

# BILL RICE







*Front cover:*

*Silks*

1984, oil on canvas, 60" x 48"

Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap

*Left:*

*Untitled*

1967, ink on paper, 11" x 8½"

Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap

*Right:*

*Untitled (detail)*

n.d., watercolor on paper, 11" x 8½"

Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap



*rice*





Bill Rice in Richard Kern's *Manhattan Love Suicides* (1985)



# BILL RICE

*Paintings & Works on Paper*

JUNE 2 - JULY 1, 2011

SHFAP/steven harvey fine art projects

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*Untitled* 1984, oil on canvas, 68" x 48"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap



## Bill Rice: Salon/Saloon

*“There are several Puerto Ricans on the Avenue today, which makes it beautiful and warm.”—Frank O’Hara*

My impulse toward making exhibitions was inspired by my experience working with Bill Rice and others on a large group exhibition, *Salon/Saloon*, that took place in his studio on 3rd Street in 1984. It was one of my first collaborative curatorial experiences and it provided me an example of what could be done when artists work together to do something outside of traditional confines. It was a sprawling mix of artists, some of whom have subsequently become well-known and others still under the radar. That it existed in all its private grandeur in his dilapidated East Village studio was due to Bill’s generosity and inclusive sensibility. Some of my basic ideas about art—that it should exist against the grain of dominant cultural modes and that it should be personal and homegrown and as much as possible be self-determined by artists—reflects my experiences working with Bill.

Rice painted, as was said of Bonnard, with a brush in one hand and a rag in the other. He layered washes of thinned out oil paint into a cloudy geometry of boxy urban architecture and private/public desire. Critic Ted Castle termed Bill “the painter of modern life... for our time.” Bill’s color was like a tawny orange afterglow—urban dusk, plus the glow of stoplights after the sun has settled. Inky darks like Prussian blue night skies, and un-attributable grays impossible to describe like dust, like rust on metal. The surfaces of his paint-

ings were distressed, his corners frayed, expressing fragility and vulnerability, but he would say “just let me take a little linseed oil and freshen it up...” and it would emerge...like a treasure from an attic.

In his early work from the sixties he painted accretionary architecture like spider web complexes, related to the tenement and bridge paintings of Gandy Brodie. Later he began to paint a kind of cartoon topography of gay urban desire acted out in trucks and parks between young Latino and black men.

Rene Ricard called Rice “the greatest living painter of the city, and in his painting there is no other city than New York, black New York...” Bill, whose slender limbs sometimes barely seemed to exist, celebrated the “electric body” of the men he loved and admired...stretching, folded up, crouching, having sex, handsomely endowed, his work is like a more out version of Whitman, an erotic ode to a city...

Going back to the fifties, Bill could tell you about the circumstances of how a painting had been made. I bought from him a painting of a woman in a cobalt violet dress huddled in a doorway. He told me that he had glimpsed her early one morning, while walking home late on the Bowery. The painting is like that—just a peripheral glimpse—that he had the visual acuity to transform into a vivid color image. His work always seemed close to life and yet transformed. Like Bonnard, Rice understood memory as a key transformative principle in painting.

Rice’s painting is representative to me of the culture that I grew up with in the East Village, an independent culture, like that of Jack Smith, Jeff Weiss, Robert Frank, Bob Thompson, Lois Dodd, David Grossblatt and my father Jason Harvey, among others, a predominantly urban, independent culture. I remain grateful to Bill for his work, his presence and his largesse.

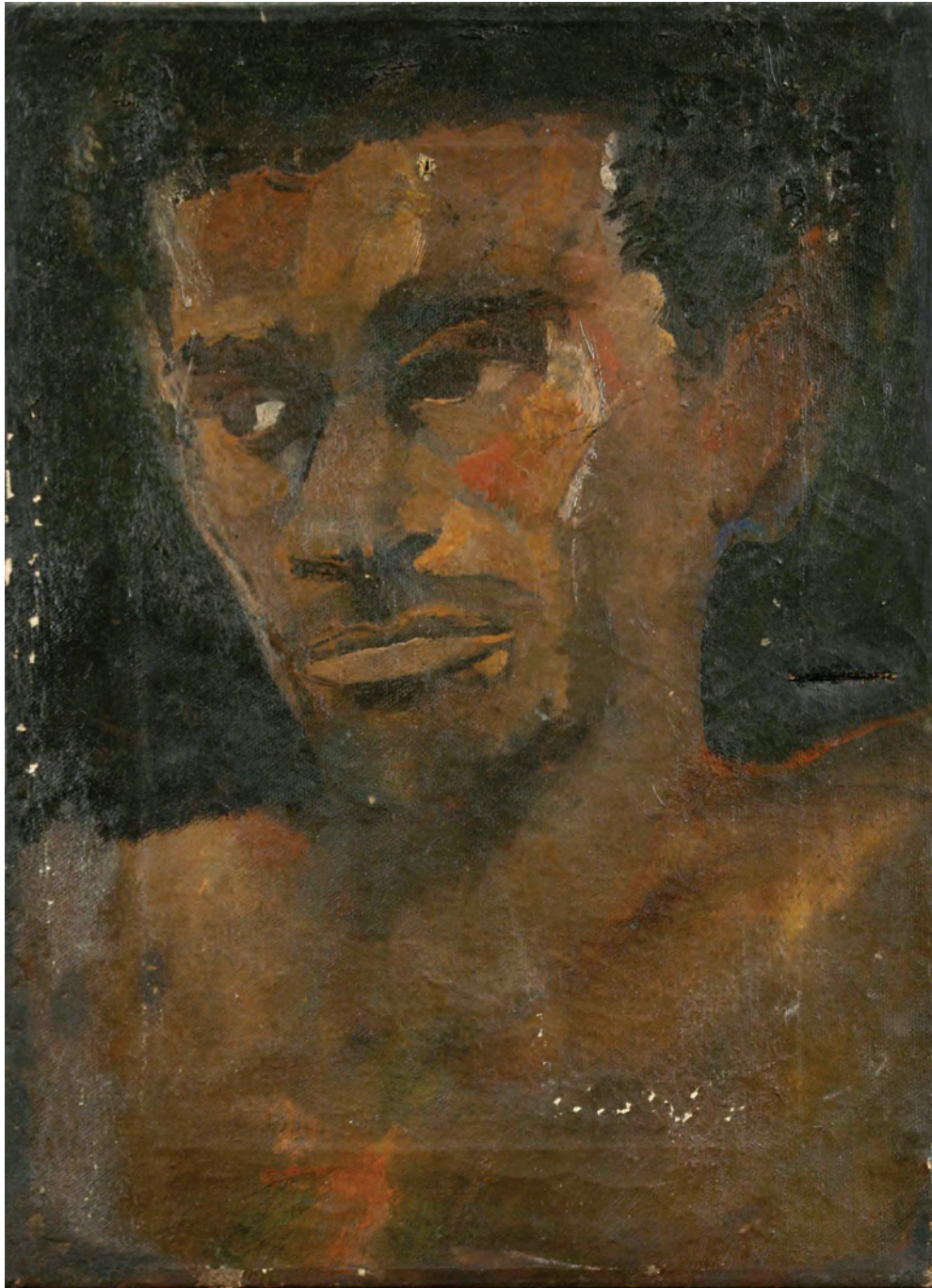
Steven Harvey





*Woman in Purple Dress* 1985, oil on canvas board, 20" x 16"  
Private collection, courtesy shfap





*Tom Verters* 1962, oil on canvas, 14" x 10"  
Private collection



## Bill Rice's *Idylles Noires*

The painter Bill Rice was like a poet in that he trusted in the tangible: the smoky architecture of his neighborhood, the beauty of African-American and Hispanic men—omnipresent in the men's shelter across from his apartment and studio as well as being his friends and lovers; the inexorable presence of cars and trucks; the continuance of sexual passion, be it intimate or furtive; the primacy of the creative act.

