kind of epic quality that is so familiar from classical art, ranging from the celestial spectacles of Giambattista Tiepolo to the New World vistas of the Hudson River School, and perhaps including, more recently, the paintings of Anselm Kiefer.

At the same time that Clough reaches for the heavens, so to speak, he is utterly grounded in the materialist imperatives of contemporary abstract painting. That is to say, his paintings immediately declare themselves unequivocally as paint on canvas, as a “flat surface covered with colors” as Maurice Denis had it. In fact, as if to underline his paintings’ materiality, Clough’s pigment is, if memory serves, commercial sign-painter’s enamel, specifically designed to withstand extremes of weather. Arguably the most material

of paints, sign-painter's enamel is notable for its durability, sheen and high lead content. Like Robert Ryman, Clough restricts himself to his art's most elemental qualities. But where Ryman opted for the purity and simplicity of white, Clough embraces the glories of the entire color spectrum. With his complete palette, he makes the paintings that Ryman just couldn't make (apologies to Martin Kippenberger and his "Paintings Pablo Couldn't Paint Anymore"). Ryman plies a brush, needless to say; it determines the very essence of his art. Clough uses a different tool, one of his own devising, a fact that is similarly central to his work, both defining it and making it possible (my apologies for taking so long to get to this important point). What is this tool? Clough makes his paintings with a custom-designed, upholstered drumstick-like wand that he calls his "big thumb." A silly name to be connected to serious enterprise—abstract painting—but the notion of the "thumb," of the unique originality of the thumbprint, of being "all thumbs," amplified still further in Robert Hughes' assault on the then-young Julian Schnabel and his "five fat thumbs," is not without avant-garde resonance. Clough's "big thumb" is a tool like no other, a tool whose utility, counterintuitively, lies in its undifferentiated clumsiness. It makes only blots and smears.

Clough's "big thumb," then, embraces the kind of gauzerie that has characterized advanced art since the dawn of modernism; the term was used, for instance, by late-19th-century critics to describe Paul Cezanne's unconventional painting style. Clough wields this tool (or it could be said that the tool wields him) to make painterly marks that magically metamorphose like an intricate Rorschach Blot into an astounding array of abstract landscapes, cosmologies, ascensions, nativities and all manner of other compositions.



Taylor is With Us, 1992, latex on canvas, 112 x 85 inches, collection: Burchfield-Penney Art Center



Melanie Rowland and Rashone Jackson adding their layer of paint to *Cluffalo: Winter 2020*

Each metamorphosis is obviously subjective and almost mechanical, but nevertheless uncanny, wonderful and and sublime.

More recently Clough has moved what was a solitary studio practice out into the public arena, expanding his art-making into a communal enterprise. It's an admirable project, and one that I support. If I were king of the world, though, I would grant Clough the resources to produce a series of large, new paintings, works that would strive to capture the epic dimensions of contemporary life.



family



advertising art



art projects

Introduction

We realize opportunities if we are so struck. Growing up with love in **family** and community led to my concern for realizing my life in a meaningful way. Fear, anxiety, and alienation are inescapable, but I had a vision. The infantile struggle for autonomy evolved through modalities of inspiration, acquiescence, and oppositionality. The discernment of influences, to achieve authenticity became the object. Self becomes evident through action. We project our identities through what we “do”: hang around, help, show off, piss off, fascinate, aggravate, sing, dance, joke, tell stories, doctor, lawyer, politician, gangster, or “be” an artist.

My sense of being an artist proceeded through thresholds of realization. From my earliest memories I felt encouraged to make art. When it was time to choose a secondary school, I did so to pursue a course of “**advertising art**.” I self-directed **art projects**, from childhood when a sense of pursuit—artistic objective, became established in my persona. Concerns such as mechanical engineering and illustrational techniques occupied me through my teenage years. I was exposed to fine art by museum visits and popular media. Then, through the course of a year of art school, at Pratt, adolescent limitations gave way to the agency of adulthood. This connected with the revelation of what “artistic freedom” made possible. The moment was January 5, 1971—nearly fifty years ago. From that point I have understood my life as a unity of accruals of images, texts, and objects. In 1976 I realized this to be making the *gesamtkunstwerk* that is “the photographic epic of a painter as a film or a ghost,” also known as **Pepfog**: I have taken photos since 1968, I have lived an epic arc as a painter, and “the film” is, theoretically at least, a flip-book animation (abstract animation) of every one of my images. Each work marks

time and place—painted, photographed, videoed, written, or keyboarded. These sequences inter-relate and generate additional gestalt-like meanings.

It is possible that better-adjusted people are not distracted by this compulsion for attention. I may eventually reach that peaceful state. But after devoting most of my life to art, I would, at least, like the effort to sustain me through my remaining years. Thus my artworks are souvenirs from my journey for you to acquire, ponder, and share through exhibition and publication—much of the imagery that represents my work is available online for you as “common wealth.”

I chose my high school program to prepare for a career as an illustrator. After attending Pratt Institute from September 1969 through May 1970, and absorbing contemporary political and cultural developments, I decided to “devote my life to art.”

I scoped out opportunities in Buffalo and located sculptor Larry Griffis, Jr. (1924–2000), with whom I traded my assistance for art studio space at the Essex Arts Center. Larry, after distinguished service in World War II, started a family and continued to run a successful hosiery company started by his father. In the early 1960s he decided to leave his life in Buffalo and move to Rome to learn bronze casting.

Upon his return to Buffalo in 1969, Griffis established the Ashford Hollow Foundation to develop a 400-acre sculpture park and fifty-thousand square foot arts facility in a former ice house on [Essex Street](#). Unlike art school, Larry and the A.H.F. provided a blank canvas to evolve my art practice. I can’t overstate the importance of these circumstances. After gaining an understanding of how to proceed as an artist at Pratt, having time and studio space to evolve my way, unfettered by imposed structure, was perfect for me.



pepfog



Essex Street

Before favorable results from the draft lottery precluded an adventure in Viet Nam, I had researched art schools in Canada. The Ontario College of Art provided an inexpensive and highly instructive interlude in Toronto. The school was in the throes of reorganization, which allowed for much self-direction in a fascinating and foreign art scene, if only ninety miles from Buffalo.

Back in Buffalo in 1972, I audited classes at the University at Buffalo, Buffalo State College, and the School of Visual Arts in New York (by way of frequent hitchhiking trips) and read *all* of the back issues of *all* of the art magazines.

Meanwhile, Griffis had secured I.R.S. 501c3, not-for-profit status for the Ashford Hollow Foundation. He had also secured more artists renting studios at the facility. Based on situations I had witnessed at A Space in Toronto and Artists Space in New York I began to conspire with fellow artists, Robert Longo in particular, at A.H.F. to organize for mutual benefit. Thus **Hallwalls** was founded as an experiment in further realizing artistic freedom.

Within Buffalo's cultural context of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, UB's ground-breaking Media Studies, and the equally innovative, New York State-funded Artpark in nearby Lewiston, Hallwalls achieved prominence and public funding. Decades later, in 2009, Douglas Eklund would contextualize Hallwalls in relation to the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibit he curated, *The Pictures Generation: 1974–1984*:

The ringleaders of Hallwalls were **Charles Clough**, a Buffalo native who was up on current art and had long thought of opening a space to show his and his colleagues' work, and **Robert Longo**, a BFA student at Buffalo



Hallwalls



State, whose proactive enthusiasm gave Clough the impetus to follow through. (p. 81)

William Olander's 1987 New Museum exhibition and essay added further interpretation of my work within that period:

Clough could probably have counted on a secure place in the postmodern canon, either in the progressive arm, identified with appropriation (aka, Pictures Generation), or the retro arm, associated with Neoexpressionism (Fischl, et al). But since the beginning, he has been unwilling to disentangle either himself or his work from the various issues, even though of late he has devoted himself almost exclusively to painting. This shift, however, has not clarified matters. On the contrary, it has only



Charles Clough, Robert Longo, Michael Zwack, and Cindy Sherman

made the state of his art more complex and contradictory.

