



The Recluse 5

Homage to George Schneeman

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Elio Schneeman

Michael Lally

Maureen Owen

Will Yackulic

Sandy Berrigan

Pamela Lawton

Vincent Katz

Elinor Nauen

Anselm Berrigan

Todd Colby

Lisa Birman

Steven Hall

Edmund Berrigan

Gary Parrish

Cliff Fyman

June 2009

The Poetry Project

for Katie

Fresco

for George Schneeman

In this valley
the blue green hills converge
where we meet
and tug at each other
like the surrounding poplar trees;
we mimic the landscape
in dancing motions,
the notion of our lives
in a giant mixing bowl.
We discard our clothes
and converge with the hills
that surround us.
A sad music descends
with the twilight:
we will die here
along this side
of the earth.

Prayer

for my father

God raise you
when it's time, you
who are so kind,
over our savage sea,
You opened the world for me.
I, who stole from you
your heart, and saw it break.
May your frescoes be the clouds of Heaven.

Elio Schneeman

George Schneeman from A to Z (from my perspective)

Artist: George Schneeman lived the life of an artist in a way few do anymore. He painted, made collages, drew, used watercolors, sculpted, made plates and vases (as frisky and indelible as any antique Greek pottery, only more so), did frescoes even, pretty much anything an artist could do with actual materials, he did. And it was always engaging, entertaining, and often enlightening in ways the work didn't project so that it was and is constantly surprising.

Berrigan, Ted: Poet Ted Berrigan, in many ways the godfather of the St. Mark's poetry scene, was one of George's best friends and vice versa. They had a lot of friends, many, I suspect, who thought they were their "best." But from my observations, Ted and George considered each other as "best" as friends can get. They had a lot in common, including age (both born in 1934) and creative strategies. When Ted died, it was a blow to George, but he responded by leading a parade around the Lower East Side carrying a big banner that was actually a painting George did of Ted, celebrating Ted's life.

Calendar: George is famous among his friends for the calendar he made and gave us each year, a print of one of his latest works of art with the twelve months, and their days, hand lettered underneath (his last, 2009, reproduced a painting of Piazzo del Ganno in Asciano, Siena). Like everything George did, the calendars themselves were unique works of art.

Death: There's no explaining death. It's painful for those left behind no matter when it comes to those we care about. A lot of us cared about George.

English as a second language: One of George's day jobs years ago was teaching English as a second language to immigrants (at the American Language and Culture Institute where he became the Director—he also worked as a gardener and landscape designer for "a few select people"). George had a lot of interesting stories to share about that gig, though mostly he was just grateful to have a way to make some extra money so he could make his art without having to consider anything monetary (except for supplies), just his creative instincts and taste and vision.

Fresco: George was very proud of being one of the few artists—the only one I knew of—working in frescos. (He taught fresco technique for several years in the summer program at the Skowhegan school of Painting and Sculpture in Maine.) The difficulties and challenges of painting on wet plaster (or sometimes cement I think he told me) and still controlling the outcome when it dried gave George great delight as he expressed to me often, explaining the technique many times to me over the years, making sure I got how challenging it was. And yet the frescoes he created never gave off any sense of the struggle it took to make them, in fact the exact opposite—he made it look easy.

George: One of the ways you know someone has totally entered into the story of your life is when you can refer to that someone by one name only and they know who you mean. That was George.

Handsome: George was a beautiful man. Handsome, yes, but also delicate, a term I doubt he'd want used, but nonetheless, his good looks were delicate, not feminine, just delicate in the best sense of that word (not every photo illustrates this point that well, so if you never saw him in person, you'll have to take my word for it).

Italy: George and his wife Katie have a place in the Italian countryside, where they'd go for some R&R from city life. He loved Italy. A lot of his art reflected that love. One of his shows in recent years—at CUE—was of landscapes he'd done of the Tuscan countryside. Beautifully understated reflections of the peace those vistas obviously gave him.

Justice: George had a strong sense of justice—what he thought was right and what he thought was wrong. Especially when it came to art (e.g. his criticisms of how and what art was shown in New York museums and galleries—there was a right way as he saw it and a wrong way, the latter often that of the curators of a show or permanent exhibit he thought could be done better).

Katie: George's wife was renowned not only for her remarkable beauty, but for her love and support of George and their sons, as well as many of the rest of us in the community who looked to her as the ideal wife and mother.

Love: I love George's art. And I loved him. I doubt in any way he could ever understand, or even knew. But then, everyone I know who knew George loved him.