Rice was a legendary figure of a time and place that stands out in political and cultural history, both locally and internationally. He made a unique contribution to painting in what was for most of the twentieth century the characteristic American way: that of adapting the accomplishments of canonical European masters to one's own experience. Rice also can be credited with inventing his own genre.

Rice went to Middlebury College and moved to New York in 1953 and to the Lower East Side in 1960, taking up residence in one then another apartments on East 3rd Street for the rest of his life. The Lower East Side was at that time home to Polish and Ukrainian immigrants, Asians, African-Americans and Hispanics, beatniks, artists, gay people and jazz musicians.

Formerly farms, slums and landfill, it had been rebuilt at the turn of the twentieth century, filling up with tenement buildings that complied with new laws that outlawed rooms without windows. By the 1960's it was bohemian, artistic, political and poor, but comparable



*Untitled (Red Figure)*  
 1987, watercolor on paper, 11" x 8½"  
 Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap

to Berlin in the 1920's or Picasso's Montmartre in its significance as a place that germinated what became a wealth of radically new theatre, film, music, literature and visual art.

Soot filtered through the New York City air then. It seemed thicker on the Lower East Side that was shadowy and unpopulated after working hours. "It was dark after sunset," Rice once said, "there were no stores open late and not many bars." In Stuyvesant Park, men would socialize on the benches then go into the bushes for sex. The East Village in the 1960's, according to the writer Perry Brass in his memoir "Lost Gay New York"<sup>1</sup> "was dirt cheap and wild...friendlier and more bohemian than anyplace in New York, but it also could be violent at times. You had to watch whom you eyed, but you never could tell when a pair of friendly eyes might meet you. It was also very integrated racially."

Rice liked bars. He was wont to find a comfortable spot where he could observe and return to it nightly, reclaiming the same exact seat, if possible. He first hung



out in the Old Reliable, a mixed, gay-friendly bar with a good jukebox at 213 East 3rd Street between A and B. It was extremely dark and completely democratic and classless.

*The bar was talk and cruising; in the back  
room, we danced: Martha and the Vandellas,  
Smokey and the Miracles, while sellers  
and buyers changed crisp tens for smoke and smack.<sup>2</sup>*

Marilyn Hacker's poem about the Old Reliable goes on to describe a place where a secretary might kiss a woman for the first time, everyone "wailed about the war" and some would head South to work for CORE and SNCC. A group of experimental playwrights turned the back area into The Old Reliable Theatre Tavern and many theatrical people became regulars. Later the crowd moved to



*Fire Play* 1987, watercolor on paper, 18" x 24"  
Private collection, courtesy shfap



*Untitled*

ca. 1974, watercolor on paper, 13¾" x 11"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap

Phebe's on the Bowery and Rice followed. He was an absorber, keeping up with the goings on, meeting people, drinking half the night then going to his studio to paint.

The work from this time appears more detailed, literary and hesitant than what he came to be known for later, but one extant triptych already contains what appears to be a sexual encounter between two figures. Cheerfully impoverished, he survived on meager sales of his paintings to friends, and took on work as a literary researcher with the scholar Ulla Dydo—for whom he worked for over twenty-five years. He was a collaborator on *A Stein Reader* and *Gertrude Stein: The Language That Rises*. Bill Rice worked concurrently with the scholar Edward Burns for nearly fifteen years and with Ulla Dydo they collaborated on *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten* and *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder*. Burns, who had met Rice in the early 1970's at Phebe's and is the owner of the aforementioned triptych, wrote that Rice wasn't known much as a painter at that time but talked often about visiting museums and galleries.<sup>3</sup>





*Untitled* ca. 1974, oil on canvas, 24" x 30"  
Private collection



*Untitled* n.d., oil on canvas (triptych), 22" x 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 36" x 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 22" x 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  
Private collection





*Untitled (right section of triptych)*  
n.d., oil on canvas, 22" x 21¾"  
Private collection

By 1970 the East Village was in the throes of a heroin epidemic, landlords let the buildings dilapidate. Fires, torched for insurance money—a tradition—gutted many. Vacant lots sprang up. The population of older and minority neighborhood stalwarts became victims of this disinvestment. Water and heat disappeared from apartments regularly. It became an environment of chaos and decay.

Newer arrivals to the increasingly marginal neighborhood were younger people who, with no particular expectations of larger worldly success, began making no-budget films for an audience consisting mainly of one another. Bill Rice began acting and soon became well known locally, appearing in films and experimental theatre. His deep resonant voice and sad sack demeanor brought an unusual resonance to many productions.

Rice was an adherent to a particular ethos, sometimes identified with early bohemia, that abhorred self-promotion. He claims in the 1960's to have had mostly black people for friends and lovers, "I didn't think white people had any soul..."<sup>4</sup> But interacting with many of the younger East Village artists who had their own adamantly anti-professional disposition, such as filmmakers Amos Poe and Beth B and Scott B,

*Untitled*

ca. 1973, oil on canvas, 50" x 50"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap



artist David Wojnarowicz and various Punk musicians such as Richard Hell, who derived creative energy from the very real rats, garbage and destruction that surrounded them, no doubt furthered Rice's own work.

Notably, Rice does not, for the most part, depict the Lower East Side as devastated, with vacant lots and piles of trash, as is depicted in many of the films as well as the paintings of younger artists of the neighborhood such as Martin Wong. In many ways Rice's work seems constructed from memories of his first and comparably utopian decade there.

Among the voluminous sheaths of drawings, paintings on paper and mixed media figurative collages he left behind are several diminutive watercolors of

verdant landscapes. Done on trips to Cape Cod, they belie the muted, crepuscular precincts that are seemingly *echt* Rice. Considering these limpid depictions of Elysian meadows alongside a number of Rice's early paintings and drawings of relatively lighted but austere architecture one finds the underpinning of a classicist's worldview.

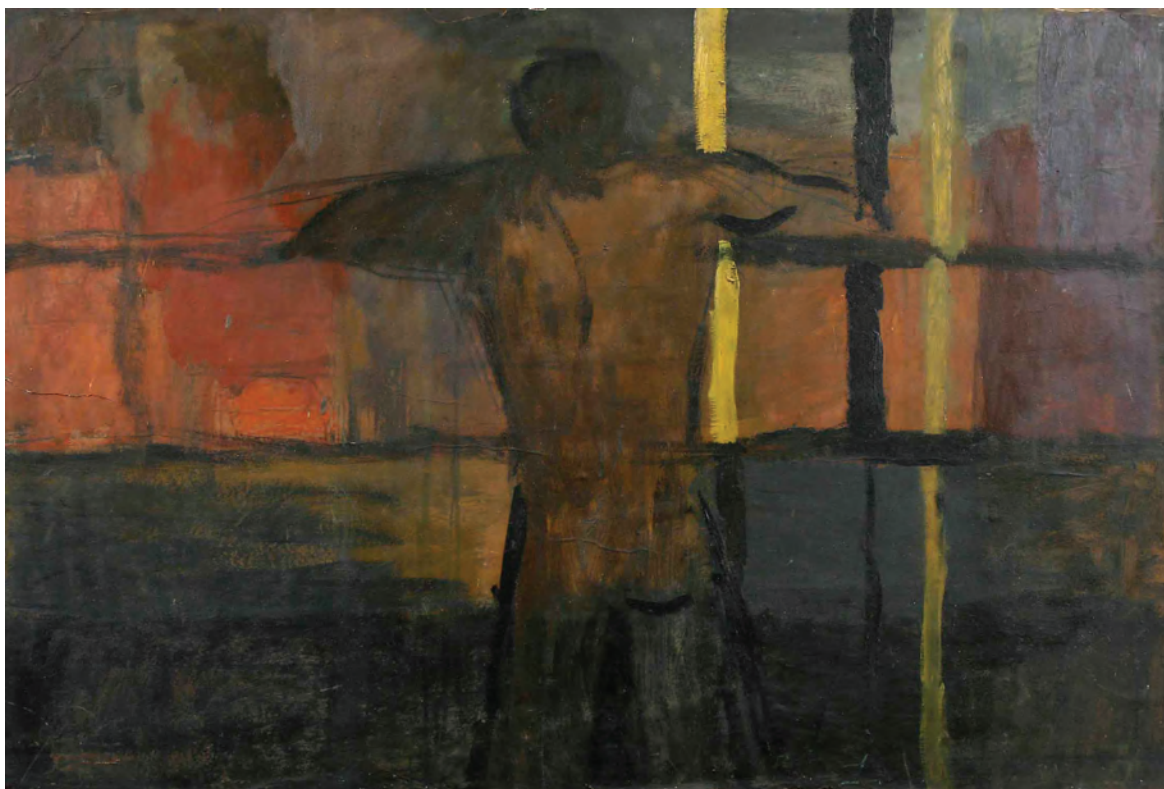
Rene Ricard, in the landmark essay on Rice, "An Art of Regret," in the Summer 1985 issue of *Artforum*, wrote, "the work is the opposite of Watteau's *fêtes galantes*." Ricard continues that Watteau was a solitary consumptive who could never participate in the outdoor dances and loitering that he depicted among the costumed aristocrats, that Watteau landscapes are painted cardboard like Rice's fictive land of tenements and that like Watteau, Rice in his "literacy and whiteness" is left an ignorant cripple among these "unemployed illiterate gods."