Throughout my early years at A.H.F., on weekends I stayed at my parents' home in East Aurora, twenty miles south of Buffalo, and waited on tables at the Roycroft Inn. The Roycroft was a reformist community of craft workers and artists founded by Elbert Hubbard in 1895, and which formed part of the Arts and Crafts Movement. The work and philosophy of the group, often referred to as the Roycroft movement, had a strong influence on the devel-



The Roycroft



Elbert and Alice Hubbard

opment of American architecture and design in the early twentieth century. Fourteen original Roycroft buildings are located in the area of South Grove and Main Street in East Aurora. Known as the **Roycroft Campus**, this rare survival of an art colony was awarded National Historic Landmark status in 1986. My employment as a waiter ended in 1974. With my parents living out the rest of their lives in East Aurora, I visited the Roycroft frequently during annual visits until I took a studio there in 2015.

I moved to New York City in 1978. While retaining a Manhattan residence, I rusticated my studio to coastal **Rhode Island** in 1999. Then in 2013 I moved it to **Buffalo**. Two years later, I relocated it twenty miles to the Print Shop of the Roycroft.

This is where the Cluffalo Public Painting Workshop began on September 21, 2015 to address issues of authorship and inclusion in art making. Since then eighteen *Cluffalo: Seasons* paintings have been completed by more



Roycroft Campus



Rhode Island



Buffalo

than 600 participants in more than 250 sessions. I provided the workshop space, tools and materials, my time and freedom, such as it is limited by gravity, viscosity, and drying time, for the participants to engage the creative experience. Through the course of each season the layers of paint accrued and the participants also painted their take-aways and had the opportunity to “be” within a transformative creative moment. At the end of the season I gouged and ground the painting to open the layers onto each other and to finish the painting in a manner that fulfilled my aesthetic. The results of the Public Painting Workshop are titled: *Cluffalo: Seasons* and paintings that I make by myself are titled: *Cluffalo: Numbers*.

I had intended to present the completed book of these *Cluffaloes: 2014–2019* in a public lecture in May of 2020. However the covid quarantine intervened and has postponed that indefinitely. So I made this book instead. As the scope and possible length of the quarantine became apparent, I began making daily YouTube videos. Excerpts are transcribed here as is a Zoom visit with John Massier, Visual Arts Curator of Hallwalls, and “The Pith of Cluff,” a summary of my ideology presented in November of 2019.

1 At the Roycroft

Transcripts of YouTube Journals, March 16-April 5, 2020¹

March 16, 2020

OK, so, who the fuck am I? I'm Charlie Clough. I'm here. This is my library. I call it the **Dorothy and Sidney Clough Memorial Library**. Dorothy and Sid were my parents. They lived in East Aurora since nineteen sixty-seven. And they were docents here at the Roycroft— they were my biggest piece of luck, insofar as they were kind to me.

Today, Monday, March 16th, "Governments Scramble for Effective Response as Markets Slide" *NY Times*. I guess we're under quarantine, at least the schools are closed. I've been in this **Print Shop tower** space for about two years, had my studio downstairs—painting studio since summer two thousand fifteen. I have a public painting workshop there is one painting per season and **public participants**



Print Shop tower



Dorothy and Sidney Clough Memorial Library

add layers of paint, like these folks, first layer looked like that, get as many participants, and layers of paint as I can and at the end of the season I subtract, by grinding and gouging, like there's one... *Cluffalo: Summer 2018*.

The space is magical because it was occupied by Elbert Hubbard, who was the force behind the Roycroft—started a press on the campus in eighteen ninety-five and this building (see [view from the tower](#)), the Print Shop was built in two thousand, uh, no, nineteen one. And Elbert and Alice, his wife, used this space for their office until they died on the Lusitania in nineteen fifteen...



public participants



view from the tower



Cluffalo: Summer 2018, latex on pvc, 32 x 44 inches

March 17, 2020

Yes! Being my own boss! These are my time sheets, August second, two thousand nineteen, to March seventeenth, two thousand twenty a, twelve ten or, now, it's twelve twenty, how 'bout dat? This is my first **studio** here at Roycroft, I think it's, like twelve by twelve feet, and I used to have the



studio

painting workshop in here but then I got the room across the hall—over here is the new painting workshop, and it's probably gonna be the last layer of, uh, Winter two thousand twenty, hah, how will we remember March seventeenth, two thousand twenty? I love my colors, I love my tools. Hah (sigh) and I know my days are numbered, hmm, maybe I can outdo Richter at eight-eight, maybe not. There's my **monument to color**—it'll pop out in a while, when it's fully formed, my choice, my heritage, my garbage, and, uh, that's it.

March 18, 2020

Went food shopping for the first time in a week. Eight hundred footsteps to the food co-op. Got vegetables and fruit and trail mix. Got a kick out of Holland Cotter's *Time*'s piece about big museums reevaluating their agendas. Thought I'd mention **Peter Greenaway's *Darwin*** (watched last night). Pretty cool. I don't know, 14, 15 tableaus against which a



monument to color

description of Darwin's ideas...he had a rough haul, what can I say, he worked hard too. So here in the library I've set up to **copy stand** stuff. Since I've had this stuff here I've been intending to edit it. The boxes behind this shelf full of stones is **my journal** 77–81, 81–83 da, da da, da, 09–10, 2011 to 2013. "My back pages" as Bobby [Dylan] said.



copy stand



my journal



Peter Greenaway's *Darwin*

Thursday, March 19, 2020

Hi, today's Thursday, March 19th, two thousand twenty. Turns out it's the first day of spring. Not March 21st, rather Thursday, March 19th, two thousand twenty at 11:50pm. The good news today from the front page of the *New York Times* shows Coronavirus diminishing in mainland China and South Korea. Still going up in the United States, Spain, and Italy.

I received an email today, and now I'm going to demonstrate two things simultaneously—first one is how poorly I read out loud and the second one is how poorly I read poetry out loud.

Do You Remember, Sweet Souls?

Do you remember, sweet souls,
what it was like before this thing,
this empty shadow,
knocked on our doors?

Do you remember, please try,
what it was like
to hold a perfect stranger in your arms,
to love the things you did

but hardly noticed them,
things that were so simple
you turned them into secrets—proud habits,
if only you had not taken them for granted.

Now that you cannot touch them,
go near them, or even imagine them,
you consider them precious—things that were so small
you could hardly find them.

Do you remember what they were like,
before this thing knocked on our doors—
please, try harder, for they are still there, waiting for you
to remember them.

By Richard Milazzo²

*For all my friends and family,
who seem so far away from me now.
New York City, March 19, 2020*

Memory brings up the idea of history. I saw something online about "What's the **oldest thing** in your home?" and this is one of my oldest things. It was formed four billion years ago, at least the material, anorthosite. It uh, took the shape that it's in some time after that. Of course, it's pretty young compared to thirteen and a half billion years for the universe. How long will memory last?



oldest thing

Friday, March 20, 2020

It's Friday, March 20th, almost 2 o'clock. News didn't get good yet, but winter turned into spring so, whether it was last night at 11:50 or this morning at 6 am, Spring two thousand twenty began. And I did my subtraction from [the painting](#). Not much in the way of gouge material there, and the grinding was pretty light actually because I was pleased with the way I got it basically. So there were fifteen or twenty people who worked in, I don't know, a dozen sessions maybe. I have to put [the book](#) together later today. This being the Autumn, twenty-nineteen Clufffalo. So, so there you have it. Clufffalo Winter two thousand twenty. Bye.



[the painting](#) *Clufffalo: Winter 2020*, latex on pvc, 32 x 44 inches, collection: Ann Seymour Pierce.



[the book](#)

Saturday, March 21, 2020

Hi, It's Saturday, March 21st, two thousand twenty, almost 4:15. Thank you Andrew Cuomo for showing incredible leadership when others don't. I'm working on the book form of Clufffalo Winter two thousand twenty. There were twenty-two participants, shown here and actually I'll go down to their—those are take aways and here are the different states of the painting. In any case I'm pleased to have gotten to the end of this project. Will post it online probably tomorrow.

Anyway, we all keep on keepin' on.