Mind, George's: I often didn't know what was going through George's mind when I encountered him. I always felt like my exuberance and sometimes tactless overexcited response to most of life amused him. (After I wrote something like that on news of his passing, several others who knew George emailed me saying they felt the same way.) But when George articulated what was going on in his mind, it was always interesting and often revelatory. He knew a lot more than he let on most of the time, which made his thoughts seem even more surprising and unique when he shared them.

New York: George created a life that was perfect for an artist. First living with Katie in Italy after he got out of the service in the 1950s. Then, after poet Peter Schjeldahl showed up on their doorstep there and told them about the New York scene and convinced them to check it out, George and Katie found a rent-controlled apartment on St. Marks Place, right in the heart of the action that made the 1960s "The 'Sixties!"—and ditto for the following decades.

Obituary: The obit in *The New York Times* for George was bigger than anyone else's that day, and bigger than many I've seen in the *Times* for world leaders and world famous artists. Everyone got a big kick out of that and thought George would have found it pretty amusing, and secretly been very proud.

Poets: Most of George's closest friends were poets (like Ted Berrigan, Ron Padgett, Bill Berkson, etc.), and he is best known in the downtown St. Mark's scene of the past almost half century as an artist who lent his skills to the covers of many books of poetry and little magazines, and who collaborated with poets on unique works of art that capture the spirit of collaboration—especially of the 1960s—in ways that no other art has. Quiet; George

could be awfully quiet sometimes, in ways that made me think of that old saying—“Still waters run deep.”

Reaction: Sometimes George reacted to people and their actions with amusement, sometimes with obvious if unstated distaste, sometimes with strong criticism or arguments for his perspective. And sometimes, at least in my experience, with a kind of stubborn silence. For many of us, George’s reactions mattered—a lot.

Sons (and grandsons): Over the years George made it clear how proud he was of his sons Paul, Elio and Emilio (aka Emil). When they were little, they were like three beautiful angels. When they became teenagers and my oldest boy Miles was little, they all babysat him at different times. They were already becoming more worldly, but they still maintained the look of angels, maybe mischievous angels. Elio went on to become a wonderful poet and beautiful man with almost an ethereal presence as if his spirit was constantly on the verge of carrying him away from us, which it eventually did. George never talked about how he must have missed Elio terribly. George’s youngest son Emil was a working actor in New York and later in Southern California, until he turned his attention to “the art of the deal” and became a successful real estate broker. After which, whenever I saw George, he’d smile broadly as he related the latest, high price of a house Emil had sold, figures way beyond anything George or I ever had anything to do with. Then Emil and his wife Brit created George’s two grandsons—Luke and Mark—and *they* became the topic of George’s pride when we’d meet. George’s oldest son, Paul, was in many ways his closest companion, especially after Paul moved back to Manhattan from Florida not that long ago. Paul has his father’s hands when it comes to making things and fixing things, and a lot of his personality. They were both lucky to have each other back in their lives again, especially in the last months of George’s life.

Tibor de Nagy: A few years ago Tibor de Nagy had a small show of some of the collages George did with poets—starting from the 1960s to more recent ones. It was like walking into the very act of collaborating itself. Brilliantly original.

Understanding George: Granary Books put out a great collection of these collaborative collages, along with several essays and an interview with George. The book is *PAINTER AMONG POETS*. It will help anyone interested in George better understand what he was about. Just the first few paragraphs of Peter Schjeldahl’s essay “George Inside,” for instance, go a long way to understanding who George was (as does, say, Steve Katz’s piece “Made By George” etc.).

Valuable: My guess is George’s art is going to become more and more valuable now that he’s gone. I suspect some enterprising gallery (hopefully one as committed as Tibor de Nagy) will curate a show that will demonstrate for anyone who doesn’t already know, the breadth of George’s talent and the delight he obviously took in exercising it, a delight that is contagious when you’re standing in front of one of the results of one of the many approaches he took to creating art.

Whatever it wants: The affection I felt for George was partly the result of his art. It has the kind of infectious charm that Joe Brainard’s art also has, where if it gets to you, it can do whatever it wants, like a child you adore who can do no wrong.

X: Always the toughest letter to come up with something for, let's just say it reminds me of George's carpentry (the "x"s marked on spots where nails are to be pounded in or screws screwed in, etc.). George's studio was in his apartment, where there was no separation between his art and the rest of his life as far as I could see. In fact, quite a bit of the furniture and built-ins in the apartment he made himself, works of art in their own unique ways, including the harpsichords he built from kits and taught himself to play, one for the St. Marks apartment and one for his place in Italy.