Ricard was no doubt referencing Baudelaire's assertion that the more one is cultured the less they are interested in fucking. But Rice was far from a dreamy consumptive. He was an inveterate cruiser and his working hours were filled with innumerable projects as well as his own painting. For example, Rice hosted his own theatrical *fêtes*. Gary Indiana describes Rice's "backyard garden—a jumble of bricks, concrete, and cinder blocks with little sprouts of vegetation here and there—behind Bill's floor-through studio at 13 East 3rd"<sup>5</sup> where they presented summer theatre for four years. Rice called it "Garbage After Dinner." He also opened a gallery in his basement and exhibited early work by Robert Gober, Barbara Ess and David Wojnarowicz, among others.

Then there are the thousand-odd pages of his own pet research project, the raw notes on Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, that he was convinced was originally meant to depict a male brothel. It could be observed that Rice brothelized his immediate environment in his paintings and drawings. Robert Scholes writes of the fixation that Picasso and Joyce had with the prostitute and the brothel. It had much to do with the artist's relation to the world and how art making is a risky exploration. "What they share, is a special interest not only in the prostitute but in the brothel itself as a place of degradation and magic."<sup>6</sup>

Rice was an admirer of Watteau, however, and the comparison with the *fête galante* prompts the idea of the *idylle noire*, a pastoral poem with an element of urban grit, of city streets and night. Among his major works, there is a series of paintings of trees, for example, that borrow their signatory presence from the classic idyll. Rice conflates the tree with quasi-cubistic verticals that exchange the dominant linear elements in black with the slow undulant curves of the arboreal presence. It is one of the clearest indicators that like an idyll, one is in the pres-





*Man* 1979, oil on canvas, 24" x 36"  
Private collection, courtesy shfap

ence of nature. Compare a work of Rice's with say, Edward Hopper, whose work thrives on the tension of difference between the human presence, nature and architecture. Rice, by contrast, strives for continuity. Even the cars and trucks are painted and drawn with exceptional empathy. Painting thrives on paradox. Rice paints the Lower East Side as a mythic place of small pleasures, of comforts; what is supposed to be threatening is depicted as warm and enveloping, like a drug.

Rice once said he used "Dick Tracy colors, black, red and yellow." The paintings can be seen as palimpsests of experience. He left behind paintings in all stages of completion, owing to a method of slow build-up of mood and memory. The structures that occur between panels of the comic strip seem melted into Rice's spaces too. With *Man*, 1979, a painting on paper of a male figure seeming to be looking over a parapet, Rice paints the figure like a tree. The figure is seen from behind with his legs apart extending downward toward the lower edge, rooted almost like two trunks and painted with a diagonal brushstroke pattern that is reminiscent of tree bark. Decisive black marks underline one



*Fourth of July Man*  
1986, gouache on paper, 18" x 24"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap

buttock, a lower bicep and his left flank. The scattered structure of loosely painted reds and yellows is interknit with browns and grays. There is a sultry, festive feeling that extends from the suggestive brilliance of the varied lights to the unguarded figure, enrapt and nearly naked.

In the painting *Silks*, 1984, a slightly bent figure walks among surrounding perpendiculars of densely muffled nighttime windows, doors, walls and girders. A traffic sign glows meekly. The figure in blue and red is complemented by the faint yellow structure of a cab for hire. Whistler, Rothko, and Giacometti's walking man seem enfolded here, but there is the lingering presence of Watteau. Similar to the paintings of this mysterious eighteenth century artist, Rice turns the figure away from view and lights the side of the face. He places emphasis on secondary aspects of the two players, the shimmer of the clothes of the figure, and the reflection on the stem of the windshield frame of the taxi.

The work *Fourth of July Man*, 1986, depicts a young man in red t-shirt and blue jeans sitting on the step of a shuttered storefront with a collection of replicas of pieces of the Statue of Liberty spread on the ground in front of him, presumably for sale. The composition owes its pictorial structure to Matisse's series of Nice interiors from the 1920's where sensual models were situated among an array of decorative patterning derived from various fabrics and framed by hotel architecture. Rice finds equivalent patterns in the steel scissors gates and wrought iron arabesques behind





*Silks* 1984, oil on canvas, 60" x 48"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap





*Untitled (Man with Fan)*  
ca. 1973, oil on canvas, 24" x 24"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap

the figure and yet another decorative motif—his rendering of the horizontal painted graffiti as it overlaps with the horizontal folds of the store’s rollup door. Where in Matisse the significant figure would be a curvaceous woman, here the street salesman is hunched and angular, but sits on the patterned cushion of a plastic milk crate. In counterpoint are the souvenirs: the slender orange and sensual yellow curves of the flame shapes and the oddly soft spikes of the green crowns below the figure’s white sneakers.

In *Untitled (Man with Fan)* Rice challenges himself to create a chamber picture as rich in visual puns, games and double-entendres as the one Matisse assembled in MoMA’s *Piano Lesson*. There is the rhyming sequence of ovals, from the darkly colored afro of the man to the roundness of the fan object, finished by another disc shape at rest under where the hand holds the elbow resting on the table. Note the grape sliding onto the forearm from the “painted” fruit on the fan itself, its collection of bananas and buttock-like peaches. The gathered colors that shield the figure’s chest are matched by the colors of the bouquet

directly to the right of it, with an outline of testicles steadying the vase upon the surface. The vase contains an outline of a shaft sticking up through it, climaxing in the floral exclamation.

The other epidemic that devastated the Lower East Side underground was the AIDS crisis. Though there is no direct reference to this in Rice's work, the numerous paintings with the dimming of blinds might be about the dimming of lives. In the latter part of the 1980's when these deaths were at their height, Rice spent time at Dick's Bar on Second Avenue, which had blinds.

In this sense, it is how Rice perhaps is most like Bonnard, the most Proustian of painters, who worked with the very particulars of his day-to-day existence and seems to go over them endlessly for clues. Every surface in Bonnard seems scoured for some sort of meaning. Rice's blinds are symbolic, for this writer, of hunter's blinds. His inclusion of taxis, automobiles and trucks so pervades his paintings, even more so his drawings, sketches and notes, attended to with such delicacy and feeling that they amount to quick views of urban fauna. Thinking of these beasts sidling by the blinds at close range, unaware of their observer, brings to mind "When the Hunter gets Captured by the Game," a jukebox hit of the mid 1960's. Rice chose bars based on their jukeboxes, and probably knew the Marvelettes song well.

Rice's work is a testament to what it felt like to live and love in the East Village at a certain time. It has a kind of compacted feeling that still seems the unique property of the medium of painting. Beyond this is Rice's unique gentleness in how he was able to communicate all that he was captured by.

