

THE WRITER'S *Brush*

Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture by Writers

Donald Friedman

With essays by William H. Gass and John Updike

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INTRODUCTION

“There is no such thing as ‘Art.’ There are only artists,” is the first thing E. H. Gombrich tells us in *The Story of Art*. In the case of the two hundred 19th- and 20th-century artists whose approximately four hundred works are reproduced here, they are also, astonishingly, all writers, many of them among the greatest names in western literature. Blake, Pushkin, Hugo, Poe, Dostoyevsky, Proust, and Kafka are just a few of the pantheon. They are Classicists, Romantics, Pre-Raphaelites, Symbolists, Modernists, Dadaists, Surrealists, and Beats. Every Nobel laureate in literature who expressed himself in art is represented—from Yeats, Tagore, Kipling, Faulkner, Churchill, Shaw, Buck, and Elytis, to Hesse, Grass, Walcott, Fo, and Gao.

Weldon Kees—a writer, artist, musician, and filmmaker—would probably not have been surprised: “No doubt the majority of painters and writers could turn to either medium if they liked. Most of them, I think, are forced by society to do one thing and, consequently, in some cases, they become narrower and narrower. They get over-specialised. They’re in a trap and they can’t get out.”

Of course, not all are equally gifted. Those with smaller talents in the visual arts do not seem to value their painterly efforts any less than do the twice-blessed, museum-collected minority (such as Arp, Barlach, Blake, Fromentin, Jones, Kokoschka, Lewis, Rossetti, and Strindberg) for whom each morning was apparently a coin toss to determine whether the day would be spent standing in a smock or seated with a pen. What these writers all seem to prize is the pleasure derived from arranging colors on paper and canvas; it is what distinguished the experience from writing and made it worth their while.

Strindberg equated the sensations he felt as he did his first painting to a hashish high. Hesse described the “entirely new joy” he discovered at forty: “Painting is marvelous; it makes you happier and more patient. Afterwards you do not have black fingers as with writing, but blue and red ones.” The normally cynical Twain acknowledged the transformative effect creating art had on him: “I am living a new and exalted life of late,” he wrote. “It steeps me in a sacred rapture to see a portrait develop and take

soul under my hand.” “All my life,” said D. H. Lawrence, “I have from time to time gone back to paint because it gave me a form of delight that words can never give. Perhaps the joy in words goes deeper and it is for that reason more unconscious. The conscious delight is certainly stronger in paint.”

Although Kees emphasized the creative nature of writers when he posited their desire and inherent capacity to paint, there is also a natural urge in most people to do something different than what one does routinely. “It’s just perfectly ordinary for writers to do this,” says Kurt Vonnegut, alluding to his painting and prints. “I mean ... I might have been a writer and a golfer, too! Imagine being two things at once!”

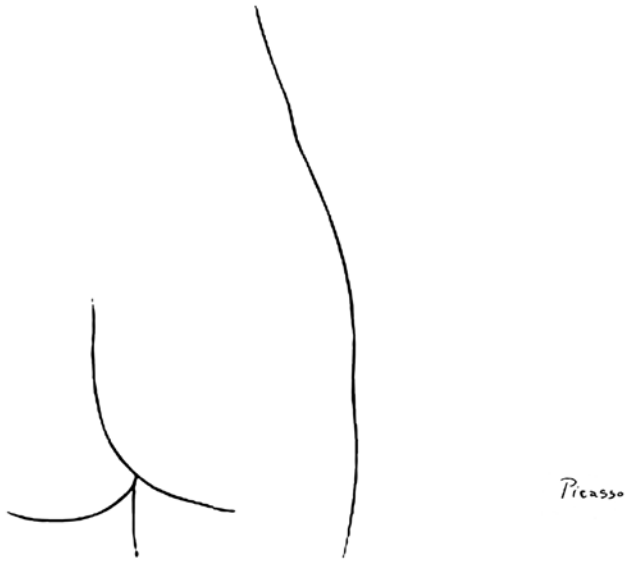
Indeed, some writers insisted there was no essential difference between using words and pictures. “For half a century, I wrote in black on white,” said Colette, “and now for nearly ten years, I have been writing in colour on canvas.” Drawing, Jean Cocteau used to say, was just a “different way of typing up the lines.”