You care about, people: George didn't have regular gallery shows. As far as I know he didn't have a regular gallery (though he did show in various galleries over the years including the Holly Solomon Gallery in Soho in the '70s where he had some very successful shows that included his famous plaid-shirts-on-hangers done as frescos on cinder block bases—he also did the shirts as silk screen prints, one of which hangs in my living room, and which the Metropolitan Museum used on Christmas cards for years—more recently he showed the egg-tempera-on-wood paintings he made of his collages at the Donahue-Sosinsky Gallery). But ultimately he didn't really seem to care about all that stuff (another reason many of us dug him so much, we felt a kinship to that kind of approach, the do-your-work-the-way-you-want and get it to people you care about and don't bother with all the schmoozing and "networking" and compromise and whatever else you have to do to forge ties with those with power in the art or poetry or any other world).

Zenith, and zigzag. George's drive and talent didn't diminish with age, if anything the opposite. His last more-or-less private show demonstrated that he was at the zenith of his career. Especially his latest collages. A year or so before the exhibit, he showed me how he was creating them. To begin a collage he'd cut out a shape from a pile of Italian magazines from the 1920s and '30s (as I distinctly remember it, though Emil says they were American magazines). Then he'd use what was left in his next collage, its shape determining much of the outcome. Often the leftover from the initial cut out would be in a zig zaggy, almost "Z" kind of shape. The resulting collages are uniquely beautiful. But I've never seen any art George made that I didn't find unique and beautiful. I have it all over my apartment, mostly stuff he gave me, or Emil gave me, or a little collage I bought from that last exhibition—one of the best shows I've ever seen. I went back to it several times. Partly out of indecision over which collage to buy since I could only afford one, and partly to bring others to see the show, including my son, Miles, his son Donovan, and my youngest son, Flynn, who was only nine at the time. The winter before, during the visit to George's apartment when he explained the source and technique for his last collages, Brit took a photo of George and me with all our boys—Paul, Emil, Luke, George's only grandson at the time, Miles, Flynn, and Donovan—that's still on my refrigerator. I noticed recently (after George passed) that in it I'm holding *George's* grandson, while George's hand is holding *my* grandson's shoulder, with a touch so light you can feel the tenderness in it through the photograph—that same light but loving touch, connecting to the circle of life, not to get too corny about it, that I believe is at the heart of George's art, and life.

Michael Lally

for katie

Haiku for George

the last calendar
our artist sailed away
hangs in my kitchen

1.27.09 3 a.m.

After Shonagon

for ron padgett and george schneeman

Coming up First Ave this morning I ran into Ron & George on the corner of 10th street. They looked magnificent as they came towards me. Their splendid, cherry-colored Court cloaks were lined with material of the most delightful hue and lustre. Ron wore dark grape-colored trousers, boldly splashed with designs of wisteria branches: his crimson under-robe was so glossy that it seemed to sparkle, while underneath one could make out layer upon layer of white and light violet robes. The cherry-colored Court cloak George was wearing was sufficiently worn to have lost its stiffness, a white under-robe buffeted loose trousers of dark purple. From beneath the cloak shone the pattern of another robe of dark red damask. They had just come from viewing the u no hana and were each carrying nothing in their hands but a single spray of the white blossoms.

for George

howled and trilling

Will there be rapids?

or a fava bean shaped pool

he mailed the year straight unto the tongue

At 9 in the coffee bean forest
clothes hung in the air on the glass manikins

clothes you can't go anywhere in

filled with people working

millions of teacups of rain came down in torrents
clustering traits harpsichordist it's all like high heels
kept in one place
rendering faithfully the noise alone

not surprisingly what we have often very personal elements
speak carbonated pendulum so many cross over
not knowing where it comes from