Sunday, March 22, 2020

It's Sunday, March 22nd, 2020. Of course I'd like to complain about Covid-19 and the science denying bunglers who have enabled it. And I'd also like to complain about this [radon mitigation apparatus](#) that lends its happy humer, kghghghghghgh, to my otherwise fabulous environment here. I think I got kind of lucky today in that I thought I had some facemasks stashed and it turns out one of them is an N95. Check it out. So that means I can go to the grocery store soon. Woo hoo, food. [My poster](#) here from last fall, shows one of my favorite paintings, [Clufffalo 228](#) and the phrase, Clufffalo—where the true, and the



radon mitigation apparatus



my poster



Cluffalo 228, 2019, latex on pvc, 12 x 15 inches

beautiful embrace head, heart, and hands, Cluffalo, well my url I came up with in 1996, Cluff. That's when I realized that there are, you know, like 80 Charles Cloughs (cluff) or Chuck Cloughs (clow) or whatever and I wanted a short url. My mother said I should have used my full name, including Sidney, um, but I didn't. And then when I came back to this western New York, Buffalo, et cetera, I got a kick out of the Cluff to Cluffalo conceit. And I see it as kind of uh, an ambiguous never-land where anything can happen, well at least anything that I can dream up. The true, the good, and the beautiful, I realized about thirty years ago that that's kind of really my underling M.O. And then head, heart, and hands underlies the Roycroft philosophy. These are Elbert Hubbard's thoughts. And so you have it here today. Hope to get to tomorrow. Bye.

Monday, March 23, 2020

It's Monday, March 23rd, 2020. These days there is a force in my life that causes me to view my personal project of being a human being, to be a failure. This takes me back about fifty years to when I attended the March on Washington following the Kent State killings with my girlfriend, um, a traumatic moment. Brings to mind fifty-thousand Americans and over a million Vietnamese who died for the cause of preserving the face of American policy. Anyway, my girlfriend broke up with me and that sort of fell on my moment of transitioning from childhood to adulthood. It became my narcissistic wound that I healed by devoting my life to art. It took a few months to get through this and date my moment of epiphany as January 5, 1971. So, as I approach my fiftieth anniversary of that moment, I once again turn to art to face the despair of the pandemic and my personal failures. Thank you.

Tuesday, March 24, 2020

It's Tuesday, March 24th, 2020. Market day at **Tops Friendly Market**. Buffalo area chain along with Wegman's, well they don't have a Wegman's in East Aurora, so I took advantage of "old timer's" hour, 6:45 this morning and I should be good for probably ten days. And I'd just like to point to Armand Castellani, the founder of Tops Friendly Markets who many years ago spent twenty-five grand in my studio and sustained me for a few more months. Thank you, Armand.

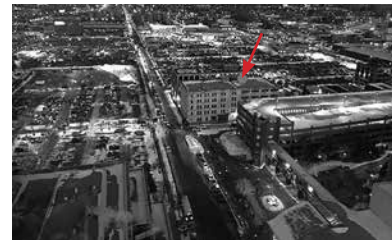
Wednesday, March 25, 2020

It's Wednesday, March 25th, 2020. And as you can see here, it's a heatwave here in East Aurora (54 degrees). Sadly I'll mention James and Alexandra Brown who died a few weeks ago in a car crash (artists living in Mexico) and also Paul Kasmin who died on Monday. I was proud to be included in a group show at Kasmin's many years ago and I've enjoyed his shows at least four times a year for the past twenty-five years. And then Maurice Berger, yesterday, from Covid19. Never met Maurice, but read his stuff for years and was really pleased that he liked some of the stuff I posted on Facebook. In memoriam...



Tops Friendly Market

Until recently, I was planning a "Spring offensive" as a review of my past five years of making art. Last November, I presented my ideology such as I constructed it over the past fifty years. "The Pith of Cluff" can be accessed through cluff.com. That's cluff.com. I returned to Western New York from sort of New York, Rhode Island, lured by the opportunity of the grant of a three-year studio at **Hi-Temp Fabrication**, and because I was providing assistance to my mother who died about two years ago. In the summer of 2015, I began my residency at the Roycroft. Since then I have completed two Cluffalo places paintings, **Hamburg, New York** underwritten by what was then known as the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and at **Art Omi**, underwritten by Art Omi. Thank you. I've completed eighteen *Cluffalo: Seasons* here at the Roycroft, with five of them having been collected, such that they've provided um, support through the past five years. In all the participatory projects more than 800 people from two to ninety-two years old and from around the world have painted with me. It's with some regret that I have not had gallery representation for the past twenty years. However, since January, 2014, I've completed more than 350 paintings, published twenty books,



Hi-Temp Fabrication



Hamburg, New York



Art Omi

presented eleven solo shows, presented thirteen, lectures and eked enough income through sales, Social Security and a Guggenheim fellowship which provided about a quarter of that. Six collectors, my “pillars”, have spent more than ten grand each in the studio. So in light of the numbers, of say Jeff Koons, et al, it's kind of pathetic for me to brag about my economy such as I've achieved, but hey, fuck the art world. I'm still here. Bye.



Cluffalo: Hamburg, 2014, latex on canvas, 72 x 192 inches, collection: Albright-Knox Art Gallery

Thursday, March 26, 2020

Time is 1:10 on Thursday, March 26th, 2020. One of the things I enjoy about the Cluffalo Seasons Project, Public Painting Workshop is how it functioned as a clock—that each season, a painting needed to get made, so, they stacked up, everything stacked up—the participants, the version, the versions of the paintings, the take-aways—and they turned into **book spines**, from Autumn 2015 to Winter 2020. The thing is, I realized, that there came to be punctuations within the series, meaning that the Public Painting



book spines

Workshop, as a clock, as a time-marker, stopped on March 21st, 2020. Reminds me of the *O My Goodness* painting from 2010, *The Terminal Painting* from almost twenty years ago—points of retrospection and making a work as punctuation—I think that's where I'm going right now, now that the clock is broken.

Friday, March 27, 2020

It's about 2:20 Friday March 27th, 2020. The smell of spring—the whiff of death. “O My Goodness”—my only painting from 2010—two prints of it, that I made, that I'll be working over to determine this moment's painting as punctuation. Covers ten years—uh, 2010–2020—these are the words, the notes, the caption—it's a big caption that covers the period—should transcribe these, or at least, read them.

Saturday, March 28, 2020

It's Saturday, March 28th, 2020. We're becoming invisible. *Hunter Hall*—kind of “Our Town” and “The Twilight Zone.”



Hunter Hall



O My Goodness, 2010, acrylic on plywood, 27 x 33 inches



The Terminal Painting

Sunday, March 29, 2020

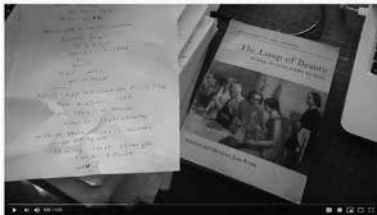
It's Sunday, March 29th, 2020 around noon. Yeah, my “back pages”—about eight terabytes—last night, going through files, changing Quark documents into InDesign, and uh, thinking about sculpture in Rhode Island—categories and years—yep, review, that's what I do—now...

Monday, March 30, 2020

It's Monday, March 30th, 2020. Um, to haunt, to find, a place where others used to be and find some kind of relationship with that past. Pulling together the threads of space and time. March showers.

Tuesday, March 31, 2020

It's Tuesday March 31st, 2020, more quarantine. I let myself get entranced by the building here, and **thinking about Ruskin**, so these are not the stones of Venice, these are the **stones of the Print Shop** at the Roycroft—glacial erratic boulders, brought down, I dunno, from Canada? Mostly granite, a lot of black granite, these stereo pictures—oh, I'll make one of those pdfs and post it at my website, like **the one I did for the Fournier House**.³ The quarantine continues.



thinking about Ruskin

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

April 1st, 2020. Shirley Verrico, from Buffalo Art Studios, requests, “**art from home**”—videos—I've been doing that for the last two weeks. So here's one more.



the stones of the Print Shop



the one I did for the Fournier House



art from home

Thursday, April 2, 2020

Thursday, April 2nd, 2020. This is “O My Goodness” from 2010. Ten years ago. Whaddaya know? “*For Goodness Sake*,” April first, 2020.