But text and image do not function the same way. Words, as anyone knows who has tried to describe the face that makes his heart bang in his chest, or a landscape that inspires hosannas, are imprecise and abstract. Images are specific and concrete.

A few years back, bluenose Florida legislators exhausted 328 words attempting to define the area of the buttocks they considered indecent to expose. The first clunking bit read:

The area at the rear of the human body (sometimes referred to as the *glutaeus maximus*) which lies between two imaginary lines running parallel to the ground when a person is standing, the first or top of such line being one-half inch below the top of the vertical cleavage of the nates (i.e., the prominence formed by the muscles running from the back of the hip to the back of the leg) and the second or bottom line being one-half inch above the lowest point of the curvature of the fleshy protuberance....

Who wouldn’t prefer Picasso’s elegant capture of the forbidden zone with a few sure lines in *Femme*.



Even if we concede the legislators' language an accuracy to meet constitutional standards of fair notice when the police appear (with rulers and T-squares drawn), we still have no mental picture of a real-world butt. Are we being protected from the sight of a gym-hardened, sun-tanned glut, a steatopygous traffic-stopper, or a dimpled white jiggle of flesh needing a surgical lift?

Which leads to the semiotic—the words, images, sounds, and movements that carry meaning to be interpreted by another—in this case, the way the less specific but more colorful descriptives used above do their work. (They begin by representing one person's perception or memory, then presumably summon images in the reader's mind that stand for other images or ideas in her memory that, in turn, stand for others once perceived, until something suggestive of "a real-world" buttock, or the idea of a real-world buttock, arises.) Or, the way a couple of graphite lines on paper or acid-etched in metal do something similar.

A single Greek word, *graphos*, meant something written as well as drawn or painted. Although no landscape or portrait rendered in words can have the specificity of one captured in oil, scratched in copper, or carved in marble, and while ink, metal, canvas, and stone do not permit a character or place to evolve over time or allow more than a suggestion of dialogue or interiority, there is a connectedness

between the written and plastic forms. Obviously, both use implements on a surface to communicate an idea, an emotion, or an image. Fernando del Paso says the earliest drawings he can remember making were the alphabet. And letters were drawings first—and to some extent, innumerable generations after the hieroglyphs and ideograms of the ancients, they remain so. Henri Michaux turned the alphabet into hallucinogenic figures. There are artists employing word shapes in their paintings and sculptures everywhere.

Cave pictures were there to say something about the scenes or events our preliterate ancestors chose to memorialize. But not only was painting essential to communication before letters were invented, even when words supplanted images as the primary means of unspoken informational exchange, language remained essential to art. We see this in the "long line of poet-painters," who were, William Carlos Williams wrote, "all of them artists for whom the text portrays, the picture speaks."

Drawing, painting, and sculpture partake of the physical world and are sensory, while writing is conceptual. However, the distinction blurs when one considers that there is pleasure in rhyme, rhythm, and meter that is musical, somatic, and sensual enough to provoke physical response. How pleasantly does writer-artist-jazz musician William Sansom's "So though with others smokes and girls might sound a stronger vice" splash around the palate. The deaf carve poetry out of space, with their hands. The blind absorb stories through their fingers. The Greeks grouped poetry with the healing arts of medicine under the aegis of Apollo.

