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Curator's Statement

Wayne Edson Bryan

*Purple Portion/Selections from The Purple Gang
(parts 1 through 3)*

Bob Budin

Solo Exhibition

Paulo Buennos

Dis-Placement

March 9 - April 20, 1996

Opening Reception :

9 pm - 11 pm

Saturday, March 16, 1996

Hallwalls is very pleased to have the opportunity to present solo exhibitions by Wayne Edson Bryan, Bob Budin, and Paulo Buennos, and to present the two essays and one poem that are the result of these artists' collaborations with writers Grant Samuelsen, Leslie Walker and Jimmie Margaret Gillam.

Wayne Edson Bryan has been working in the Washington DC area since the 1980's and is known for a style which merges post-modern, critical approaches to content with obsessively layered, folk and pop-influenced imagery. Bryan has expanded the scope of the encapsulated signs of personal identity to include direct references to the mass media, which informs and creates identity in modern America. Bryan has adapted much of the language of television and advertising (particularly its ability to create schizophrenic juxtapositions of meaning) to the task of formulating lyrical visual metaphors expressing the relationship between language and identity, and how they shape or explain human behavior, understanding, and culture.

Recent exhibitions include a ten-year retrospective of his work entitled *Gold Diggers, Back Stabbers, and*



Game Players at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and *Elvis+Marilyn: 2 x Immortal*, currently at the Portland Art Museum. Bryan is also working with architects Cesar Pelli & Associates to design a commissioned work for the new terminal at Washington National Airport. Chicago-based independent curator and writer Grant Samuelsen has written a new essay titled *The Useful Art of Wayne Edson Bryan* about the three series of work that are being presented in this exhibition.

Known for his long career as a prominent stockbroker, and his involvement on the Board of Directors of the Buchfield-Penney Art Center, Budin began to paint after his retirement in the late 1980's. He joined Buffalo Arts Studios in that organization's first year, and in the studio, with no instruction, taught himself to paint, using methods such as copying from books and projecting slides onto canvas. His work rapidly began to develop its unique character in a series of paintings from 1993-1994, when Budin focused on amorphic rock-like forms within a landscape. These gradually became more vertical, suggesting shadowy figures. In works such as *Heroes*, the landscapes opened up into great planes under immense skies, geometric measurements and diagrams often hovering on the picture plain, with silhouettes of figures giant and small giving a human order to the space. In his first solo exhibition, Budin will present paintings from 1993 to the present. Bob Budin has a degree in Literature from Antioch College. His work has been presented throughout the United States, including Buffalo Arts Studio, the Cheekwood Museum in Nashville TN, and the Three Rivers Art Festival in Pittsburgh. Buffalo-based writer

Leslie Walker has written a new piece on Budin's work, and examined his development as a painter.

A recent MFA graduate of SUNY Buffalo, Paulo Buennos will transform one of Hallwalls' rear galleries. The walls and floors will be painted the color of a school blackboard, and an imagined map of the world will be superimposed over the floorplan of a house, all drawn in white chalk. As the audience moves through the room, the lines will be eradicated, the drawing transformed. The artist will return weekly to reinvent the installation, somewhere between comforting domesticity and the immensity of a view of the world from above; and in that invented space will examine the poetic connections created through memory and imagination. A native of Brazil, Buennos studied music at the State University of Sao Paulo. He has presented his work at the Center for the Arts at SUNY Buffalo, and at Itau Galleria, Armando Alvarez Penteado Foundation, and Oficina Cultural Oswald de Andrade in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Williamsville writer Jimmie Margaret Gilliam has written a poem titled *The Where of Who/The How of Now* to accompany the installation.

My thanks to the artists and the writers for all of their wonderful work, to the staff and Board of Directors of Hallwalls, and to Hallwalls' Visual Art Committee. Hallwalls is supported in part by the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, The ArtsLink Partnership, the county of Erie, the City of Buffalo and the members of Hallwalls. Hallwalls is a member of the National Association of Artists' Organizations (NAAO) and the National Alliance of Media Arts and Cultures (NAMAC).

Sara Kellner
Visual Arts Director

The Useful Art of Wayne Edson Bryan

Outside the limits of the picture, the teeth were lying everywhere in utter confusion, scattered rather thinly without any pictorial effect. Encircling the imaginary boundary whose circumference was marked by the teeth furthest from the centre, there was an empty zone bounded in turn by a slender cord fixed at wide intervals to the tops of thin pegs several centimetres high. We were all gathered in front of a polygonal barrier.