after others before us

Maureen Owen

My memories of George Schneeman mostly involve growing up around his work, as I didn't, except occasionally, grow up around him. Sure, there was the odd party at his house, times I was too young to remember, or later as a teen when I ended up in the studio, thinking, "this is where it happens!" But we never did a proper "studio visit". I saw a couple of his too few shows, and he once, very generously, gave me one of his homemade calendars—the kind I remember hanging around the house in my childhood. I invited him to a show of mine once, but when he realized it was in Chelsea, he said, seemingly to himself, "do I go there?" and then a little more directly, "no, I don't go there." I didn't take this personally—it may have been based purely on transportation constraints, as he biked everywhere, and this may have been a little out of his range. Or it may have been an affirmation of a path that had little proximity to that of the art world, or specifically, the art market. Or maybe both. In either case, a question of proximity. George's work was and is in close proximity to a lot of work by artists whose names many would recognize. And it more than holds up. I remember going to my cousins' house and always being confronted with George's portrait of Katie, topless, which, at the time, I thought was of my aunt. And nearby was a Guston drawing of a hand holding a cigarette which was, in my six year old mind, a stand-in for uncle Ted. Cigarettes and nudity! Shocking! I'm sure it had some bearing on my future. But the works looked good together and made total sense in their surroundings. These were paintings that resided in the type of place they were made. There was a place for art in this type of life, not the dead examples of technique that reside in institutions but living, breathing pictures, and I was enthralled. This is part of the personal aspect of which people talk about when they speak of George's, Joe's (Brainard) and others' work that I grew up around. They were generally small by today's standards and much of it small by anyone's, destined for friend's walls and having indications of their intimate nature in their subject matter. The image of George and his wife physically engaged on the bed in the most private of activities (for most) is a fusion of subject and technique of the utmost primality. As a kid it was the most scandalous thing I'd ever seen, and it still resonates, though now there is something touching about it. That's staying power! And George had range. Egg tempera portraits, landscape frescoes, exquisitely considered collages made from just two or three pieces of paper that confound one's perceptual abilities, painting collaborations with poets, various multiples in a variety of techniques. He's been referred to as a poet's painter, but he was just as much an artist's artist. He was actively investigating arcane processes and mediums on the verge of being forgotten or at least written off. He famously (to me) thought that oil paint had ruined painting (!). He didn't have the cult of personality thing or "a look" and this may have doomed him in the marketplace. But it made for unostentatious, austere work that is very good, in a time when, unfortunately, people prefer canvas's that have been pissed on for the umpteenth time, or what have you. Dealers and curators are constantly "discovering" artists who have escaped the attention of the art world, and George's work may yet have its day in a gallery somewhere. I don't know how much he'd care, though. I kind of picture him preferring to paint the Italian countryside.

Will Yackulic

As You Know I Rarely Write

for George

He popped out of an envelope
Complete with earphones
Listening to Scarlatti
The disc bubbled with whole notes
and secret sounds
He looked serious but there was
a Twinkle in his Eye

So pure the broken old car
It's owner reads the daily news
As He would not

Beautiful tubular forms
Lead to water
She always crosses her legs
in the desert
He won't go there

there is a pom pom on a tom tom
beautiful body no tits or head
a lonely d and a knee
converse

Sandy Berrigan

I loved Italy first, and then I met George. The pasta e fagioli we sampled while in Urbino at the School of Visual Arts reminded my New York friends Elizabeth Fox and Katherine Koch of George's (his was better)- the Majolica portraits in profile seen at the Uffizi caused Koch to reminisce about her informal lessons with him, had led to her making a series of ceramics inspired by him; the numerous paintings of Saint Anthony of Padua in churches triggered stories about his frescos of Tuscan landscapes in which Saint Anthony was pointing to a road, with a flock of birds above. By the time I was lucky enough to be invited to his house in New York to attend one of his famed Italian classes, a ritual during which he would serve a six-course meal, ensure that all of guests would converse in that language only, and have a movie afterwards in Italian also, I was meeting a legend. Not surprisingly, his apartment, where he lived with his wife Katie and occasionally, one of his three grown sons, was as close to an Italian setting as I could find in New York, better than the now closed café La Fortuna where my Urbino friends and I would meet and look at photos, or at the Conservatory Garden in Central Park where I would paint statues and architecture reflected in water to connect me with my experience of painting in the Boboli Gardens. That was to be the first of uncountable visits which continue now with his wife Katie, now, senza George, senza Elio, their son, in a house that is a museum of art and of the past.

George's presence resides in the table where they eat (made from scrap wood that he assembled), his clocks and lamps, espresso cups with dancing figures evoking Matisse and Majolica, and in the harpsichord that he made himself that

Katie so loves to hear. Walking around there now, I take in his oeuvre, the multitude of landscapes with skies both faint and tough, on wood in egg tempera, the diminutive collages that pack a punch with their bold flat color, juxtaposing figures in improbable positions; the life-size portraits reminiscent of Piero Della Francesca, and Sixties' reductive forms, with flat broad un-modulated planes of color and pattern.