Yet, if poets and painters are part of the same family in their common use of images and language, their union has been viewed by some as unhealthily incestuous. When the boundaries soften, the purity of each form is threatened. "I developed these principles to the rejection of all detailed description," wrote William Butler Yeats, "that I might not steal the painter's business, and indeed I was always discovering some art or science that I might be rid of and I found encouragement by noticing all round me painters who were ridding their pictures, and indeed their minds, of literature." Wyndham Lewis declared that keeping the literary out of his consciousness was the way to achieve purity in painting. Conversely, he would have "recommended the construction of as abstract an alphabet as possible."

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Sixteen-year-old Winston Churchill turned to art after his father criticized his participation in choir. “Papa said he thought singing was a waste of time, so I left the singing class and commenced drawing,” the boy wrote to his mother.

It was not until he was 40 that Churchill attempted the oils with which he would acquire great proficiency. He described his first try at painting the scene at the front of his house. His “empty brush,” he wrote, “hung poised, heavy with destiny, irresolute in the air. My hand seemed arrested by a silent veto.” Hazel Lavery, a neighbor and painter, drove up at that propitious moment and saw Churchill hesitating at his easel. Churchill recalled how Lavery demanded he give her a large brush and then:

Splash into the turpentine, wallop into the blue and white, frantic flourish on the palette—clean no longer—then several large, fierce strokes and slashes of blue on the absolutely covering canvas.... The canvas grinned in helplessness before me. The spell was broken. The sickly inhibitions rolled away. I seized the largest brush and fell upon my victim with berserk fury. I have never felt in awe of a canvas since.

In an article encouraging others who sought to take up painting late in life, he counseled that they forget training, as there was “no time for the deliberate approach.” Instead, he advised: “We must not be too ambitious. We cannot aspire to masterpieces. We may content ourselves with a joy ride in a paint-box. And for this Audacity is the only ticket.”

Yet Churchill never stopped taking instruction from the many fine artists he knew, including Walter Sickert, John Lavery, William Nicholson, and Paul Maze. And, except for five years during World War II, he never stopped painting. During World War I, to the amazement of those around him, Churchill set up his easel at a shelled farm that was his front-line headquarters and painted the shelling of the village, the pockmarked landscape. “I think it will be a great pleasure & resource to me if I come

through all right,” he told his wife. And so it was; Churchill painted and sketched wherever he went, whether he was vacationing or dealing with affairs of state. In 1920, when heading to Iraq where he would assume his duties as Secretary of State for the Colonies, he stopped in Paris for an exhibition of the artist “Charles Morin.” It was, in fact, the first show of work by Churchill himself, displayed pseudonymously in the hope of receiving an unbiased look from critics. And when, almost thirty years later, two of his paintings were accepted by the Royal Academy, they had been submitted as the work of a “Mr. Winter.”

A legendary statesman and warrior, Churchill began his career as a journalist and novelist, achieving literary fame as a biographer and historian. Churchill published essays and articles on painting, along with drawings, and a book, *Painting as a Pastime* (1948). In 1953 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Born in 1874 in Woodstock, Oxfordshire, Churchill died in London in 1965.



Right: Winston Churchill. Study of boats, South of France.

Mid-1930s. Oil on canvas. 20 x 24 inches. Collection: The National Trust, Chartwell. Copyright © Churchill Heritage.

Opposite: Winston Churchill. The goldfish pool at Chartwell.

Coombs 344. 1930s. Oil on canvas. 25 x 30 inches. Collection: The Lady Soames, DBE. Copyright © Churchill Heritage.



E. E. CUMMINGS



E. Cummings's father, a Harvard professor and an ordained minister of the Congregational Church, was also an amateur artist and his son's first art teacher. From early youth, Cummings was immersed in his art. **John dos Passos** described his friend's art habits and the importance of the visual in their lives:

Cummings never tired of drawing sea lions. As he walked he would be noting down groups of words or little scribbly sketches on bits of paper. Both of us lived as much for the sights we saw as for the sound of words.