Raymond Rousel, *Locus Solus*

Wayne Edson Bryan

Purple Gang II / The Herald's Blend / Ginger, 1994, enamel, varnish and gold leaf on carved wood, 13.5" x 11.5" x 1"



Before getting on a plane to fly to Albuquerque last Thanksgiving, I picked up a copy of the computer culture magazine *Wired* at an airport newsstand. I generally find it difficult to sleep on airplanes without first downing a couple of Wild Turkeys, and it was a morning flight so hooch was out of the question. Staying awake and occupied was to be the strategy, and *Wired* was to be the tactic: I was going to use this magazine's schizoid graphica and typography like an amphetamine administered optically.

A couple of days later in Albuquerque, I noticed my grandmother sitting in my uncle's living room and looking bored and zoned. I decided to try the *Wired* cure on her, and gave her the magazine with the warning that she might learn something about a culture she is admittedly terrified of. After courageously leafing through the entire 200 pages, she dropped the magazine in her lap, looked up at the room, and told me she felt as if her eyes had melted. Such is the state of visual culture.

Dangerously close to too *much*, Wayne Edson Bryan's constructed paintings are as overwhelming to the seasoned consumer of media as that copy of *Wired* was to my charmingly agoraphobic grandmother. Yet, according to the artist in a written statement from 1988, the works are "visual koans," and that reference to the contemplation of paradox in Buddhist philosophy is strange when used to explain the motivation behind artworks so visually dizzying. Classical koans — "think of the sound of one hand clapping" or "what was the appearance of your face before your ancestors were born," for example — contain the key to their own resolution in the process of quietly contemplating an irreconcilable paradox. Wayne's paintings embody paradox with no resolution, and loudly proclaim their irreconcilability. By using the word "koan" to represent the fundamental nature of his work, Wayne seemingly describes a cup of tea to explain a Molotov cocktail.

Or maybe not. After all, we live in a culture in which the sound of one hand clapping is, conceivably, an obtainable commodity. Digital media and other technologies have rendered this possible, and we're only scratching the surface here. Not only this, but the sheer proliferation of images in contemporary culture has made it possible to hypothetically pick-and-choose ready-made resolutions to the odd paradox. As the epigram at the beginning of the *X-Files* tells us, "The Truth is Out There." To this one might add: "...if you use the right Internet search engine" or even "... as long as your eyes don't melt."

So Wayne Edson Bryan's paintings take their place as equals among the other pulverizing visual stuff of our culture. I wonder whether we can even separate these paintings from the gooey mass of visual culture writ large by calling them artworks, but of course we have no other choice.

Sometimes I prefer to think of Wayne's work as having emerged, fully formed, from a factory or laboratory somewhere that deals in creating and then documenting confusion, such as Cantarel's estate in Raymond Rousel's *Locus Solus*. I also like to think that this is part of the artist's intent. The fact that Wayne hand-paints (*hand-paints*) these things that appear to have been manufactured isn't only due to his grade-A perfectionism. It is because he wants us to see these objects as equivalent to other visually-manifested objects more common than paintings. In the case of many works from *The Purple Gang* suites: gameboards, coats-of-arms, television, and computer-generated images. Most of these "other" forms happen to be manufactured themselves, and the only way to separate the art objects from their source mate-

rial and/or family members is to treat them (overtly and traditionally) like art objects. Hence he uses his hands to paint.

In the newer series of works from the on-going *Purple Gang* series, Wayne becomes more painterly while simultaneously becoming more machine-like in his ability to combine layers of distinct meaning. *The Purple Gang II: The Herald's Blend* (1994) and *The Purple Gang III: Ghosts* (1995), combine more frenetic patterning, decorative elements, and symbols of cultural identity contained in the earlier *Purple Gang* works. However, these series' include one element central to *The Purple Gang* project and imperative in understanding the relationship of *The Purple Gang* to identity and the body. Each work in *The Herald's Blend* and *Ghosts* contains a human brain which, as Henri Bergson argued, is not only the center of perpetual activity, but is also an equivalent component of the perceptual equation which is the exterior, perceived world. The brain isn't necessarily an indicator of an identity jarred and placed on a shelf like the brains in *Frankenstein*; it's another element in a gaggle of stuff we have to contend with every day.

Wayne Edson Bryan creates test-sites that document the collision of cultures and individual histories on the mind and body. The fact that painting renders these frenetic events immobile allows for contemplation of the multitude of impossible and illogical confluences that make up the visual part of culture. Rendering this infinitely dynamic process still, *The Purple Gang* employs ancient technologies — painting and drawing — to analyze a set of cultural trajectories, emblems, and images supposedly alien to handiwork, mindwork, and contemplation itself. Visual koans indeed.