Friday, April 3, 2020

It's Friday, April 3rd, 2020. So, Bob Dylan, “she's an artist, she don't look back”? I'm an artist and I look back, at some stuff—but not everything—not in terms of repression, but some shit should just be, like, moved away from, but, looking back here and now, well, pandemic—when I had my epiphany, almost fifty years ago, a key element was that you don't know what's gonna getcha, kinda like that HBO Series, “Six Feet Under,” so, the message was, to get your work done, and that the work would accumulate, that the work would mark time...So, last fall, I was looking at the wrap-up of five years residency in The Print Shop, here, and wanted to put together this package of what I got done—part of it being this ideology of “The Pith of Cluff,” but moving into a book, that documented, you know, catalogue raisonné, of work from the last five years, so then that retrospective moment, aligning with this fifty-year anniversary coming up, of having the vision of being an artist, and then thinking ten years ago I did the *O My Goodness* painting and now I punctuate with my *For Goodness Sake* painting, and, thinking forty years ago—that transition, thirty years ago—that transition, from place, through time, New York City studios, the Rhode Island studio, Hi-Temp Fabrication⁴ and then to the Roycroft. And, um, moving those threads of time and place with the particular streams of work that I was producing, meaning paintings, photos, and words, and videos—is a way for me to be now.

Saturday, April 4, 2020

It's Saturday, April 4th, 2020, and today I'm concerned with turning *the* time into *our* love—hope we're here tomorrow.

Sunday, April 5, 2020

It's Sunday, April 5th, 2020. Happy birthday, niece, Anna Hezel. Happy Palm Sunday, Happy nearly, Passover. Turning *the* time into *our* love—that was yesterday's video and that kinda caps my, oh, sense of the moment, for a while, I've still got issues, like how child's play bifurcates into the military-industrial complex [on the one hand] and into the arts [on the other].⁵ Also, norms and transgressions, you know, both in culture and society,⁶ but don't look for a video tomorrow, I'm not sure when I'm gonna make another one.



For Goodness Sake, 2020, latex on pvc, 27 x 33 inches

Notes

1 Or you can watch me in living color at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyMNCU7P7LY>

2 Richard Milazzo is a critic, curator, publisher, independent scholar and poet. In the 1970s, he was the editor and co-publisher of Out of London Press. He is also the co-founding publisher and editor of Edgewise Press. In the 1980s, under the rubric of Collins & Milazzo, he co-curated art exhibitions and co-wrote works on art and art theory. Collins & Milazzo brought to prominence a new generation of artists in the 1980s. It was their exhibitions and writings that originally fashioned the theoretical context for a new kind of Post-conceptual art that argued simultaneously against Neo-Expressionism and Picture-Theory Art. It was through this context that the work of many of the artists associated with Neo-Conceptualism (or what the critics reductively called Simulationism and Neo Geo) was first brought together.

3 Alexis Fournier (1865-1948) was an American artist, and an important figure in the Arts and Crafts movement. Fournier's connection to the movement deepened in 1903 when he moved to East Aurora, New York, after Elbert Hubbard invited him to be the Roycroft community's permanent art director.

4 Hi-Temp Fabrication LLC was John McKendry's full-service machine shop that offered a wide variety of sophisticated parts made from non-metallic materials for industrial laboratories. McKendry made unused space available in Hi-Temp's downtown Buffalo, NY, location, to artists and arts organizations in the 2000s.

5 I think we can agree that in childhood play can be thought of as what freedom allows. I sense a ratio of fear to wonder as determining how "free play" is enacted. I guess that the fearful imagination leads to paranoia and defensiveness. So the "free" imagination is subject to external conditions. I suppose I'm hoping for some sort of "natural" condition for "goodness" to "flow from"—and I suppose that this is hopelessly naïve.

6 This relates specifically to art history from 1840 through 1990 and generally to "progress" in humanity. Before 1840 visual art could be viewed, simplistically, as the refinement of verisimilitude. After photography emerged, that rationale gave way to a succession of "avant garde" moments, until globalization and related phenomena blew up the hermeticism of the art world. I buy into the myth of human improvement, variously referred to as progress

and humanism. A broad view of history charts relative progress and regress. In the United States in 2020 the sense of regression is overwhelmingly apparent. I claim that my effort is to co-opt the pleasurable quality of art into the service of humanistic progress. I understand, but disagree with, the argument that the arts are luxuries and diversions from the "revolution."



studio in East Aurora

2 Hallwalls

Zoom with John Massier, Visual Arts Curator, April 14, 2020

Massier: We're back with our eighth [Socially Distant Studio visit for Hallwalls](#) and today our special guest is Charlie Clough, who's an American painter and founder of Hallwalls and we're very happy that he could join us from his [studio in East Aurora](#), New York. And Charlie, my first question to you, as to everyone else at this time is how are you, how are you doing, how is the family doing?



[Socially Distant Studio visit for Hallwalls](#)

Clough: Hi John, hi everybody. I'm fine, the family's fine. I feel very lucky that way, and I wear the gloves, wear the mask. There's certainly the desire to go hang out with the relatives, I mean friends and you know, I miss the friends, but the distance with the relatives sucks. But, uh, we could be suffering more.

Massier: Yeah, I mean you have grandkids that you probably haven't seen in a little while now.

Clough: Facetime. Thank goodness for Facetime.

Massier: That's um, as much as we complain about social media and technology we are a little bit fortunate at this moment that we have that means and methodology to stay in touch.

Clough: A miracle of modern technology, just like us right now.

Massier: You know I wanted to hearken back, I always, when I'm giving talks at Hallwalls to different students, which I do a lot, and I have to explain the origin of Hallwalls, I often quote or paraphrase something that you said way back when, when you and Robert Longo were thinking of putting together this organization and among the questions you were asking was how do you become a part of the larger culture and your answer was well, you just make a culture and then you are the culture and then you belong to the culture.¹ And that certainly was a big part of Hallwalls origin as with many other similar places. But that creation of culture and the maintenance of that culture to this day, has relied very heavily on the congregation of people,² of people being in physical spaces together, of chatting with one another. And I wondered if you had thoughts about the effect of our current moment on what you and I and everyone in the arts has relied upon for so long as the heartbeat of our culture?³

Clough: The Burchfield Center show "In the Fullness of Time" gave me this perspective of a hundred and fifty years of painting in western New York and lately I've been reflecting on the past because I'm coming up on fifty years and, thinking about the ethos that Hallwalls was part of and

I'm trying to put my finger on it, like *Whole Earth Catalog* or um, I'm not even sure—I mean sort of, art world rhetoric at that point, Artist's Space, A Space.⁴ You know, did I ever read anything that they said?—Well here's what we're gonna do. I probably did, but I can't put my finger on it right now.⁵ But I'm caught up in this sort of failures of institutions through the last fifty years and how the congregation that you mentioned, formed around Hallwalls and the thing is Hallwalls like [is] carved out of the Ashford Hollow Foundation. Hallwalls couldn't have happened without Ashford Hollow Foundation or Media Studies or the Albright. There are all these kinds of swirling institutional bits that turned into a situation where a congregation would gather. And it blows my mind that there's like a thousand paid members for Hallwalls. Do I understand that correctly?

Massier: Yeah, roughly that yeah.

Clough: That's really wild and you know is there a way for an institution like that to segue into the future, you know in a positive way in relation to all the bullshit that's going on? You know I find myself here at the Roycroft with this tradition of progressivism,⁶ "Head, Heart and Hand," and Hubbard was for suffrage and for equal rights and for empowerment of the workers and you know being at this sort of fifty-year mark I'm like thinking about what I've done and how what I've done has been a critique of say my parents or say the culture of the nineteen-fifties and sixties that I grew up within and how that mixes in with a hundred years ago on the Roycroft campus. I mean it's weird, it's like there's a hauntedness going on and it's like my parent's property abuts the campus here. There's this whole like holy shit am I mourning like for five years like that my

parents died? I mean I'm not you know like they were cool and stuff but I'm not like that attached to them, but on the other hand, thinking what did they represent institutionally, how I got a sense of like church and school and Museum of Science and Scouts and like, there were these institutions that sort of bounced my head into Hallwalls and what are the linkages in there to make that happen? It's like I'm you know, these introspective times you sort of take you into, off on tangents and into cul de sacs and I guess that's where I am.

Massier: Well you know it's funny you use the word institution because sometimes people say, well, Hallwalls is an institution because we've been around for forty-five years and it's true and yet, this comes up at our staff meetings, we often discuss the fact that, yeah we're an institution but, we want to avoid being institutional and there's a difference between those two things. You know there's this desire to remain nimble and open and you know somewhat spontaneous within you know within certain planning parameters that we do anyways. But still somewhat open and spontaneous within that and diverse in our programming and approach. So it's funny that you bring up the word institution cuz, it's something that bounces around in curious ways.