Cummings sketched the scenes around him—dancers and circus animals, landscapes, friends or strangers on the street. He studied art in Paris, spent time with Picasso, but was influenced by **Cocteau** and wrote about his drawings. In the early 1920s, Cummings's work reflected the Vorticism movement. His first major show of paintings was in 1931 at the Painters and Sculptors Gallery, New York. That same year he published a collection of 99 of his drawings and paintings, titled CIOPW—an acronym for C(harcoal), I(nk), O(il), P(encil), and W(atercolors). Cummings never worried about reconciling the painter and the poet within himself. In a mock self-interview he asked, "Why do you paint?" and answered:

For exactly the same reason I breathe. / That's not an answer.
/ There isn't any answer. / How long hasn't there been any
answer? / As long as I can remember. / I mean poetry. / So do I.
/ Tell me, doesn't your painting interfere with your writing? /
Quite the contrary: they love each other dearly. / They're very
different. / Very: one is painting and one is writing. / But your
poems are rather hard to understand, / whereas your paintings
are so easy. / Easy? / Of course—you paint flowers and girls and
sunsets; things that everybody understands. / I never met him. /
Who? / Everybody.

In a more serious tone he wrote:

Let us not forget that every authentic "work of art" is in and of itself alive and that, however, "the arts" may differ among themselves, their common function is the expression of that supreme alive-ness which is known as "beauty."

Edward Estlin Cummings was born in 1894 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He attended Harvard, where his majors were English and classics and where he and his friends founded the Harvard Poetry Society. Cummings was a novelist, playwright, essayist, and artist. But, first and foremost, he was the poet who dropped punctuation but kept the sonnet; who railed bitterly and sarcastically against the impersonal, institutional, and governmental but was exuberant about sex and lyrical about love and living an engaged life.

In 1917 Cummings went to France to serve in the ambulance corps. After a few months he and a friend were arrested for supposed pro-German sympathies and held in an internment camp. His notes while imprisoned became the basis of his novel *The Enormous Room* (1922).

Cummings published *Tulips and Chimneys*, his first collection of poems, in 1923, *Collected Poems* in 1938, and *Poems 1923–1954* in 1954. Before his death in Silver Lake, New Hampshire, in 1962, Cummings garnered, among other literary honors, the Shelley Memorial Award (1945), the Academy of American Poets Fellowship (1950), the National Book Award for *Poems 1923–1954*, and the Bollingen Prize in 1958.



Above: E. E. Cummings.
Strip Joint.

Oil on canvas. 10 x 8-3/8 inches. Courtesy of Gotham Book Mart, Inc., New York City. Copyright © by the trustees of the E. E. Cummings Trust. Photo by Jason Brownrigg.



Left: E. E. Cummings.
Bois de Bologne.

C. 1920s. Pencil. 10 x 8-3/8 inches. Private collection, New York City. Copyright © by the trustees of the E. E. Cummings Trust. Photo by Jason Brownrigg.



E. E. Cummings. Portrait of Marian Moorehouse Cummings.

1940. Oil on wood. 10 x 14 inches. Private collection, Pennsylvania. Copyright © by the trustees of the E. E. Cummings Trust. Photo by Don Simon.

VICTOR HUGO

French literary giant Victor Hugo left behind paintings and some 3000 drawings. He not only drew and painted with traditional materials but, a century before it was fashionable, incorporated random stains and ink blots—as well as such found materials as coffee, soot, and greasepaint—into his works, using rags, wood sticks, and stones to create effects. George Hugo described how his grandfather drew on any scrap of paper at hand:

He scattered the ink haphazardly, crushing the goose quill which grated and spattered trails of ink. Then he sort of kneaded the black blot which became a castle, a forest, a deep lake or a stormy sky; he delicately wet the barb of his pen with his lips and with it burst a cloud from which rain fell down onto the wet paper; or he used it to indicate precisely the mists blurring the horizon.