Joe Fyfe

<sup>1</sup> <http://queernewyorkblog.blogspot.com/2010/05/perry-brass-lost-gay-new-york-uptown.html>

<sup>2</sup> "Nights of 1964-1966: The Old Reliable" from *Selected Poems: 1965-1990* by Marilyn Hacker (W.W. Norton, New York 1994)

<sup>3</sup> "Bill Rice: New Paintings," catalog essay by Edward Burns, p. 5, 11 Rue Larrey at Sidney Janis Gallery, 1995

<sup>4</sup> "David Wojnarowicz: A Definitive History of Five or Six Years on the Lower East Side." Interviews by Sylvère Lotringer, p. 61

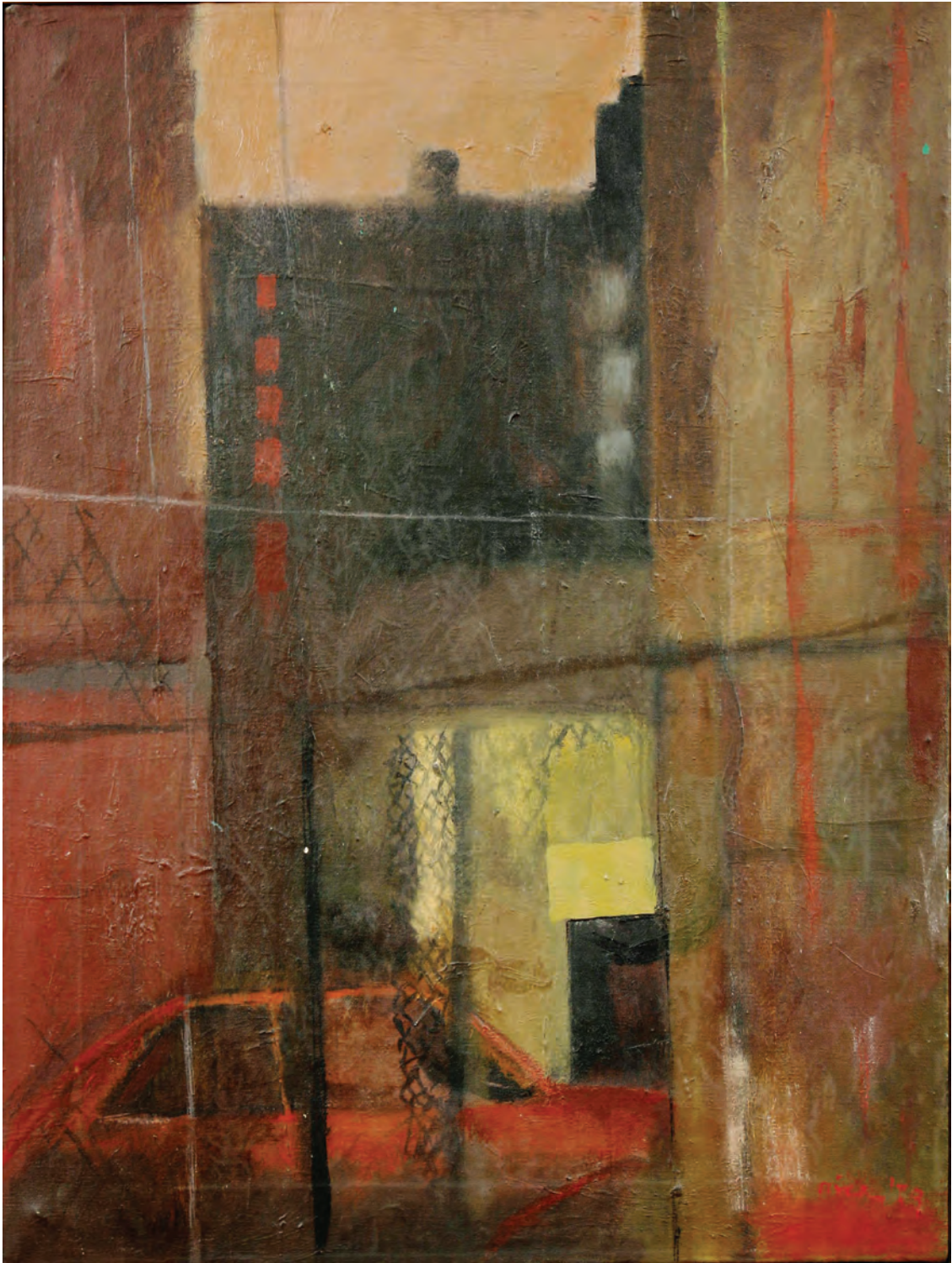
<sup>5</sup> "One Brief, Scuzzy Moment," Gary Indiana, *New York Magazine*, May 21, 2005

<sup>6</sup> Robert Scholes, "In the Brothel of Modernism: Picasso and Joyce" <http://www.brown.edu/Departments/MCM/people/scholes/PicJoy>



*Untitled* 1979, oil on canvas, 16" x 12"  
Private collection





*Untitled* 1979, oil on canvas, 23¾" x 18¾"  
Private collection



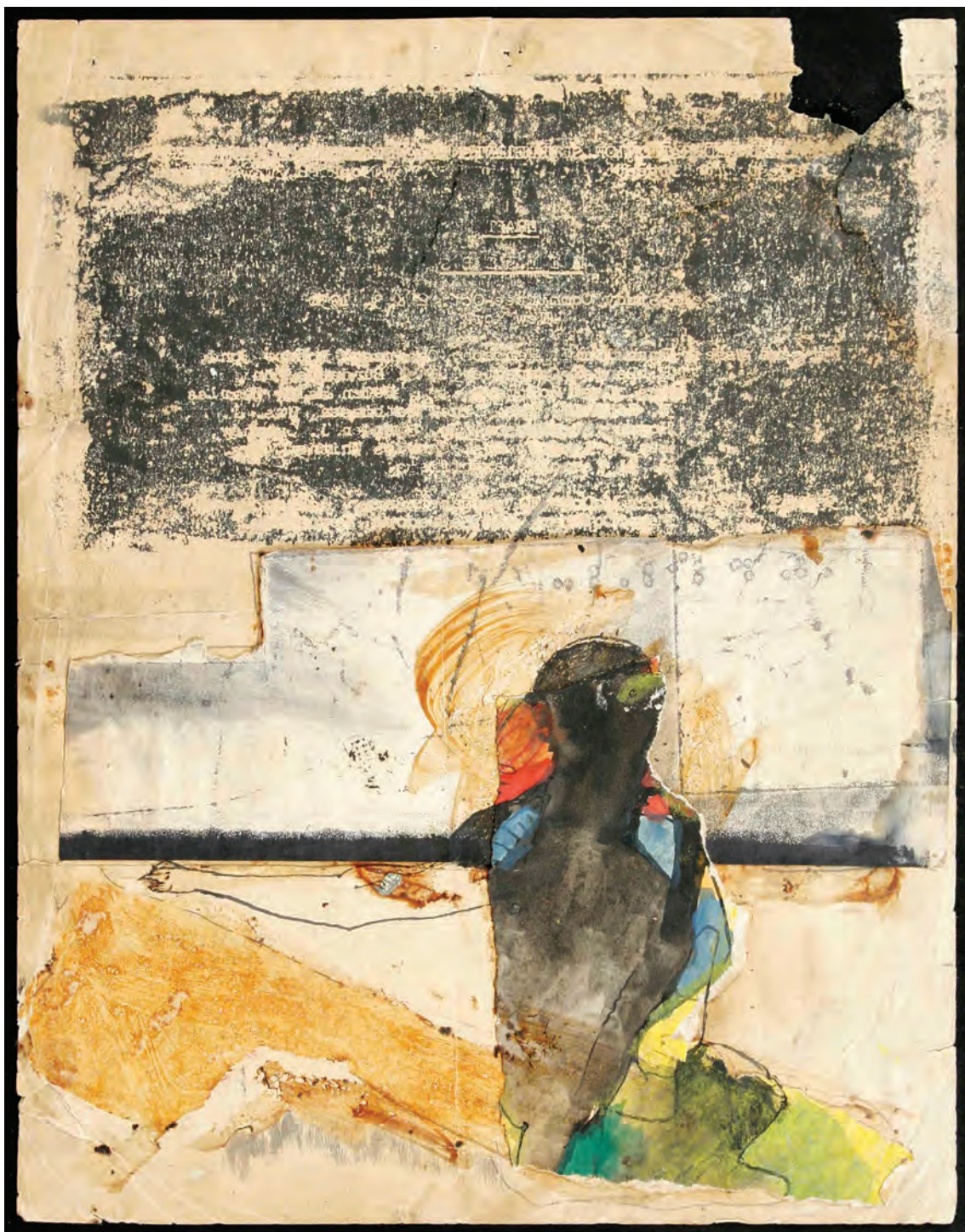
*Untitled* 1984, collage (two-page spread from artist's book), 9½" x 14"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap





*Untitled* 1984, oil on canvas, 54" x 74"  
Private collection





*Untitled* 1961-62, papier collé, 11" x 8½"  
Private collection

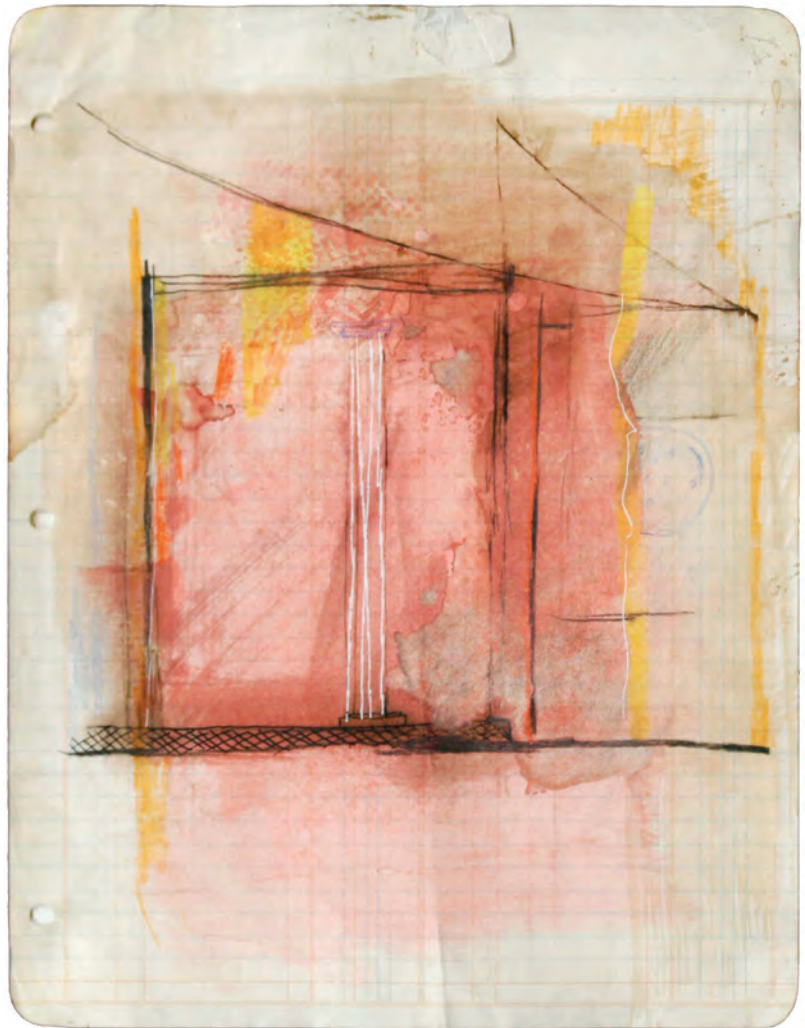


*Untitled* 2005, mixed media, 11" x 8½"  
Private collection



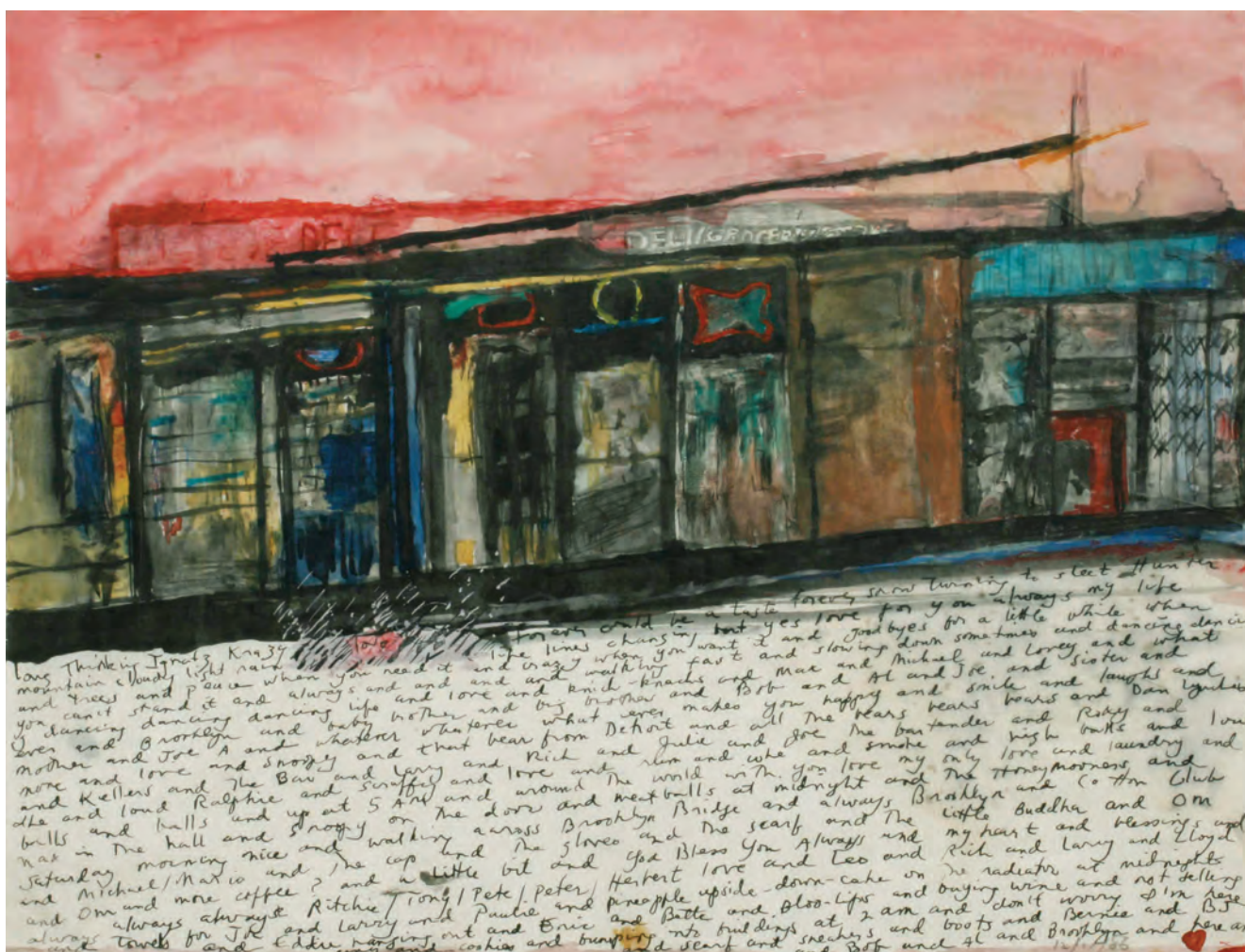


*Untitled*  
 1967, ink on paper, 10¼" x 3"  
 Private collection



*Untitled*  
 ca. 1986, watercolor on paper, 11" x 8½"  
 Private collection





*Deli* 1986, watercolor and ink on paper, 11" x 8½"  
Private collection



*Untitled*

1987, oil on canvas, 50" x 20"

Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap

*Untitled*  
1987, oil on canvas, 50" x 20"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap







*Untitled (Self Portrait)* ca. 1979, oil on canvas, 12" x 9"  
Private collection

## Closer to Home

Asked to write about the artist Bill Rice for this retrospective of his work, how do I respond to viewers, to an audience of people who have followed him as an actor in a play or movie, seen a drawing of his, heard about him from friends? Some may even, without knowing this tall, skinny man, have observed him walking on the sidewalk across the street, eyes focused on something distant, you knew not what, that determined his step, set the angle of his body, the focus of his eyes. Fascinated by his slow advance toward something, you expected Bill to come upon a discovery he was about to make there, across the street, but you'd miss it and regret it, a misinterpretation, a mere error, a distraction. You'd discard it and stay closer to home.