In pursuing several series of works simultaneously, the collages, landscapes, collaborations, and portraits, George was able to develop the distinct voice of each one. He was not concerned with forcing a direct relationship between the different bodies of work. When explaining the definition of a "series" of artworks to students, I impart George's work to them as an example. He explained to me once that whenever he made something, of a particular size, medium, and subject matter, he would usually make one hundred of them. Daunting, yes. But it worked for him and I think he surpassed this number one hundred fold.

The making of the collaborations between George and the poets, the story of which has been told and retold, was social, a circumstance which other, less fortunate painters look wistfully upon as it provides a relief from the unending working alone day in and day out. These collaborations appear to be effortless; they are playful and confident, spilling over with the joy of friendship and the exchange between words and ideas.

His marks, gestural and lyrical, are seen also in the ceramics where strong, flowing lines were laid down once and for all. Like other great art, the collaborations and collages speak both the language of the era in which they were born, and also, crossing over time, live in the present, engaging the viewer with the immediacy of our time now.

In comparison, the landscapes strike a more timeless, and a more restrained chord.

Though George loved the early Renaissance (Giovanni de Paolo, Sassetta) and his

loathing for the Baroque was never more apparent than while discussing Rembrandt at the Met, whose light and shadow he found abhorrent, he also found Matisse and Cezanne of great interest. His best landscapes are truly visionary, combining his love of plein air painting (he would set his easel up in the fields in San Giovanni D'Asso, where he lived half the year), Sieneese painting, and fresco technique, which suited his need to complete his work in a rapid and efficient way. Whether it was painting outside with a fast-drying medium and the sun encroaching, hurrying through a Matisse show at the Modern, or preparing a pasta dish in his Saint Mark's kitchen, George's time was always sparing, accelerated, and exuberant, with an impatience for the more reflective ponderings of his family and friends.

In the last couple of years his landscapes moved from hazy panoramic views to closer, cropped ones. His increased mastery of egg tempera on wood allowed him to become more thorough in his process, wherein, after laying down his smooth flat planes of color tinted by the sun of the day, he would build them up, reworking and layering them. His brushstrokes in these later landscapes became more fluid, amassing to create the forms. Recently, he began introducing architectural forms in his paintings, first, fences, and later, buildings. His most recent series included one of a piazza, which I am fortunate enough to look upon on a daily basis, since it formed one of his 2009 calendar images. At first glance it appears flat and unremarkable, the buildings packed into the piazza with a simple palette of umbers, ochres, and cerulean blue, a De Chirico without the explicit Metaphysical content. The central fountain column, upon first glance, was to my eye unspectacular and ordinary. It was only over time that I discovered the true mystery imbedded in this scene. Starting from the bottom left, the planes in shades of brown tinged with grey shift my orientation, my eyes moving through the space,

building a pivotal series of diagonals, horizontals, and more diagonals that cause the buildings and the ground to sway, backing into the space with pleasure, exhilaration. A late landscape, made of a deep grey with white sprays of dazzling strokes, a bush as fluid as a fountain, reminds Katie of Giovanni De Paolo. When asked why, she comments "because it is mystical." Several comments George has made to me have become so imprinted in my brain that I cannot, for example, reach for a particular blue without recalling his reply to my question. How did he achieve that brittle presence of pale blue, was it Ultramarine Blue? : "Oh, no, I would never use that, too strong!" It seemed that cerulean blue was his preference.

Visiting the Met Museum with him and Katie on occasion, I recall being in the European Paintings section, where early Italian tempera on wood paintings can be found. George was shaking his fist, not at the painting, which he loved, but at the curator, whom he hoped would overhear his comment that the painting was hung too high. Just in case he did not hear, he wrote him a letter. Later he let me know that the curator had followed his advice. In any case, the painting was lowered.

I could not play poker with George for long. His cunning skill and ability to fool me with his opaque smile and jovial tricks frequently sent me out of the room enraged and a few dollars short. But I always felt loved by George, even when he was winning at poker.

George, "May your frescos be the clouds of heaven" (Elio Schneeman, "Fresco", Along The Rails.)