Hugo illustrated his letters—a beautiful example of the many in which his text frames a drawing of monuments or architecture is found in de Ayala and Guéno's *Illustrated Letters* (1999). As the authors observe, Hugo “left at his death dozens of albums and notebooks containing more than 1,300 drawings that were inseparable from the accompanying text.” Although Hugo’s art was created for himself or his family and friends—to caricature, to record places visited, and occasionally as a note for a work in progress—it was inevitably published. Hugo, in a preface, asked his readers to pity him for “being an artist in spite of himself.” He was similarly self-deprecating in an 1860 letter to **Baudelaire**:

I’m very happy and very proud that you should choose to think kindly of what I call my pen-and-ink drawings. I’ve ended up mixing in pencil, charcoal, sepia, coal dust, soot and all sorts of bizarre concoctions which manage to convey more or less what I have in view, and above all in mind. It keeps me amused between two verses.

Victor Hugo, said **Jean Cocteau**, “was a madman who thought he was Victor Hugo.” The hugely egotistical, self-aggrandizing,

politically inconsistent, sexually insatiable, larger-than-life Hugo authored plays—one of which became the opera *Rigoletto*—dozens of books of poetry, and monumental novels, including *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831; published in English as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*) and *Les Misérables* (1862).

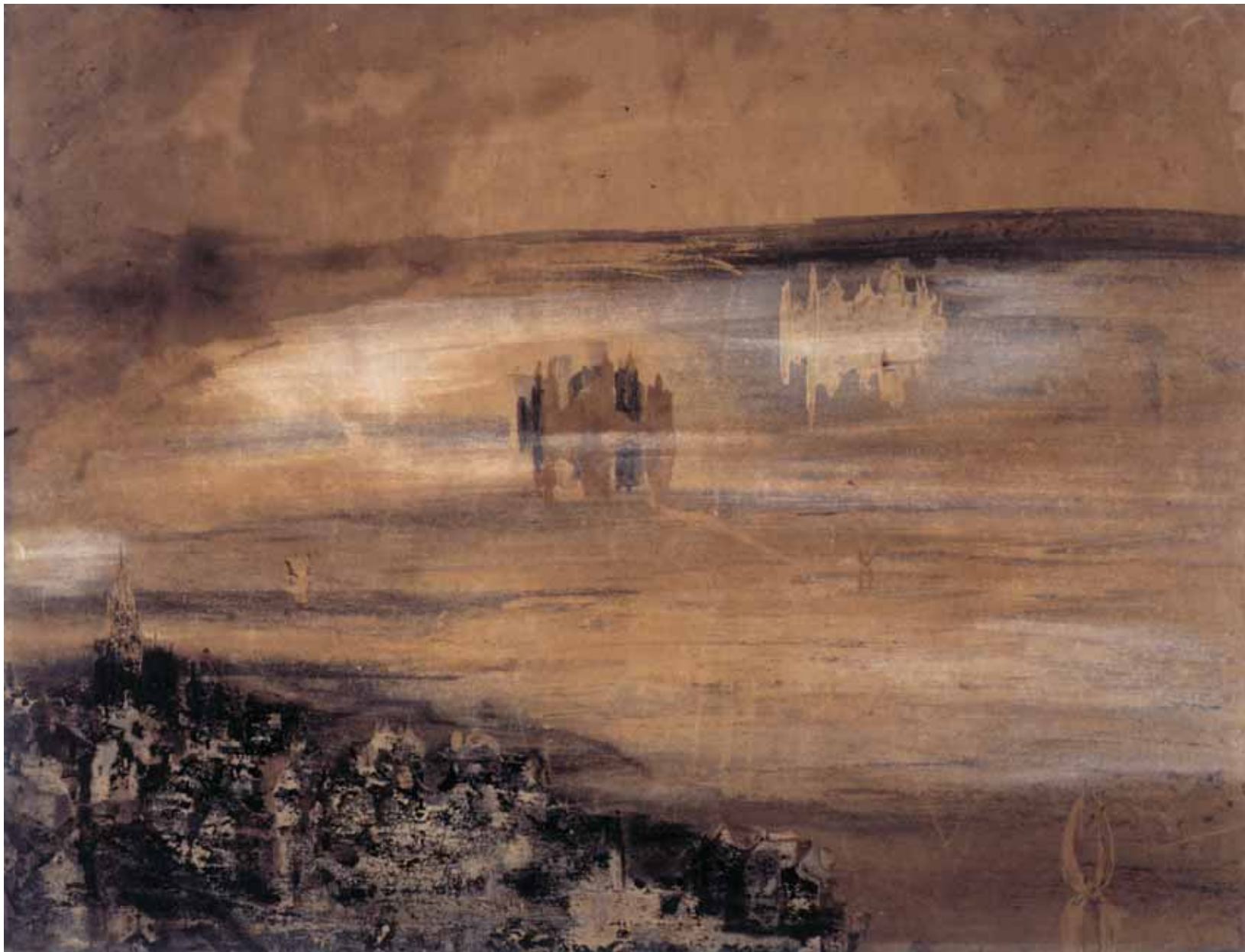
Hugo was born in Besançon, France, in 1802. His parents were estranged in his childhood. His mother took up with one of Napoleon’s enemies while his father was one of Napoleon’s generals. Hugo changed political sides throughout his life: first a royalist, then a republican; supported the revolution, then sided with the government against the rebels. After Napoleon’s nephew staged a coup, Hugo went into an almost twenty-year exile, during which he achieved great popularity by attacking the dictatorship. When it fell he returned and was elected to the National Assembly and the Senate. On his seventy-ninth birthday, a half-million people marched in his honor, and Avenue Victor Hugo was christened. Hugo died in Paris,