Clough: Well it is, it just plain is. And how it sort of like snuck in like next to the museum on the one hand and academia on the other hand and um, there was those you know Buffalo Society of Artists and Patteran Society⁷ and so on that were kinda out there. Were they institutions, or were they like clubs, or you know? But how Hallwalls can be nimble and um, sensitive to the circumstances and sensitive in a way that is progressive. I mean, what is progressive? It's something and

I think the openness to art, new art. You know it's like how does the belief system work? I think it's really interesting cuz you know, where does fiction, how do you invent your own life kind of a thing like is it, where is that borderline between fact and fiction? And take that to another step institutionally you know like fact or fiction here's what the institution represents. Does that make any sense?⁸

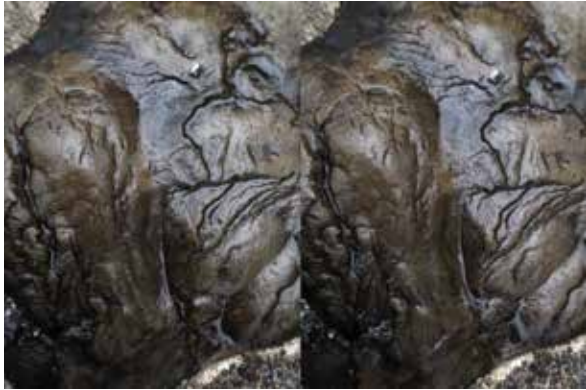
Massier: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. Um, You know you're sitting there in East Aurora at the Roycroft and I know that normally you'd be having people, individuals, families, groups come in to work on the seasonal Clufffalo paintings and I know that's probably something that's not going on right now so what are you spending your time on creatively?

Clough: It's really disappointing that the Public Painting Workshop has stopped. And I thought about it as a clock in the way that it sort of regulates my time you know like I'm on site noon to five daily unless I go to New York for a week every few months or whatever. And so like that's changed and there's some slight pain to that. What I'm doing is like I mentioned a kind of a review of, in the fall I kind of worked to a point of looking back at the five years that I've been in residence at the Roycroft and I started renting a space cuz it was near where I was staying when I was in western New York and it grew and it grew into two spaces, the ongoing painting workshop and then the library up into Elbert Hubbard's old office and paintings into Hunter Hall. It's like this is really incredible! It's like you know you read about residence programs somewhere and you know it's got all these like features and you know sitting here right now it's like I've just gone through this amazing residence program that resulted in two great big

Cluffalo places paintings, eighteen season paintings, over three hundred numbers paintings and eleven solo shows, I've got notes here, the Guggenheim, thirteen lectures and like twenty publications. It's like I got a lot of work done here. And so I'm looking back at those five years and it's like punctuation has happened. You know how will I move forward? And I don't know. You know, this new economy is going to be really interesting. I mean it's tough enough. I was building up to like, a presentation in May where I like brag about my results and then try to make some more money and cuz it's like every once in a while I would make a little bit of money and that would like keep the whole thing going. I mean Guggenheim, that was big money. Thank you Guggenheim. But now like going forward I don't know. I've got this archive here that I'm going through, finding cool Hallwalls early papers dadadada that I'll be handing over at some point when the fog lifts. But, anyway, I'm getting old. I've got to deal with my leftovers and um, again in this review kind of mode sort of squaring up what did I think I was doing fifty years ago, with what do I think I did forty years ago and thirty years ago and twenty years ago and it's like I have these threads of um, the painting thread, the **photography** thread, the words thread and what else? Oh, videos. I've got a lot of videos, most of them I haven't watched. So any point within a fifty-year range you could kind of dig into the index and say what was going on. And now all of it's in front of me here and with this, something's coming to an end. What will be starting up again? It's invigorating, it's frightening, it's um, I feel lucky I've gotten to be this age and depending on how you read the bones, there've been successes, there've been failures and, you know it's a good thing. It's been a lot of fun.



photography



photography

Massier: When you consider different points along that fifty-year thread, do you find more things have changed during that time or do you find more through lines that have remained consistent over time?

Clough: Well, there's what I do—painting, photography, writing, videos. They will change, and in those categories they come at different rates, but then there's the external experience, my experience of the external say, art world which has sometimes changed gradually and sometimes changed abruptly. I think it has just changed very abruptly in the last month. Reading about the trouble the museums are having and just general psychology, nobody's going to be into buying art. It's like from the mid-seventies, when there was very little support of contemporary art until last month, there's been this crazy rise of "Koonsism."⁹ and so on. I think the people that would support that kind of thing have lost interest. And um, the artists or the people who get something besides what billionaires got, we can continue to do that. I mean, thinking about when I came to the Roycroft, I was interested in this idea of a community art workshop and that's what the painting workshop ended up being. And it was a way to integrate the public. You know I could have done more outreach I guess, but I didn't have the budget for that. Anyway, you know there will always be art you know unless extreme concentration camp or refugee situations, you won't see art there but even in less extreme circumstances I think there'll be art and there'll be a reason to do it and you know whether it's crazy professional or simple childish, the work of a child or the work of anybody that has that impulse I think that's gonna go on.

Massier: I read a quote recently from Richard Prince, who said something to the effect that unless you break through and you become known in the mainstream your audience is probably about five hundred people.

Clough: Well that's a lot yeah, and if I have that, I'm lucky. And, you know there are the perks, that simply being an artist, you know, you do stop and smell the roses. There is a lot that can be absorbed experientially that makes that point of view fulfilling and so I *do* recommend it, but the glory is hard to get.

Massier: Well, speaking of the long course of time, as you know, as all of us in the Buffalo art community know, gallerist Nina Freudenheim passed away this past weekend and I believe Hallwalls started in late '74, early '75 and I think within a year, Nina had opened her first gallery. I know you've known her then for four decades or more. Do you have any thoughts, recollections, remembrances that you'd like to share with us about her?

Clough: Nina was great. She was truly a great person in the community. She was an enormous help for me and I have great memories of going to mid-seventies [openings] um, I think she had Les Krims as a first show and I think I went to that opening and it was spectacular. For me in Buffalo, young person, art opening, it was glamorous. I thought it was really cool. And then she paid attention to what I was doing and showed my work. We had a relationship of like thirty years and she got me the subway commission and made some crucial sales when I would have been like evicted if she hadn't. So, I was blessed to sort of have a parallel career to Nina's. My condolences to the family. It's

sort of like there was Bob Buck and Gerry O'Grady,¹⁰ people whose memorials I've been to in the last few years and they really are pillars and Larry Griffis Jr. People who made a real difference in the community, and John and Shelly McKendry come to mind as people who make a huge difference in the community and it's exciting that they did what they did and as examples, who's going to jump in there, I don't know. Leadership you know and creativity into the imagination into how can something work more interestingly you know. I forget how Gene Youngblood worded a memorial to Gerry O'Grady, but the idea of it was, he was a truly righteous dude and as close to a saint as you can in the secular world. And so Nina's in that mold and added a really incredible magic to western New York.

Massier: You know I was thinking about it and I realized, I mean I've only been in Buffalo since she's had a space at the Lenox Hotel, saw a lot of the shows there and it occurred to me that I'm pretty sure I never walked into her gallery and the show wasn't good. Like it was always good, which sounds like a small thing, but over the long course of time, that's not easy to accomplish, that you know, consistency of excellence and it really sort of speaks to how solid her eye was, how she knew art and how she knew how it should look to you when you walked in. So, I was always impressed by that as a curator that there was never a show I thought was like mediocre or anything.

Clough: That happens with effort. I mean she put in the leg work. She went to look at work, went to studios and certainly there was something intuitive, and native as it were, but refined through all of the experience of doing what you have to do to become her. In terms of attention to the art

world and artwork and that's cool. I mean that was something again about Buck or O'Grady, that they really knew the work and how that sort of I don't know trickles down into the cultural magic, but somehow it comes through, trickle, osmosis, whatever. But that kind of spirit of concern for the work and what the work could mean, you know in so many different ways through culture to people.

Massier: Charlie, my last question, which is my last question to everyone, when whatever version of the new normal returns, what is the thing that you're not able to do right now, big or small, that you want to do first?

Clough: See the grandkids.

Massier: That's maybe what I would have anticipated. So, that's a big hole for you?