Pamela Lawton



Fig. 1. Pamela Lawton, *Giorgio*, 2009, ink, charcoal, pencil, liquid paper, acrylic and felt tip pen on paper, 9.5" x 10"

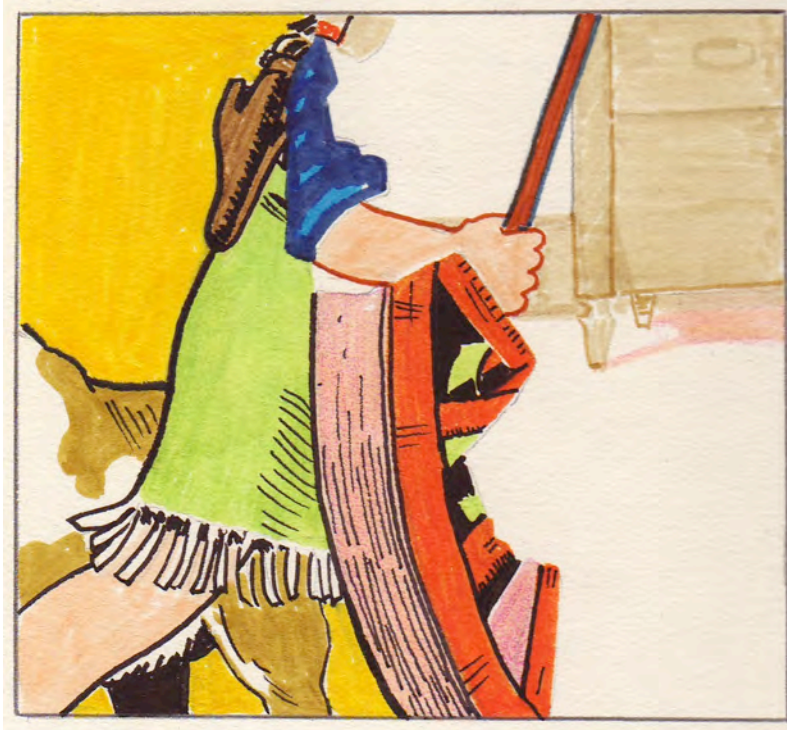


Fig. 2. George Schneeman, *Untitled #55*, undated, ink on illustration board, 3 3/4" x 4"



Fig. 3. George Schneeman, *Untitled #33*, undated, ink on illustration board, 3" x 3"



Fig. 4. George Schneeman, *Untitled #60*, undated, ink on illustration board, 3 1/4" x 4 5/8"



Fig. 5. George Schneeman, *Untitled #69*, undated, ink on illustration board, 3 5/8" x 2 3/4"

On The Rush

*to Paul and Emil
and in memory of Elio*

There would always be enough
or too much, the way things got derailed
as though infinite possible train tracks

or American, we hide in trees
the rain comes down, it hits pigeons
little stones on the pathway

a gentle rain that opens into
vistas of skies filled with clouds
and light over foreign cities

there's that and also the poetry
which is also always foreign, in need
of translators, friends, who fall down

at night, which is our night, the night
that began as poetry, delicately
but also savagely and bravely, in private,

there in those apartments, that park
could that be a sideline, or was it
the main subject? I can't recall

Vincent Katz

Bowl

rough glaze
strawberry lemony green
granny smith
naked naked

Chases Dirt

When I'm feeling too almost ill
to be in school, and have no phone
at home, I tell the principals to call
you. Major storm swelling out of the
rockies, into and out of my torso to
plunder the Sun, a 3-in-1 credit rapport
with Score Power. And I, just sitting
here, am, don't try, cleansing Color
Products, for the prism that ere to Thor
commandeers my gas. Rental jag tron.
All dem leettle pressures make you give
yourself too many corrosive gifts! It is
not hard to be exhausted! Addington
– or any other thoughtless, when the
pressure's on, fuck – read the space
to add room to a weakness, a perfectly
obvious blind spot in the national
psyche, with advice. A poor-heeled gig
without the poor. Touch the color & I
smack your arm, but not so it hurts,
physically. And anyone with the guts
to turn, their fine legs coming out of
the captain's head, off and thinking,
make fifty or a hundred thoughts about
it, is gonna get that torturing is a weakness.
Made the mistake of wanting to see if
the stuff felt as vivid as it looked, twice.
Not toy. Cut to light when the boredom
that is certainty freezes; see along the
way who's doing it on the vases.