in 1885, arguably the best-known man in the world. More than a million people gathered for his funeral.



Victor Hugo. *Souvenir d'une vieille maison de Blois* (Memory of an old house in Blois).

1864. Given to Philippe Burty, Paris Maison de Victor Hugo (0128).



Victor Hugo. *Ville au bord d'un lac* (Town beside a lake).

C. 1850 Pen and brown ink wash over graphite, watercolor, gouache, and stencil foldings on vellum paper with the watermark J. Whatman partially scraped. 19-1/16 x 24-1/16 inches. Paris, Maison de Victor Hugo (0035).

ALDOUS HUXLEY

Of Aldous Huxley's many marvelous gifts, the most surprising was the gift of sight," wrote Sir Kenneth Clark about the nearly blind Huxley. What Huxley wrote about painting, said Clark, "proves him to have been one of the most discerning lookers of our time":

Nothing could show more clearly the difference between two divisions of sight—if I may be excused such amateur physiology—the efficient functioning of the physical organ in carrying messages to the brain, and the reception of those messages by a prepared intelligence.

At 16 Huxley suffered "a violent attack of Keratitis punctato, which left me (after 18 months of near-blindness, during which I had to depend on Braille for my reading and a guide for my walking) with one eye just capable of light perception." Despite his visual handicap, Huxley painted throughout his life and maintained a studio where friends and family would pose for him. Indeed, perhaps because of his injured sight, color and sight became central to his life and writing. Biographer Sally Paulsell wrote that in his life and art Huxley developed "a consciousness-expanding search for ultimate reality revealed to him through the mystical qualities of color and light."

Huxley, also an accomplished pianist, wrote of the three mediums in which he worked:

Music can say four or five different things at the same time, and can say them in such a way that the different things will combine into one thing. The nearest approach to a demonstration of the doctrine of the Trinity is a fugue or a good piece of counterpoint.

Painting too can exhibit the simultaneity of incompatibilities—serene composition along with agonized brushwork and the most passionate violence of color, as in so many of Van Gogh's landscapes; neurotically restless drapery, as in one of Cosimo Tura's saints or Virgins, combined with an image of beatitude or love; the final inwardness of mystical feeling expressed in the nonhuman otherness and outwardness of a Sung landscape.