For years Bill and I worked together on a book about Gertrude Stein. He'd come to my house once or twice a week so we could review the last details examined and go on to the next. He never rang the bell, never telephoned ahead.

I'd listen. Slow, regular steps on the stairs to my loft, two flights up, displacing the air, barely audible. Equal weight placed on each step, one by one, at regular intervals. No need to see what I heard then and even now still hear in my mind. Auditory memory.

At other times, I hear a clear, regular speaker's voice proofreading familiar sentences and phrases that are parts of our book, the voice and pace assuring me that they read right and sound right.

After Bill Rice died, on January 23, 2006, there appeared, along with an obituary in a local Lower East Side newspaper, a photograph of Bill, a painter, holding a stretcher for what one assumed he expected to use for a new painting. Bill's face, with a wry smile, looked at the reader from the center of the stretcher. Perhaps it was for publicity, to advertise a new performance or a party in his garden in the summer. At the time, I thought the image was a framed self-portrait. That is how I remember the photograph even now.

At the N.Y.U. Library, on which we both relied, I would see Bill from where I was sitting, climbing up into the stacks with a prepared list in his hand, moving along the shelves with no apparent aim or direction. He rarely followed the library's numbering system to locate a particular volume. The library was a place for unexpected discoveries, a title or odd shape of a book might demand attention. Sometimes Bill might examine a whole stack of volumes because near the bottom was a title of interest.

His mind worked three dimensionally. He searched shelf by shelf, and looked up and down as well as sideways. He had not yet learned the new skill of searching in the flat, horizontal direction, the skill of the machine age, the know-how, know-all, of the twenty-first century that no longer needs the third dimension. When Bill looked for art books and came upon one that he needed, he would engage in what looked to me, from a distance, like an exchange with the artist/subject who had been flattened into the pages of a book. He'd hold the book up vertically, look at the image, and extricate him from the volume.

At the Metropolitan Museum, Bill asked not for the usual Visitor's Admission Pass, but for a Researcher's Admission Pass. Well spoken as he obviously was, he had no higher degree and no academic affiliation, no status, nothing to prove his worthiness or his professionalism. Yet in the end, he received the Researcher's Pass.



*Woman in Red Dress*  
n.d., oil on canvas, 50" x 10"  
Private collection, courtesy shfap



*Untitled*

1973, oil on canvas, 48" x 36"  
Private collection



Bill was an actor, too, though he had not started as a performer. When a friend, who had written a play, asked him to take a part in the new play, Bill discovered that he could act in the theater, that he loved performing, learning lines, and practicing how to speak them, learning the life of a play.

One day, when Bill had a part in a play, I saw him walking up Second Avenue to get to the performance three blocks away. He crossed the avenue looking down, not speaking, not even moving his lips, not smiling at people he knew, greeting or talking with friends, social exchange left behind, a mere memory. He was already in the play, his lines moving

his mind, his concentration, his focus inside, never visibly performing or rehearsing his lines, or practicing how to deliver them.

On the street, Bill would meet shy, young would-be writers or poets, often gay men that did not know how to put words together, or write lines. He would befriend them, look at their writing, their often forlorn attempts to “say something,” say this or say that, mean something else. And he’d read aloud what was written down. He’d sound out what he saw there and the young friends could not believe that it was their writing. Then he’d help them find lines, words, rhythms, even rhymes. Often they’d return for more instruction, more lessons.

A big cityscape oil painting by Bill hangs in my house. Every evening, the setting sun projects through the window frames across the room and onto the bottom of the painting. Then, suddenly and sharply, it illuminates one particular orange section of the painting, always the same. I wait for the setting sun to rise onto the canvas. The orange comes to life, as if its job was to complete the painting with a brightness the canvas required and insistently asked for. Evening sun and canvas would engage in this exchange. Of course, the sun would not stop; its job done, it would go on its prescribed way, leaving the visual memory of what had happened to Bill’s painting.

Over the years of working with me on Gertrude Stein’s writing, Bill became interested in Picasso’s portrait of her and his friendship with her—a mutual friendship, active between them wherever each of them was, whatever they were doing—writing, painting, thinking—in Paris, in Spain, in Italy or while visiting friends. In those years Bill became increasingly absorbed in the gradual development of Picasso’s sketches for *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*. When discussing Stein together, Bill was able to listen to me as I talked and jotted down notes while he contemplated reproduction of new details in Picasso’s design. Sometimes, when we concluded, I’d be uneasy with the rough drafts of what I’d written, ready to throw out my few pages. I’d give him the pages to take away or discard, I don’t know what I wanted. Within a few days, perhaps at our next meeting, he’d return the pages to me, sometimes with a very few comments jotted in but mostly without words. I would not know what he had thought, but returning the pages, read or not, allowed me to continue.

Later, Bill and I met on Friday afternoons, and he would speak of new discoveries in the sketches for the *Demoiselles*. He would not read to me what he had written, but speak of what had gone on in his mind,





Studio wall with *Demoiselles* studies, ca. 2003. Photograph by Bill Rice

how the movement or position of the figures in the sketches had led Picasso in new directions. At first, I took notes about what he laid before me, always with the images before us. But eventually I let him talk and recorded on tape what he said. Later, after he had left, I would type his recorded words into a coherent typescript, and ended up with one dated typescript for him and one for myself. By the following Friday, he'd have read the last typed pages, sometimes adding notes or question marks, and we would go on to record the next Friday's discoveries.

All this was in preparation for a book about the *Demoiselles*. Bill recorded the latest news of what he'd seen, discovered, or discarded but he never wrote it out in longhand. (Even in the last two weeks of his life, hospitalized, he planned "next Friday.")

Now, in my large hall closet, I have a typescript of some 870 pages of Bill's work, the book of his spoken words that will never be completed, never published. Was it his refusal to write? His distrust of written words? His doubts about his perceptions or Picasso's intentions?

Since then, we have cleared Bill's studio in the basement of a nearby building. A hand-written note on the table where he sat and worked, reads:

NOTHING IN HERE IS TRASH.

What remains with us is his work, finished or not, his private process and his artistic preoccupations.