Clough: It's yeah, well, they're thrilling. It's like magical, um, the icing on the cake.

Massier: Charlie, thank you so much for taking some time in your studio today to talk to us. It's really great to see you as always. Hopefully this will, you know the curve will be flattened or crushed very soon and I can come out to East Aurora and see you in person cuz that's always a delight as well.

Clough: It's nice talking John. It's nice being swept into the **outside of the studio**. So, thanks.

Massier: All right, thanks Charlie.



outside of the studio

Notes

1 A clearer sense of how our effort worked is that we mimicked what I had seen at A Space and Artists Space and we did it in the amazingly lucky circumstances of Buffalo in 1974, involving the Ashford Hollow Foundation, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Media Study at UB and Art park, the *Buffalo Evening News* and *Courier Express*.

2 John's mention of "congregation" struck a chord. Over recent years I have thought about the diminution, if not failure, of institutions that I grew up with. My experience of "church" and religion was important to my development and I'm conflicted about how to transform that sensibility into something I can reckon with today. Here the conflict and ambiguity of fact, truth, or science runs up against faith, hope, magical thinking and dogma-presented-as-fact. It could be hoped that "goodness" underlies all institutions, particularly, government, education and culture. Secular humanism has played into this scenario and would seem particularly germane to the separation of church and state. As education grades into philosophy and the arts, concerns associated with religion blend in. The "congregation" that Hallwalls membership represents, to me, the "native" up-swelling of the collective impulse toward "the good" or the "common-wealth." Joseph Beuys believed that "everyone is an artist," with the ability and agency to transform the world around them. In Buffalo, Buffalo Art Studio, CEPA, The Locust Street Art, and Starlight Studio serve to fulfill this. In Los Angeles, Mark Bradford's Art + Practice, and in Chicago, Theaster Gates's Rebuild Foundation are effective examples. Increasingly museums are reaching out with programs of engagement. I see this as an institutional context for negotiating difference.

3 The direct perception of art is essential to the fullest understanding of it. A work is qualified as "art" through becoming a reference point in society. The "sharing" of art gives form to culture.

4 Artists Space is a non-profit art gallery and arts organization first established at 155 Wooster Street in Soho, New York City. Founded in 1972 by Irving Sandler and Trudie Grace and funded by the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), Artists Space provided an alternative support structure for young, emerging artists, separate from the museum and commercial gallery system. Artists Space has historically been engaged in critical dialogues surrounding institutional critique, racism, the AIDS crisis, and Occupy Wall Street.

A Space Gallery was founded in Toronto in 1971, and since has played a significant role in the evolution of contemporary art in Canada. A Space began as an alternative commercial gallery three years before the center's not-for-profit incorporation in January 1971. Known as an innovative space dedicated to exploring current ideas in art, A Space was a place for alternative music, poetry, dance, video, and performance throughout the 1970s.

It was my experience of A Space's visiting artist program that became the model for Hallwalls programming.

5 The "ethos" I was groping for was contextualized by the do-it-yourself sensibility of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, 1968, and more specifically by that of "Post-minimalism" and Conceptual Art as exemplified by "Anti-Illusion: Procedures / Materials," the 1969 exhibition organized by Marcia Tucker and James Monte, who also wrote essays. Specific influences were works by Carl Andre, Michael Asher, Lynda Benglis, William Bollinger John Duff, Rafael Ferrer, Robert Fiore, Philip Glass, Eva Hesse, Neil Jenny, Barry LeVa, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Steve Reich, Robert Rohm, Robert Ryman, Richard Serra, Joel Shapiro, Michael Snow, Keith Sonnier, and Richard Tuttle. Also, "Six Years: The Dematerialization of Art 1966-72," Lucy Lippard, was one of the pivotal books that, to me, crystalized Hallwalls. "Conceptual art means work in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or 'dematerialized.'"

6 Progressivism is a political philosophy in support of social reform. It is based on the idea of progress in which advancements in science, technology, economic development and social organization are vital to the improvement of the human condition. Roycroft progressivism, circa 1910: "The Roycroft Platform: Work. Health. Happiness. Brotherhood. Good Roads. Co-operation. Votes for Women. Human Service. Manual Training in Public Schools. Universal Peace through Arbitration. Tree-planting and Forest Preservation. Good-cheer and courtesy, even under provocation. The keeping of promises made to those who can't enforce them. The Kindergarten system, and its introduction into higher grades. A Patriotism that will include other countries, with no lack of love for our own. No war of aggression . . . Disarmament through mutual agreement . . . A Square Deal for animals . . . The taxation of church property and other institutions not supported by taxation. Are you with us?"

7 The Patteran Society was a Buffalo art club from founded in 1933 by a rebellious group of artists and sympathizers that influenced the art world in Buffalo for fifty years.

8 "Free self-creation"—as the inner voice executes vision into becoming reality, the action is at the very edge of creation, whether painting, writing, or being.

9 "Koonsism"—Artist Jeff Koons directs the production of paintings and sculpture through extremely expensive methods which have been marketed through the most powerful art dealers and auction houses for prices up to \$91,000,000.

10 Robert T. Buck Jr. (1939–2018), was the art historian and longtime museum director known for his campaign to bring the Brooklyn Museum to the forefront of New York's cultural scene. He became director at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo in 1973. During his decade-long tenure at the institution, he organized major solo exhibitions of work by artists Sonia Delaunay, Sam Francis, Richard Diebenkorn, and Fernand Léger, among others; strengthened the museum's education programs; and oversaw the publication of the collection catalogue *Albright-Knox Art Gallery: Painting and Sculpture from Antiquity to 1942* (1979).

Dr. Gerald O'Grady (1931–2019) led the early 1970s media revolution in Buffalo, which was among the first cities in the nation to create a public access center for film and video equipment and education. He founded the Center for Media Study—now the Department of Media Study—at UB, teaching both the theory and practice of film and video at a time when few universities in the world were doing so. He helped hire the legendary filmmakers Hollis Frampton, Tony Conrad, and Paul Sharits, the documentary filmmaker James Blue, the video artists Steina and Woody Vasulka, and the media artist Peter Weibel, and the department soon became a hotbed of experimentation and innovation in the field.

O'Grady's influence today "remains far-reaching and profound," says Carine Mardorossian, chair of the Department of Media Study. "He advocated for a new way of using image and sound, a way of seeing and understanding media he referred to as 'mediacy,' i.e., the literacy of a new generation whose legacies are as important and inspiring now as they were then." "It is under Gerry's leadership that the vision of a scholarly and social engagement with media study and media art, of a hybrid theory and practice model. . .was realized."



Cluffalo 294, 2019, latex on pvc, 32 x 24 inches, collection: Ann Seymour Pierce.



Intermission: The Pictures Generation

From April 29 to August 2, 2009, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art held an exhibition titled *The Pictures Generation: 1974–84*. The exhibition took its name from *Pictures*, a 1977 group show organized by art historian and critic Douglas Crimp (1944–2019) at Artists Space gallery in New York City, featuring the work of Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo, and Philip Smith.

In his catalogue essay for the 1977 show and a 1979 expansion of the essay published in the journal *October*, Crimp outlined a framework to describe shared themes in the work of the five artists he presented: an interest in representational imagery and references to mass media that the artists explored through "processes of quotation, excerptation, framing, and staging."

The 2009 Met show, curated by Douglas Eklund, expanded from that list of artists to include co-founder Charles Clough and other Hallwalls luminaries Cindy Sherman, Nancy Dwyer, and Michael Zwack, among others.¹ The exhibit and its eponymous catalogue have become a canonical account of that period of art history. The Met's show argued that, from the perspective of three decades later, it is evident that Crimp's observations described a widely shared sensibility among artists of the 1970s and 80s. The exhibition and catalogue sought to tell the story of this Pictures Generation and explore the ways that these artists developed their approach to art-making. In the main catalogue essay, Eklund focused on three communities where artists shared and refined the concepts that unify the Pictures Generation: Artists Space, The California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Los Angeles, and Buffalo's Hallwalls. Of the latter he wrote:

The students and artists who formed the alternative space Hallwalls in Buffalo, New York (partly on the model of Artists Space), had not been groomed for professionalism but were self-starters who created something resembling CalArts from the ground up. As opposed to the image-driven, media-oriented photo-Conceptualism of the CalArts crew, the Hallwalls artists started out with a funkier, materials-based style of shared references to childhood, heroes, and myth—and made their self-consciously marginal status in relation to the downstate New York art world part of their cheerfully fervent group persona. This is not to say that their work was any less serious or ambitious than that of the CalArts artists, who similarly saw themselves as dealing honestly with real life—mediated as it often is by images and illusions—as opposed to the rather self-serious, even pretentious, efforts of their Minimal and Conceptual elders.