We can see more than one thing at a time, and we can hear more than one thing at a time. But unfortunately, we cannot read more than one thing at a time. In any good metaphor, it is true, there is a blending, almost at a point and almost in one instant, of differences harmonized into a single expressive whole. But metaphors cannot be drawn out, and there is no equivalent in literature of sustained counterpoint or the spatial unity of diverse elements brought together so that they can be perceived at one glance as a significant whole.

Huxley was a novelist, essayist, and short-story writer whose most famous novel, the protean *Brave New World* (1932), foretold a Utopia in which happiness is submission to authority. He was born in 1894 in Godalming, Surrey, England, and died in Los Angeles in 1963. Among his other major works are *Crome Yellow* (1921), *Point Counter Point* (1928), *Ape and Essence* (1948), *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944), and *The Doors of Perception* (1954).



Opposite: Aldous Huxley. Maria Nys Huxley at Siesta.

Courtesy of the estate of Aldous Huxley.

Right: Aldous Huxley. The Living Room at Sonary.

Oil on canvas. 27 x 21 inches. Courtesy of the estate of Aldous Huxley.



AUGUST STRINDBERG



laywright August Strindberg was also a novelist, actor, guitarist, and photographer, but it was to art that he turned for his deepest pleasure. He described the experience at 23 of doing his first oil painting, of seeing the transformation of paint into sky, grass, and foliage as the equivalent of a hashish high. It would be almost 20 years, however, before he painted again, in 1892. In the interim, Strindberg's visual expressions were mainly photographic and highly experimental. Believing that lenses distorted reality, he took pictures of heavenly bodies with a lensless camera, and sometimes with no camera at all—exposing the photographic plate directly to starlight. In later years he experimented with creating images using crystallized solutions on glass: he would heat or cool the solutions and capture the effects on photographic paper, directly from the plates.

In 1894, lacking funds and hoping to earn a living as an artist, Strindberg moved to Paris, where he was set up in a studio by an art dealer and began to prepare for a show that never materialized because of a falling out with his patron. That same year he wrote an essay on “The Role of Chance in Artistic Creation.” After describing the unique harmonies created by wind blown through holes drilled in bamboo stalks, the weavers who use kaleidoscopes to discover new patterns, and the practice of painters who sketch with leftover paint scraped off the palette, he declared this to be “natural art, where the artist works in the same capricious way as nature, without a goal.”

Once freed from the problem of composing the colours, the soul of the artist is inclined to concentrate all its energy on the outline. Since his hand keeps moving the palette knife at random, never losing sight of the model provided by nature, the whole reveals itself as a wonderful mixture of the conscious and unconscious.

Strindberg's maxim was “Imitate nature in an approximate way, imitate in particular nature's way of creating!” He described how that was translated into technique:

I select a medium sized canvas or preferably a board, so that I am able to complete the picture in two or three hours, while my inspiration lasts. I am possessed by a vague desire. I imagine a shaded forest interior from which you see the sea at sunset. So: with the palette knife that I use for this purpose—I do not own any brushes!—I distribute the paints across the panel, mixing them there so as to achieve a rough sketch. The opening in the middle of the canvas represents the horizon of the sea; now the forest interior unfolds, the branches, the tree crowns in groups of colours, fourteen, fifteen, helter-skelter—but always in harmony. The canvas is covered. I step back and take a look!

The greatest writer of modern Sweden was born Johan August Strindberg in Stockholm in 1849. He suffered throughout his life from manic depression with paranoid features. Unhappily married three times, he turned to painting particularly at times of crisis, such as the breakup of a marriage. Strindberg's plays, as well as his art, focused on inner reality and put him in the forefront of Expressionism. His novel *The Red Room* (1879) was an early landmark of the Naturalist movement. He died in Stockholm in 1912.