Anselm Berrigan

Dear George

As though a description could
bring you back to this world
a handsomer Paul Newman say
or an eagle with blue eyes and a ready laugh.
The sweetness of a Midwesterner in Manhattan
the steadiness is piercing
on all four walls of my bedroom
are pieces by you.
Just last winter
in the depth of my sadness
over losses too numerous
too lonesome to lift my head
I looked at those framed worlds
and somewhere in there a glint
a smile some deep revelation of humor & hope
just so there and so sprightly and
and the insane mysterious glint of
actually being able to say hello
to you again over weather
on a Tuscan hill or a woman's
creamy back. Memory set in motion
remembering the first time
I saw your work in Iowa and being
drawn closer to it so I knew yes
then and there black and white
photocopies of your work from my hero poet's books
thumb tacked above my college desk
I'd have to meet you shake your hand
greet you as a kinsman from the hinterlands
and so Dear George I did
and I think of you more often than not
when I flick on the light
in the middle of night or see dawn through
the blinds it's your work I see first in the morning
and last at night. And I like it that way.
I salute you George and the things you made
you brought joy
you brought mischief
you brought beauty
and you are missed.

Todd Colby

**I just like poetry, or
two heads can build something beautiful that the one head might not**

a cento of conversations with George Schneeman

I was fortunate never to be famous
I was always in the lower berth

everything sort of floating in space
blue and red over each other
a kind of purple or brown
a certain amount of transparency

it was the greatest thing of all time
people would come for dinner
we'd get up and continue drinking our wine and doing works

we'd pass things back and forth
you put some words down
glue them to a nice piece of paper
I take some things over to you
you give them back to me
I put some words down

originality's not the right word
a lot of it has to do with having fun
art is a thing of invention
not *I have something to say*
but *we have something to build*

do this or do that
this works or that doesn't work
you're never going to lose anything
even if it's something good
it's the benefit of being small potatoes

my friends mostly turned out to be writers
nobody went to work
that helped hold it together
we'd have dinner

a little bit of collage

we'd put these disparate pieces of paper together
additions and pasting down
a lot of crossings out
paint and all kinds of complications
folded over pages
left over shapes
everything has relevance to everything

it challenges the mind to have art works with words on them
it's like reading music
it makes things that aren't perplexing seem perplexing

I don't know what you call it
it becomes a different story
we'd take five or six pieces of board
without any break or theme
just to have something blue

everybody stayed up all night
a poet and a painter
nested one inside the other

we'd just do them
and when we stopped doing them
that was the end of that

Song for George

for George Schneeman (1934-2009)

Walk with me through the valley of tears
I am not afraid with you at my side I'm okay
Will you walk with me through the valley of shadows?
There I might fear a little but I'm only human
And you would say that's only natural
We are only human and that's what's so funny
When I close my eyes you are gone
When I opened my eyes you were still gone
And that's when I know it's no crime to feel sad
I hear some distant music
That must be the music of the spheres
You are not long gone somewhere in the valley
You walk into a landscape and disappear
Only you know what lies up ahead
Go before it's too late
Go before me fearless strong
Like a father to me
In a memory not perfect
But that's okay
And the rain will stop eventually
In the night of two dimensions
Cut-out stars

Steven Hall

Remembering George

Stopping on the street to give us 5 bucks each for our birthdays on St Mark's near Second Avenue * Building a giant dresser with Paul that sat in our living room at 101 St. Mark's * Building Anselm's loft bed * One night when I was babysitting the sleeping Aliah and Isaac, someone tried to break into the apartment—I could hear him fiddling with the lock. Not knowing how to call the cops, I called Anselm. Anselm called George. Both came over and the guy went away * In the gathering after Elio's funeral while sitting down unprompted he told Anselm and me what it was like collaborating with Ted, and about his bemusement when on George's drawing on a postcard of a windshield Ted wrote "There is no windshield" * Understanding the significance of my first encounter with homemade ravioli, made by George * Standing in the back room on many occasions while he pulled out many new paintings and collages to show Mom * Watching George's homemade videos, with bewilderment: One extended shot of his painted pottery slowly spinning around while classical music played * That he wrote a perfect poem for the Homage to Ted book * Being a little boy slightly embarrassed by viewing the paintings he had made of many naked adults that I knew * Reading the poem Bean Spasms at a book party/homage to him a few years back, and that he said, "Thanks for reading that poem" * That it's odd to know someone as a kid and as an adult—how to cross the barrier * That his brother Dan flashed that same devilish grin George had at the gathering after George's funeral * Listening to George describe how he had repaired the cobblestone street in the town in Italy where he and Katie lived, in order to make good with his neighbors

Edmund Berrigan

Sundown

for George and Katie Schneeman

Telephone rings
voice relays
message

George entered
his collage and sends
all best regards

Then standing
outside Bull McCabe's
two neat vodkas

White hair
among the bulbs

Florist shops
on St. Marks

Saying goodbye

Stretches eternity

A harpsichord's melody
I remember pulls
every tear from my eyes

Born Beside His Wife

Born beside his wife
he began painting his brother.
Certainly animate only and often a wide attract
a wide expanse, his home.