Grant Samuelsen

BLT

In the time that it takes Bob Budin to tell you the name of his favorite sandwich, he has probably cooked the bacon, washed the lettuce, cut the tomato and eaten it in his mind. Facile and eclectic, Budin brings a stolid, spirited determination and intellectual inquisitiveness to his work.

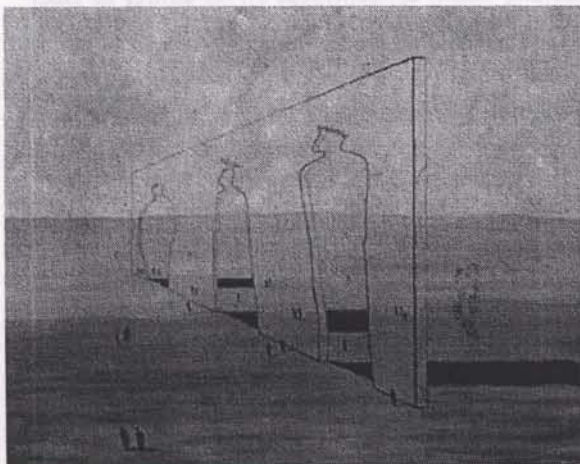
Seven years ago Budin picked up a magazine and saw an advertisement for a portrait studio that contained a photograph of a classically posed and coiffed family of five sitting in a living room. He was so bothered by its sterility and triteness, he decided to paint his own family portrait. The result was a cluster of sepulchral, rock-like forms on a barren field of color with a simple horizon line. With no formal training in art, Budin, simply by intellectual training, began painting with the question of the relationship between forms and space in mind.

Looking at Renaissance painting, Budin became interested in aspects of presentation inherent in the classical pose. In *Mother and Child* (1993), a portrait of the madonna and child, Budin's haloed figures are reduced to three spheres outlined in black. In the same way that a child might take three balls of snow and simply by placement, create what we recognize as a "man," Budin takes each spherical form in the painting and by placement, creates the recognizable pose of a mother cradling a child.

After a series of classically-inspired portraits, Budin began the series, *Figure 1 -11* (1993-4), which was inspired by a text filled with mechanical engineering drawings. Budin's interest in the drawings centered on their spatial profundity and its relationship to man, concerns which trace back to the 15th-century architects Brunelleschi and Alberti. Budin explores dimension and perspective with imaginary geometric forms that inhabit and intersect their environment, appearing as a series of exercises in the artist's attempt to come to terms with new forms and problems of three-dimensional representation. Diminutive human figures dot the landscape in these

Bob Budin

Heroes, 1994, acrylic on canvas, 54" x 64"



paintings in a way that suggests man's impotence in the face of the forces of science and nature, but they also remind us that man, as inventor and creator, must live with his constructions.

Abandoning mechanical forms, Budin extracted the human figure from his work and began to enlarge it on the canvas. Initially, he represented the figure in outline against a landscape, mimicking the geometric forms in his previous series. Although ungrounded and transparent, these figures appear forcibly on the landscape, as if they were as integral to the scene as any other piece of topography. Yet they are not of the landscape. These figures exist as metaphysical impositions on a preexisting world in the same way an engineer's drawings exist on a page.

Representing figures in outline also works as a metaphor for memory. What we see is a sketch of a figure whose real form must be somewhere else. Deliberately lacking in detail, these representations allow the associative aspects of memory full play, making his figures non-specific. Allowing the landscape to be seen through the images also suggests that these images are in transition, passing from one world to another. A similar rite of passage exists in the process of turning experience into memory, and the specific into the symbolic. In each case, the experience of the physical/object transmogrifies into the experience of the spiritual/subject. These are themes which Budin repeats in his more recent works.

Resurrecting the sepulchral form in his early portraits, Budin represents the human figure in stark landscapes that increasingly dissolve into more abstract spaces. *Ego* (1995), with its expansive green lawn and a sky filled with clouds as thick as ragweed gives way to *Man* (1995), a figure with barely enough space to throw a shadow on the bare walls that encase it.

Limbless and featureless, it makes no difference whether Budin's figures appear alone or among others. Each is isolated, unaffected, and undifferentiated from the other. There are no groups, only individuals existing independently of one another. Not "human" enough to represent something as terrestrial as postmodern ennui, Budin's figures persistently assert themselves as the idea of presence and existence. Many of these works, *Heroes*, *2nd Monument*, and *3rd Monument* (1994), utilize the transparent, outlined figures of his earlier work and similarly allude to the ephemeral and temporal nature of existence.