August Strindberg. *The Vita Mäarn Seamark II*.

1892. Oil on cardboard. 60 x 47 cm. The National Museum of Fine Arts, Stockholm. Photo by Åsa Lundén.



August Strindberg. *Underlander (Wonderland)*.

1894. Oil on cardboard. 72.5 x 52 cm. The National Museum of Fine Arts, Stockholm. Photo by Erik Cornelius.

The itch to make dark marks on white paper is shared by writers and artists. Before the advent of the typewriter and now the word processor, pen and ink were what one drew pictures and word pictures with; James Joyce, who let others do his typing, said he liked to feel the words flow through his wrist.

There is a graphic beauty to old manuscripts, and to the signatures whose flourishes and curlicues were meant to discourage forgery. The manuscripts of Ouida, dashed off with, it seems, an ostrich quill, and the strenuously hatched and interlineated manuscripts of Pope and Boswell are as much pictorial events as a diploma by Steinberg. An old-fashioned gentleman's skills often included the ability to limn a likeness or a landscape, much as middle-class men now can all operate a camera; such writers as Pushkin and Goethe startle us with the competence of their sketches.

Thackeray, of course, was a professional illustrator, as were Beerbohm and Evelyn Waugh. Edward Lear was a serious painter and a frivolous writer, and he might be surprised to know that the writing has won him posterity's ticket. On the other hand, Wyndham Lewis now seems to be valued more for his edgy portraits of his fellow modernists than for his once much admired prose. Thurber was thought of as a writer who, comically and touchingly, could not draw but did anyway, whereas Ludwig Bemelmans is remembered, if he is remembered at all, as an artist who could write, mostly about hotels; in truth, both men were bold minimalists in an era when cartoons were executed in sometimes suffocating detail. A number of writers began as cartoonists: of S. J. Perelman we might have suspected this, and even of Gabriel Garcia Marquez; but Flannery O'Connor? Yes, when we think of her vivid outrageousness, her primary colors, the sharpness of her every stroke. In "The Fiction Writer and His Country" she decreed, "To the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures."

Alphabets begin in pictographs, and, though words are spoken things, to write and read we must see. The line between

picture and symbol is a fine one. In the days of mass illiteracy, imagery—hung on cathedral walls, scattered in woodcuts—was the chief non-oral narrative means. Most paintings "tell a story," and even departures from representation carry a literary residue; e.g., the labels and bits of newspaper worked into Cubist collages, and the effect of a monumental calligraphy in the canvases of Pollock and Kline. The art of the comic strip exists as if to show how small the bridge need be between the two forms of showing, of telling. Music, perhaps the most ancient of the fine arts, is simultaneously more visceral and abstract, and though some musicians become writers (John Barth, Anthony Burgess) the leap is rarer. Music is a world of its own; writing and drawing are relatively parasitic upon the world that is in place.

As those who have both drawn and written know, the problems of definition differ radically. A table or a person becomes in graphic representation a maze of angles, of half-hidden bulges, of second and third and fourth looks adding up to an illusion of thereness. When color is added to line, the decisions and discriminations freighted into each square inch approach the infinite; one's eyes begin to hurt, to water, and the colors on the palette converge toward gray mud. Whereas the writer only has to say "table" to put it there, on the page. Everything in the way of adjectival adjustment doesn't so much add as carve away at the vague shape the word, all by itself, has conjured up. To make the table convincing, a specified color, wood, or number of legs might be helpful; or it might be too much, an overparticularized clot in the flow of the prose. The reader, encountering the word "table," has, hastily and hazily, supplied one from his experience, and particularization risks diminishing, rather than adding to, the reality of the table in his mind. Further, the table takes meaning and mass from its context of human adventure. It must tell us something about the human being who owns or uses it, his or her financial or social or moral condition; otherwise this piece of furniture exists outside the movement of the story and is merely "painterly."