

Dear A.P.

Please forgive my negligence. It was a case of purest self preoccupation which it often is in my case. I was in the midst of my last techniques piece for Art News when your drawings arrived, and although my deadline frenzies now are mild compared to those you witnessed in Ptown, I still like to get the thing off my mind before I turn to other things I'd rather do like writing to you. But I did quit Art News with a great sigh of relief even though the writing I did for them took only about three weeks of the year.

But then my next problem was thrust upon me -- i.e. the date of my one-man show was pushed up to April 5, the day my father died three years ago plunging me into a deep state of something. I was going to postpone the whole thing until next Fall but Bill said I should go through with it, no matter what the circumstances or maybe because of them. So I have been working on some unfinished paintings that I hope to finish in time. This is when your masks arrived. I have them hanging on the walls of my studio and fifteen times daily decided to write to you at their instigation but ~~xxxx~~ just kept working blindly until your one sentence note this morning ~~xxxxx~~ hurled me at this typewriter so now -- my opinion.

I was surprised by the drawings in terms of your Ptown abstractions which were so stern--protestant--puritanical. So I naturally feel closer to the drawings ~~since~~ they are so full of social comment. There was one with a woman's figure lying on a bed -- a peculiar sort of collage -- that I thought was magnificent. For some reason or other, when those little pieces of paper are pasted on and you paint or draw over them, the drawing is made sharper or more unpredictable, I don't know exactly what but the indirection-ness(?) helps. Almost the same effect occurred when you used a little white tempera on top of another drawing to change a contour. Then I liked the "portraits" ~~xx~~ that were horizontally faceted (I'm trying to describe them so you'll know which I mean: it's not that Art News has left this strain in my vocabulary irrevocably). There were no features left and still the faces were very clear. It would be wonderful if you could do the same thing in painting. Then I loved the flippant little contour drawings of you having tea with various eager ladies, but these were more strictly caricature. Which is the pitfall that awaits artists that work in solitude. I have no idea why, ~~xx~~ but I know enough instances of its happening to realize it's a menace: that is, artists working away from their fellows are very likely to become absorbed in the Grotesque. Now there is Bosch and there are others that I can't think of, and the Grotesque is a Possibility but I do think it should be a matter of Choice. My five months alone in Ptown after you left were illuminating on that score. I painted twelve or fourteen hours a day without interruption--a Total impossibility in New York -- and I thought it was heavenly. As a matter of fact I got frightened because I was so satisfied, when I realized I could easily go on that way for twenty or thirty years Alone. When you're alone, you can easily go on thinking the same thought over and over again and not know it. Think of Edwin Dickinson, Ryder, or any American eccentric (since this country breeds them).

There's nothing against being an eccentric as long as you know you are one if you are one. On my way back from Ptown, I stopped off in Boston to interview Hyman Bloom for an article. I admire his work tremendously. He, to prove my point, lives all alone in Boston and is an eccentric. He was painting corpses--horrific and marvelous painting--and very very grotesque. I wouldn't have him change for the world. He's original and like no one else which could be an aspiration for any artist. And he has one big protection. He exhibits.

Which is my next discovery! Painting under outside pressure accomplishes