He transcended a hand we would sometimes
use on Thursday, adding flesh blissfully
back and forth chatter anarchy
popular, personal
deeply double.

He was right, he painted, he married, he held,
he was admired.

Whatever.
Simply.

Books came to boil in his apartment cheerfully.
Wallpaper harpsichord home.
Self-taught to play modest, egg, mix, remain
drawing in a prolific dawn.

Threadbare, portraits, long ago found together.
Face it. Much.
Because of friends.

George from A to Z

as art act a Anne after and apartment at artists animate an artist Among Art advertisements
anarchic adding afterward around Army Alexander Another admirers agree attract

Berrigan began But between boiling bohemian buy Books blissfully best both blank being
back bossy bachelor's born besides brother because build bear

called circle collaborations Considered came certainly city's cook commerce collaborator
Collaborative ceramics collages confront companionable conventional clothes category
containing changing could College chance career cheese chatter

did deeply double done die day death dawn described Dreyfus difficult don't doing
drawings Dan Despite

East earned English-as-a-second-language exhibit easily egg each expanse else edition
English earning Emil Elio esteem

for fruitful flock Fagin Frank four found friends failure falls family financier frequent fresco
furniture far form friends' five forth former flesh

George galleries Gallery gallery Granary get grandchildren

him he highly harness hundreds home homes heart housekeeper Holly held harpsichord
hundred hand having

If it in intimate indefinable including instruction interview is Italian illustrated Into Italy

just

known Katie Kotex Kathryn

long Larry late last largely living landscapes limited literature less large

much most Modernism museums Manhattan midnight mostly modest more mixed-media
method materials mind Mary's Minn. March married magazines missed make market

New not nor Nagy

obscure" one of O'Hara Over on occasion often Other old once only

painter poets Peter prolific produced pieces pure post-war permanent places painting
playing poker pots pasta periodically part-time problem Padgett People producing portraits
photographs philosophy Paul Pratt presence pages popular press

quattrocento

Rivers recent Renaissance recounted remained

Schneeman social Schjeldhal so something sometimes Seventy-four some still self-taught
sold series school Soloman SoHo show same small sat samples simply studio
spontaneously subtracting studied St. survived sons sell string

The though Ted that tantalizingly two Tuesday till That through teaching there telephone
Thursday they title Tibor tempera Tuscany taught them together to their threadbare
transcended than text

“unfairly undoubtedly usually undergraduate

very visual vital vim Village

was well-known Waldman who work were works what worked When want well where
wife writers white without wallpaper would whatever We Winona while with well-
regarded wide wine

Xerox

younger Yodeling

Zero Zoroaster's

A Remembrance of George Schneeman

I didn't get a chance to give Katie a big hug yesterday, 2 February. I just want her to know how sad I've been at George's passing.

When I think of the many good things that attracted me at the start to this community in 1978, George and Katie's hospitality was a memorable part.

I'll miss seeing George go by on his bicycle.

I remember when Ted Berrigan died. George and Katie brought everyone back to their place. Lots of food. George with his face beaming red with emotion went from person to person cheering everyone up.

There's been a knot of tears in my chest this week.

George's death has made me consider what's important to me.

George marched to the beat of his own drum.

He seemed to never really get tangled up with distractions. He moved quickly in a practical way. He was friendly if you stopped him on the street to say hello.

At his show a couple of years ago I arrived at the end of the last day when it was getting dark and the rooms were empty of people. George was still around. George took me through the show and told me the origin of the paintings, the stories behind the paintings, who was who forty years ago, materials he used to make the collaged parts, and how surprisingly well Elmer's wood glue held up all this time.

In 1980 George showed me his studio and the egg tempera he used. I asked how he learned to paint. George growled, "I taught myself!"

I house sat his apartment for a month once in the early '80s.

There are people at various points in the circle like myself who admired George probably without George knowing it. The way he kept at it. George and his collaborations with close friends created a dream space for all of us.

I have a big green and blue ceramic bowl George made. I save it to use during the eight days of Passover. Once a year I unwrap my Passover dishes and there's that bright green and blue bowl again so good to see!

Cliff Fyman

Front cover: George Schneeman, *Untitled #45*, undated, ink on illustration board, 3 3/8 " x 2 3/4"

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George Schneeman artwork courtesy of Katie Schneeman.

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