Harmol, 1983, enamel on c-print, 4 x 6 inches, collection: Metropolitan Museum of Art

Note

¹ Wikipedia notes: "As time has gone on, other writers have argued that artists not included in the Metropolitan Museum of Art show, such as Eric Fischl and Julian Schnabel, were a part of this group."



Cluffalo 106, 2016, latex on pvc, 60 x 40 inches, collection: Janice and Richard Hezel.

3 The Pith of Cluff

Artist's Talk, November 10, 2019

Dard Hunter Hall, The Print Shop, Roycroft Campus

The pith of Cluff is thus:

I thought about titling this talk: "Why we cry." As infants we seek attention for survival. As we mature, our strategies for achieving attention and recognition become more sophisticated. I think that it's worth articulating my ideology here to give "my public" something tangible to identify with. Attention, recognition, identification, self as public currency, are essential functions within culture—think pop stars, sports figures, and politicians—those with whom we imaginatively interact to make meaning.

My hazy youthful ideals have clarified into something more specific: when I was twenty I had a life-changing vision of "righteous artist-hood," which evolved into: Cluffalo, which is where "the true, the good, and the beautiful" embrace "head, heart, and hands."

I have come to realize the influence of "conductors of spiritual generosity," such as Elbert Hubbard and my parents. I've experienced it through Larry Griffis, Jr., and the Ashford Hollow Foundation; Dr. Gerald O'Grady and his Media Studies/Buffalo; Robert Buck, former director of the Albright-Knox and Brooklyn Museum; Dr. Edna Lindemann, founder of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, and many artists and writers. Not necessarily perfect people but those who helped establish my values.

They are "conductors" rather than leaders, in the sense that their direction has been more oblique and inferential than explicit. Spiritual in the sense of "ultimate concern" and generous insofar as that their influence was non-trans-ational.

To set the stage of my concerns I'll point out the following concepts and writers:

The biological imperatives are the needs of living organisms required to perpetuate their existence. These include: survival, territorialism, competition, reproduction, quality of life-seeking, and group forming. Living organisms that follow and succeed in satisfying these imperatives are adaptive and their species continues.

I believe art is a tiny piece of this—I see it as an adaptation to make life possible and to make space for connection, community and creativity.

Through art, networks of association and identification take form. My youthful experience of the institutions of family, church, school, and culture predisposed me toward idealism. I can't over-emphasize the importance of self-criticality.

In my visionary moment I rejected directives toward a safer, more predictable adulthood. After a year in art school at Pratt Institute, I realized my way forward would be through adhering to a "structure of intentionality," enacted through attending art exhibitions, exchanging studio visits, reading all imaginably related literature and determining the parameters of my art. The literary critic Harold Bloom called this "free self-creation."

Over the course of my development as an artist I have drawn extensively from the fields of sociology, philosophy, aesthetics, psychology, and particularly, psychoanalysis. I want to highlight the writers whose ideas resonated with and shaped my work and thought.

A teacher at Ontario College of Art (1971-72) directed me toward the philosopher John Dewey. His 1934 book, *Art as Experience*, is a reliable introduction to the context of art. My personal "art as experience" starts in toddlerhood and

passes through a sequence of "thresholds of realization."

When I lived alone in the early 1970s at Ashford Hollow Foundation's Ice House, I read: Gordon Allport, Eric Berne, Erik Erikson, Viktor Frankl, Karen Horney, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Jean Piaget, Carl Rogers and other psychologists and psychoanalysts. I found inexpensive paperbacks in used bookstores and devoured these texts on personality. In particular I found Maslow's hierarchy of needs to be a useful context for examining my experience. It is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. Needs lower down in the hierarchy must be satisfied before individuals can attend to needs higher up. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.

In 1973 I read Richard Ornstein's *The Nature of Human Consciousness: A Brief History of the Study of Cognition*, in which thirty or so writers explicate different aspects of consciousness, which I find essential in understanding "truth and goodness."

Howard Gardner's *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983) proposes these "types" of intelligence, including, for example, "musical intelligence," "spatial intelligence," etc. Gardner opened my mind to the variety and richness of the various intelligences and led me to conclude that I would add "pictorial or imagistic intelligence."

My sense of "artist-hood" involves a sense of "total commitment" and having a deliberate course of action. The deepest sense of "the making of meaning" is my objective in this effort. I think of this in terms bounded by freedom on the one hand and the social contract on the other. My

sense of freedom grows out of everything that play implies. My sense of ethical meaning grows out of the golden rule and an understanding of the value of forgiveness.

After getting a grip on cognitive concerns, for me, a sense of personality development has been essential in understanding how we are able to make meaning.

Freud's formulation—of *id* / impulse, *superego* / fear, *ego* / will—is useful. I add a fourth layer—the artist's ego—which is literally “to make history” through the artworks left behind.

My sense of artist-hood is something I personally developed, but it was shaped, by:

Otto Rank's *Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development* (1932), read by me in 1977—chapters begin with: “Creative Urge and Personality Development” and conclude with “Beauty and Truth,” “The Artist's Fight with Art,” “Success and Fame,” and “Deprivation and Renunciation.” This is where “the true, the good, and the beautiful,” snuck up on me—in reading *Art and Artist*. Historically, in 1853, Victor Cousin published his *Lectures on the True, the Good, and the Beautiful*—a compelling statement of these three values as they are derived from Greek philosophy.

Crucial to understanding how art functions is the relation of form and content. *Philosophy in a New Key* (1952) and *Feeling and Form* (1957), by Suzanne Langer, address the art forms: painting, sculpture, music, theater, literature, dance, and architecture, considered as a group of activities done by people with skill and imagination and how the relationship of form and content functions in each of the arts.

Painting is my expressive concern.

I mentioned “ultimate concern” above. I use it to reference the yearning for goodness that is commonly associated with religious faith. I had a sense of this before

I read Paul Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith* (1957), but this book articulates the concept more fully.

The disconnection between market economics and gift economics is the subject of Lewis Hyde's *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (1983), which defends the value of creativity and of its importance in a culture increasingly governed by money and overrun with commodities.

The Artful Mind, Cognitive: Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity (2006), with fourteen contributors and edited by Mark Turner, considers culture of the past fifty-thousand years:

Human cultures can be regarded as massive distributed cognitive networks, involving the linking of many minds, often with large institutional structures that guide the flow of ideas, memories, and knowledge. Artists are traditionally at the forefront of that process and have a large influence on our worldviews and mental models. (p. 4)

Artists may sometimes have the illusion of separateness, of isolation from society. But in reality they have always been society's early warning devices. The best of them are connected, and more deeply enculturated than most. It follows that the sources of their creativity, although partly personal, are also public, outside the nervous system, in the distributed system itself—that is, in culture, which encompasses, but supersedes, the individual nervous system. (p. 14)

Beyond Freud and Rank, other psychoanalytic writers are

important to my ideology, including Melanie Klein, D.W. Winnicott, Heinz Kohut, and Hans Loewald. For example, in *Sublimation* (1988), Loewald quotes Freud:

We know of a far more expedient process of development, called "sublimation," in which the energy of the infantile wishful impulses is not cut off but remains ready for use—the unserviceable aim of the various impulses being replaced by one that is higher, and perhaps no longer sexual. It happens to be precisely the components of the *sexual* instinct that are specially marked by a capacity of this kind for sublimation, for exchanging their sexual aim for another one which is comparatively remote and socially valuable. It is probable that we owe our highest cultural successes to the contributions of energy made in this way to our mental functions.

The above relates to "the true." With regard to "the good" I'll briefly point to Richard Rorty from his *Contingency, irony and solidarity* (1989), who quotes Judith Sklar: "Liberals are people who think that cruelty is the worst thing we can do"; and to John Rawls' *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith* (2009): "As sin is the separation from and the destruction of community and therefore of personality, so faith is the integration into and reconstruction of community. The proper antithesis is between sin and faith. Sin is that closedness which bears the fruits of wicked actions, whereas faith is that openness which flowers into the complete fullness of communal life."