Budin also often depicts his figures in black or white, or in a positive/negative relationship to their environment, as in *Man* and *The God* (1995), which begs the question of whether reality can be represented without the existence of an "other." Although today's neuroscientists would place the color, texture, and odor of reality inside the brain, man still struggles with the time-honored question of what is the soul of our existence? Budin seems to be asking, *where* is the soul of our existence?

An economy of ideas is essential to Budin's work. His canvases remain spare, forms are symbolic rather than representational, and many works are monochromatic in tone. His expression comes through elucidation rather than description. Being less inclined to explore the physical characteristics of his medium, Budin concentrates on its ability to elucidate the philosophic perambulations of his mind.

Although Budin readily confesses to being "on the back nine" at this stage of his life, perhaps it has made him less fearful of the unknown and more adept at making use of it. "Painting is making the most of my time," he says, "I want people to be able to look at my work and, like it or not, be able to recognize it as my work."

Leslie J. Walker

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The Where of Who / The How of Now

1

Dis-placement

Enter one of three openings

Where am I?

Inside the history of Paulo Buennos

My own past is triggered

Where dreamdoors swing

Memory and Imagination dance

Like innocent knowing children

But on memory's merry-go-round

Clouds could be lakes\water, clouds

Place-names swirl

Marila, Brazil/middle-of-the-bed place

Where the artist was born

Lander, Wyoming where he is an exchange student

In his youth

Campos Do Jordão, mountain place he loves

Where am I?

The artist pulls my leg

This is no AAA triptych

A delicious humor here:

Holland, N.Y. only inches away from Paris, France

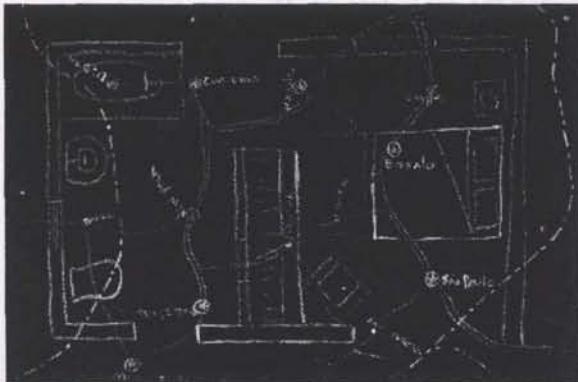
I realize my birthplace, Ashville, N.C.

Is closer to Buffalo than Batavia

2

Paulo Buennos

Study for *Dis-Placement*, 1995, chalk on paper



The maplines on the floor continue

Up the sides of the charcoal walls

These paintlines cannot be altered

Other lines delineate rooms, furniture

I/You walk through

Intersect the artist's world

Find our own paths

Blurring the chalklines

Chalk on the soles of our shoes, his

He redraws the walls

The tub, the commode, the bed

Now where am I?
 An unanswerable question
 Except to know I am here
 Moving between and through
 A bathroom/a bedroom

Places where I can feel secure
The essential privacy is intimacy

Remember myself
In my childhood's bathroom
Place where my mother gave me scoldings
Caress my little girl's rosebud
With Ivory soap
Yelling bloody mother

Remember myself in bedroom
Shared with my sister
She draws line in the middle of bed
I place broom upside down
Under the covers make a tent

Read books into the night with flashlight:
Girl of the Limberlost; How Green Was My Valley
The Call of the Wild; Alone Across The Top of The World

Remember my teenage self at new house next door
Aged eighteen take to my bed
Like my grandmother, Maggie, in her sixties
Do not want to grow up, feel
Afraid of crushes on boys, girls

3

The artist is not present
 Home is his art, yes
 But he cannot reside here
 Like all artists he dwells there
 Only in death

Only I/You enter these rooms
there is no way not to be engaged
 Shoe soles on pigment/chalk
 A strong fragility-tender

When I return I see the blurring
Of the chalklines
I know you were there

4

Though my body is not There
I have located four pieces of furniture Here
 Old pieces outlast flesh

Where is he? Where am I?
 You will find the artist
 Behind wooden drawers, glass doors

Red stuff personal

Feel the fixtures/ touch the corpuscles
The hand of the mother who dies
When he was four years old
*The winding sheets**
Sadness deep beneath faultlines
Where he and I/You belong
Trying to understand

5

When you're out of your country
Roots stretch like rubberbands
One can't go back/but we have no Place

Imagination marries memory
Defies displacement\redefines home
Lines, relationships, walls, ephemeral
We open from womb\room to art\root
Draw the floor plan of the house where
you were born
How it was in your mind\doorway
drawing the room into another room
Imagine all the memory that will come
Emotion floods
A temporary stay
Cries there where of who/ the how of now

Jimmie Margaret Gilliam
 Williamsville, New York