As to "the beautiful," I don't know how to describe it, but I know it when I see it (as Justice Stewart said in his 1964

ruling on obscenity)—I'll simply point to the images of the paintings that have been running onscreen here.¹

I have a sense that in the broad view art can be understood in terms of *mise en scène*—the elements of a theatrical production. Art is a prop within the course of society through time. The character of the artist is demonstrated through his or her oeuvre, ideology and biography. Ultimately, it's the gestalt of the artist—something that is made of many parts and yet is somehow more than or different from the combination of its parts; broadly, of these elements that make meaning. Of course the gestalt for, say Picasso or Warhol forms subjectively in each of us, but a general consensus happens in which the artist's name stands for a flood of meanings.

I seek attention through my work. When one declares "one's dedication to art" two things come to mind: a big lazy cop-out, or a painstaking quest—a delusion, or a nearly impossible journey. It took five years to determine my job description, which is to make "the photographic epic of a painter as a film or a ghost"—*Pepfog*. I have "taken" photos since 1968, I have lived an epic arc as a painter, and "the film" is, theoretically, at least, a flip-book animation of every one of my images—probably an impossibility, but, a fantasy that I nurse and it helps sustain me

My focus as a painter is on the painterly, a highly specialized instance within the larger domain of culture. I understand it as "enigmatic ambiguity blending in compelling color-shape." I like to play with pareidolia: the tendency to perceive a specific, often meaningful image in a random or ambiguous visual pattern. I prefer to point to the works that inspire me rather than to describe them. The categories of symbolization, representation, and etc., interpenetrating into a haze, fascinate me.

While I am able, my deepest desire is to continue to produce art limited only by space and access to materials. Your support of me in every way including the patronage of my work enables me to keep that expression in paint flowing. I have had studios in New York, Rhode Island, and Buffalo. Now our paths cross here at the Roycroft, East Aurora, NY. What sense do I make of that? Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters were explicitly progressive. A glance at the “Roycroft Platform” reveals their focus on “Health, Happiness, Brotherhood, Cooperation, Votes for Women and Universal Peace.” Somewhere at the bottom of their cultural, entrepreneurial, and creative enterprises were core values in some conflict with prevailing societal norms while consistent with my investment in the future.

As the Roycroft Campus has been preserved and come back to life, much has been made of the motto “head, heart, and hands.” Someone has said; “He who works with his hands is a laborer. He who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman. He who works with his hands and his head and his heart is an artist.” Elbert Hubbard adopted this with an egalitarian spin. This motto has been meaningful for numerous people who have worked over the last decades to give this place (the Roycroft) new life and to keep the program rooted in the creative. My spin on this is to cast “head, heart, and hands” in terms of “gesture as meaning,” in some ways parallel to dance and other non-verbal, kinesthetic expression.

My public painting workshop, here at the Roycroft, is a “progressive” approach to the authorship of art in the spirit of “you can do it too.” In the spirit of the most famous quote by the German artist Joseph Beuys: “Everyone is an artist.”

For Beuys “artist” was the word to describe the essence of what it means to be a human being: The deep need and fundamental ability to create and be creative.

The real “pith” here, is in locating ultimate concern in the execution of the painterly. I understand this as a moment of “numinous eudaimonia”—numinous as derived from the Latin *numen*, meaning a “deity or spirit presiding over a thing or space.” It describes the power or presence or realization of a divinity. And *eudaimonia* from the Greek meaning achieving the best conditions possible for a human being, in every sense—not only happiness, but also virtue, morality, and a meaningful life. It was the ultimate goal of philosophy: to become better people—to fulfill our unique potential as human beings. It is, however, not a panacea, just a tiny touch of wonder.

The artist makes a name that has a multitude of meanings—if the meanings are simultaneously true, good, and beautiful, the artist has provided value for the community and earned recognition. The risk will always be in failing to reach the critical mass of awareness in the minds of the public, which makes that possible.

Note

¹ Because I find it effective simply to point to what I consider beautiful, for the public presentation of "The Pith of Cluff" I showed a sequence of paintings both by me and by others. In the same vein, I have made a list of my top 500 "favorite" artists which I won't trouble you with here. I will point to Titian, Rubens, Turner, Matisse, de Kooning, and Richter to indicate where my love lies. For me, within the triad of "the true, the good, and the beautiful" I sense a "structural" linkage between the true and the good, while the beautiful seems untethered. So, specifically, for my usage, I stipulate that while the beautiful implies "attractiveness" that it (the subject) is beautiful to the extent that it is also true and good.



Epilogue

I'll try to walk away, one more time: Heinz Kohut, in *The Chicago Institute Lectures* (1996), introduces "self-expression-seeking man":

I can say only very crudely definable things about this nuclear self and the curve of its unrolling. I am convinced, however, that side by side with the investigating man as a pleasure-seeking animal, I call him Guilty Man, I think there is another aspect of man that is not pleasure seeking but self-expression-seeking man, and I call this aspect of man Tragic Man. I name both in a negative way, taking into account the undeniable fact that man's failures overshadow his successes. We are generally not able to pursue the pleasures of our senses without disturbing conflicts—Guilty Man; and we are generally not able to live out the central program in ourselves without failing or going to pieces in the process—Tragic Man. (pp. 192–193)

Richard Rorty, in *Contingency, irony, and solidarity* (1989), introduces the notion of a person's "final vocabulary":

All human beings carry about a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs, and their lives. These are the words in which we formulate praise of our friends and contempt for our enemies, our long-term projects, our deepest self-doubts and our highest hopes . . . A small part of a final vocabulary is made up of thin, flexible, and ubiquitous terms such as "true," "good," "right," and "beau-

tiful." The larger part contains thicker, more rigid, and more parochial terms, for example, "Christ," "England," . . . "professional standards," . . . "progressive," "rigorous," "creative." The more parochial terms do most of the work. (p. 73)

I was an American Niagara Frontiersman—late 20th, early 21st century, pioneering artist (alternative spaces movement) shuffling painting, photography, video, words, etc.—engendering imaginary combinations of so many things, thoughts, etc.—what did I embrace, revise, etc.?—the critical, literally, thing, in my effort has been the marking through my journey of evaluations.

Consider the nature of "endings," conclusions, completions—prep & memorials (to those I've known and how I've learned to do it), transitions through family, cohort, colleagues, fellow citizens, world neighbors (place & time), traditions, concerns, patterns of behavior, echoed, mirrored, reflected, represented, illustrated, symbolized, skin of (my) time, stretched over a life, skinned off of experience, when "ghosts" are realized in the "spirits" of those who have inspired to leave a marker of the memory.

Fearing for the grandkids, feeling for painterly progeny (parts of my public) mourning as a "values" revue, memorial as roll-call of the important stuff. Making time into art.

Identity, death, and memorial: "You die twice. You die once, when you do die, but the second time you die is when your name isn't spoken anymore." Reaching beyond the memories of friends and relatives, lives are generally remembered for being, more or less, good or bad. In either case, examples are set. For me, beginning with Jesus and Mickey Mouse, I have "consumed" personas—characters, in a comparative manner to direct or inspire my personal devel-

opment. In the text, above, there are many names—some are my relatives and most are "artists and intellectuals" who have shaped me—given me ideas. The living of anyone's life is more or less deliberate. I point to my "structure of intentionality" as something that has projected prescriptively into the future, while my oeuvre—"remains to be seen," stands as a history, an example of "the best I could do"—that which I leave. This exists for, both, my biological progeny and my "like minded souls," such as the future holds . . .

Could "creating" "beauty" as a symbol of hope, overcome its corruptibility (through commodification)?—and actually be of the "highest order"?

John Massier emailed me in mid-October and asked for a video to promote Hallwalls's upcoming fundraiser auction. He posted it on YouTube.

It picks up from my conclusion of the late March, early April YouTube monologues on April 5th:

"Hallwalls was born out of the social activism of the late 1960s and specifically the sensibility characterized by Lucy Lippard's book, *The Dematerialization of Art*.

Hallwalls became a congregation of those with ideals and hopes that reflected the best our elders had delivered to us.

Black Lives Matter! In two weeks vote the fascists out!

While the political value of politics is social justice the political value of art is beauty as a symbol of love!"