Ulla E. Dydo



*Untitled* 1962, watercolor on paper, 3¾" x 11"  
Private collection





*Untitled (Head)* ca. 1984, gouache on paper, 8¼" x 3"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap



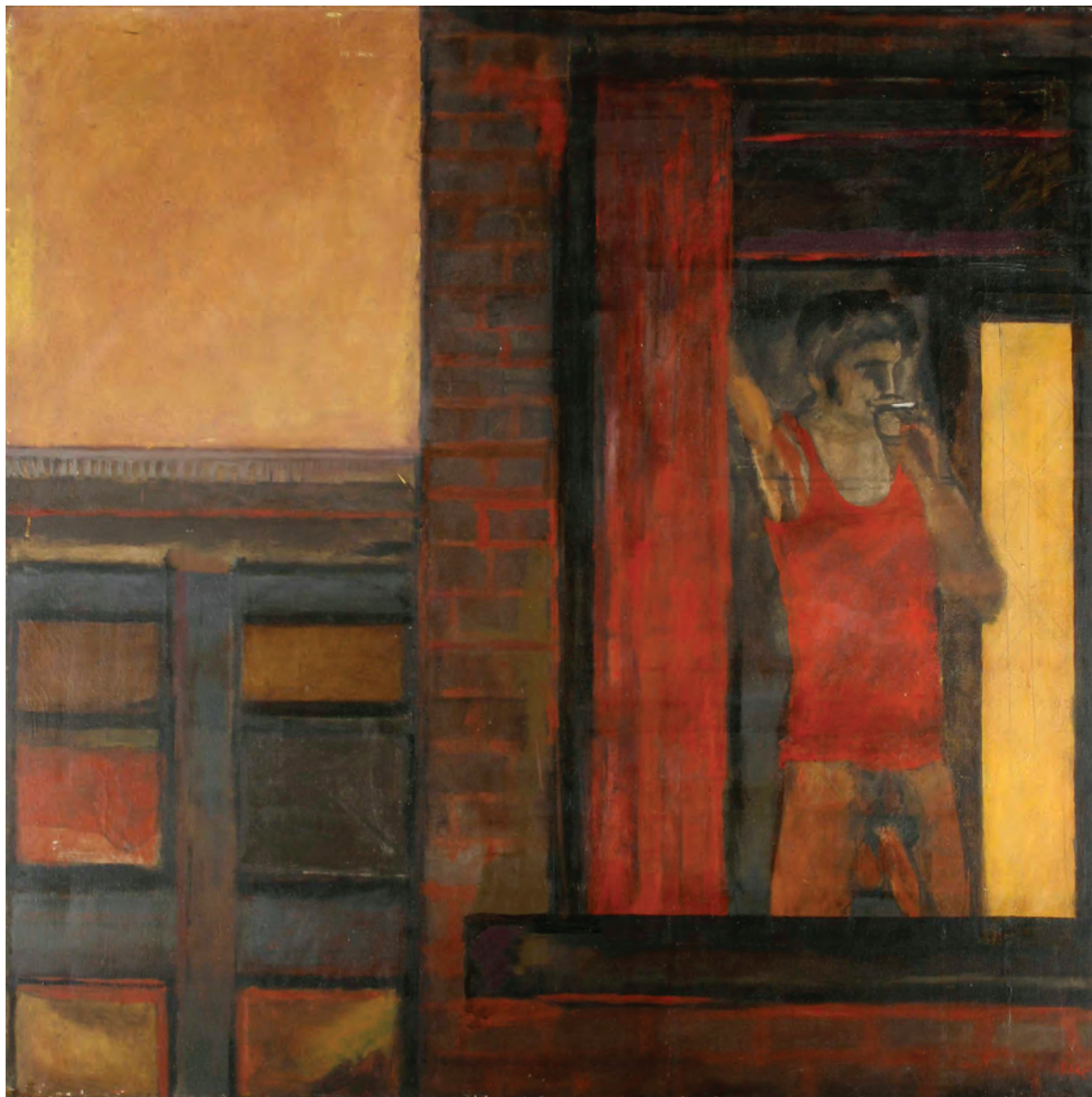
*Untitled*

ca. 1957, ink and watercolor on paper, 13½" x 7¼"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap





*Bodega II* 1984, oil on plaster, 6¼" x 5¼"  
Private collection, courtesy shfap



*Untitled* 1980, oil on canvas, 50" x 50"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap





*Two Puerto Rican Brothers* 1980, oil on canvas, 40" x 40"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap

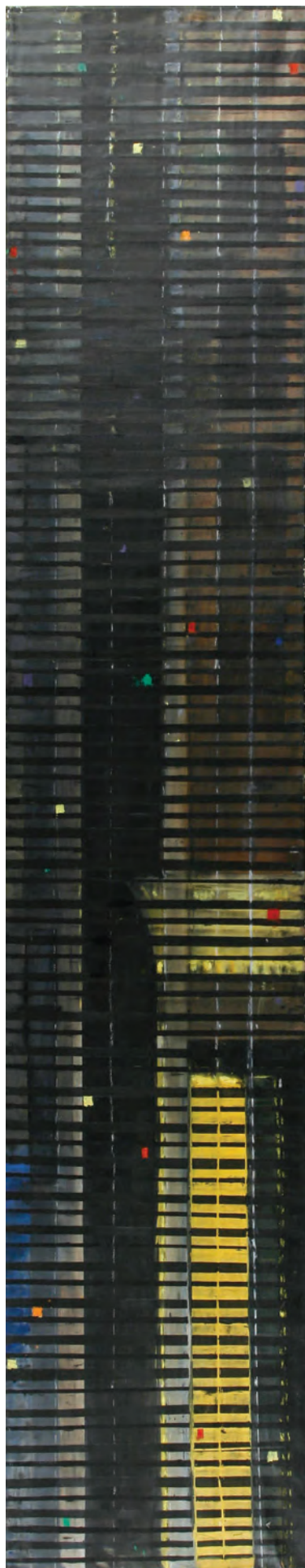




*Untitled* 1987, oil on canvas, 16" x 20"  
Private collection

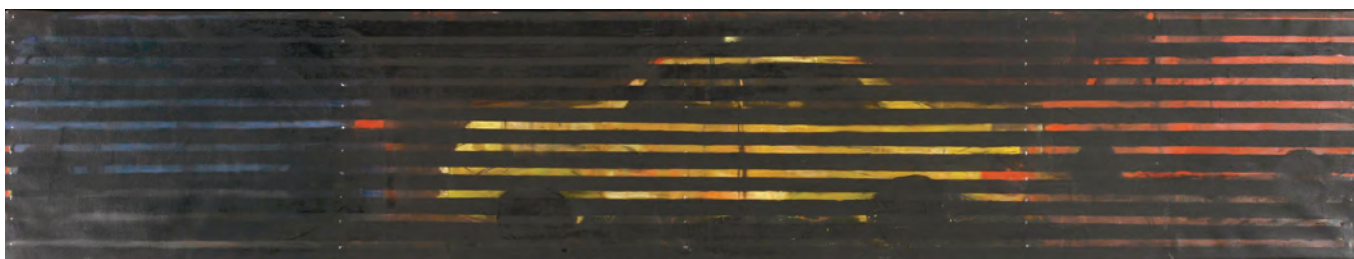


*Untitled* 1995, oil on canvas, 48" x 36"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap

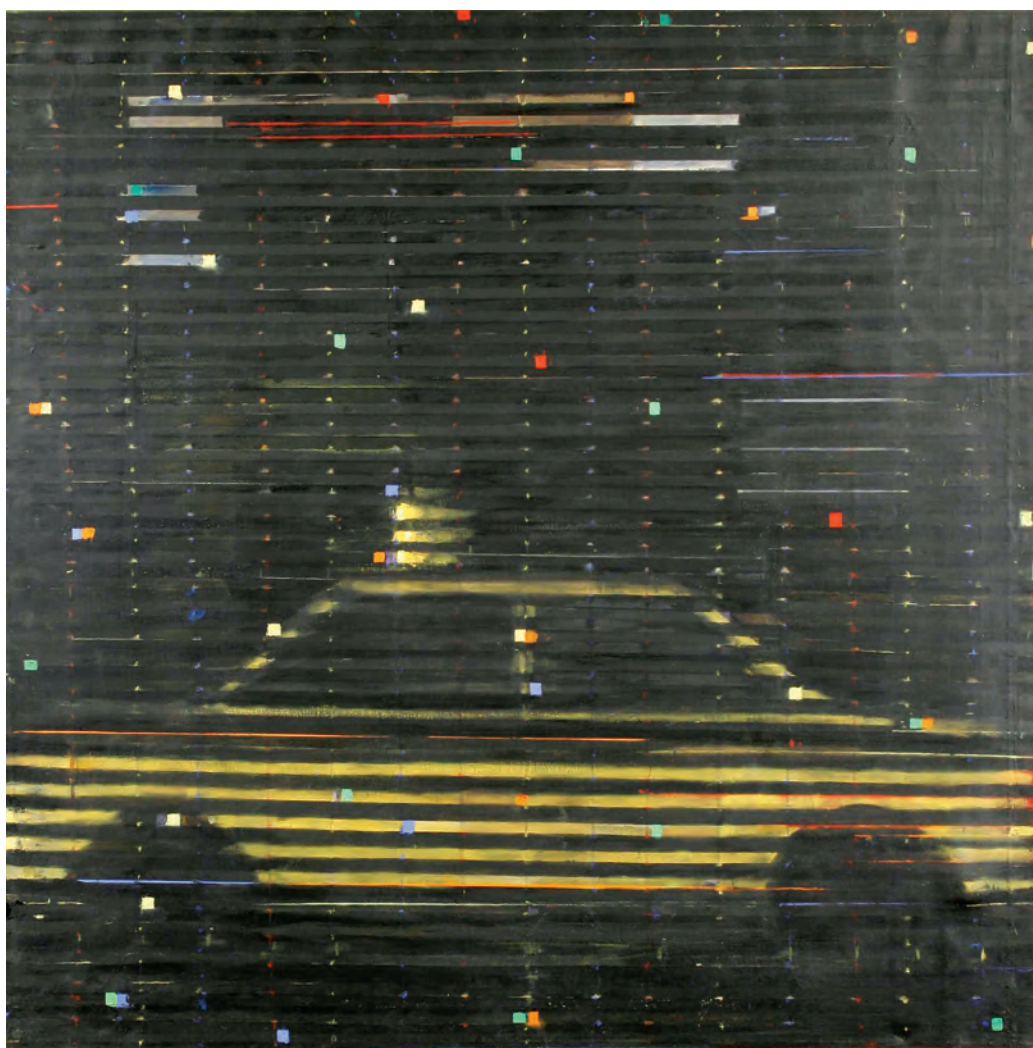


*2nd Avenue & East 11th Street*  
1995, oil on canvas, 88" x 16½"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap

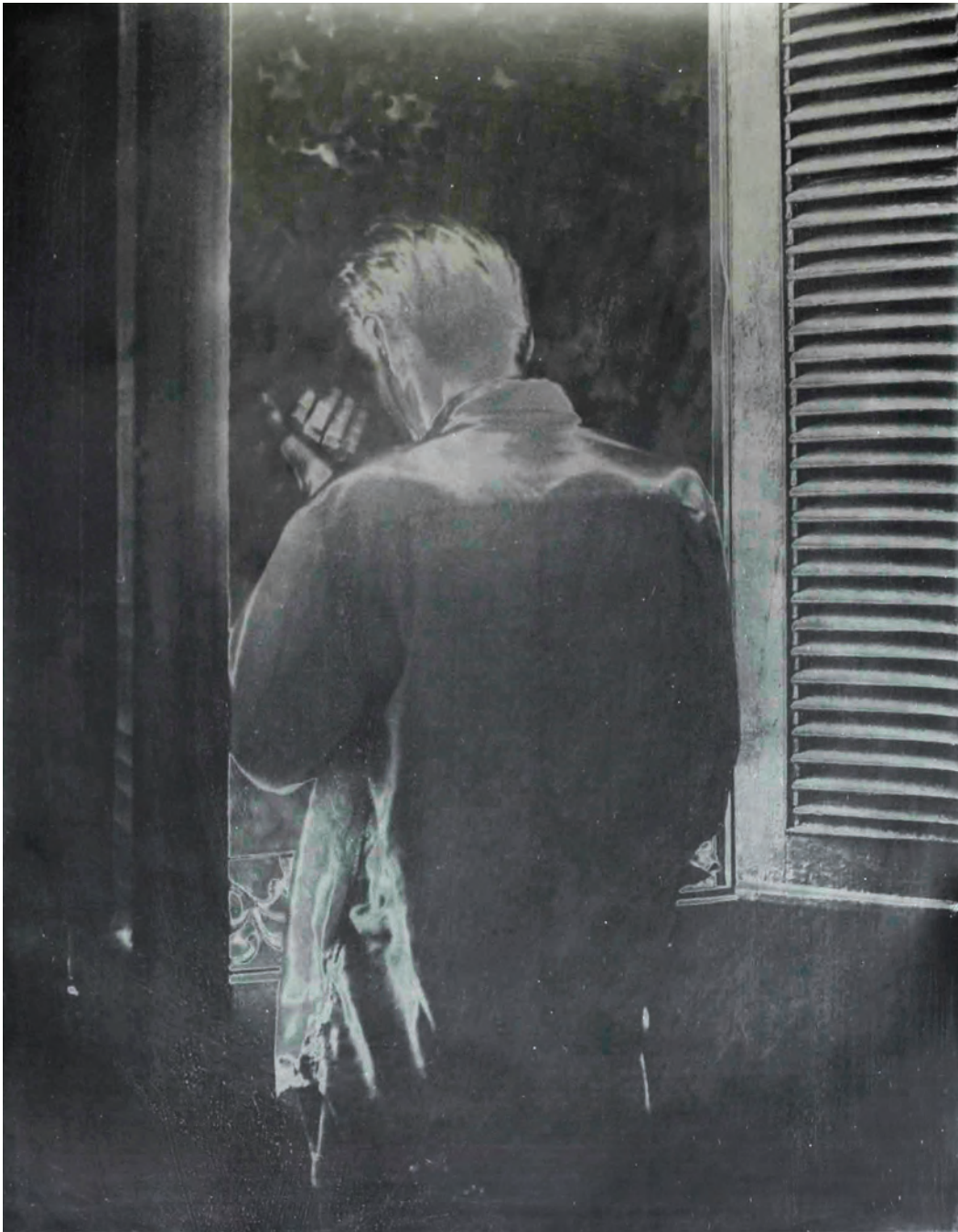




*Untitled* 1995, oil on canvas, 16½" x 88"  
Private collection



*Untitled* 1995, oil on canvas, 48" x 48"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap



*Bill Rice at Window, Gran Hotel, Merida, Mexico*  
1983, photograph by Richard Morrison, 10" x 8"  
Private collection

# BILL RICE

- 1931 Born in Castleton, Vermont; studied art as a child with Henry Lavarack
- 1953 B.A., Middlebury College; studied painting with Arthur K.D. Healy
- 1953 Moved to New York City
- 1976 Stage debut in *Raisin Pie and the Hermaphroditic Umbrella* by Gabriel Oshen
- 1978 Screen debut in *G-Man* by Scott and Beth B.
- 1980-2005 Research/editorial work with Ulla Dydo and Edward Burns
- 1983 First public exhibition, Brooklyn Terminal Arts
- 2006 Died in New York City

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 *Bill Rice: Paintings and Works on Paper*, steven harvey fine art projects, New York
- 2005 *Bill Rice: The View from 13 East 3rd*, Mitchell Albus Gallery, New York
- 2005 *Bill Rice, Private Exhibition and Sale*, Ageloff Towers, New York
- 1995 *Richard Milazzo Presents: Bill Rice, New Paintings 11, Rue Larrey* at Sidney Janis Gallery, New York
- 1987 *Bill Rice*, 56 Bleeker Gallery, New York
- 1984 *Bill Rice*, Patrick Fox Gallery, New York
- 1984 *Bill Rice Studio Show*, curated by Richard Morrison, 13 East 3rd Street, New York

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 *Oil and Water*, steven harvey fine art projects, New York
- 2008 *s(election)*, steven harvey fine art projects/Gallery Schlesinger, New York
- 2008 *Persona*, steven harvey fine art projects, New York
- 1996 *Realism After Seven A.M.: Realist Painting after Edward Hopper*, Hopper House Art Center, Nyack NY, curated by Richard Milazzo
- 1992 *Back Room Paintings*, two person exhibition with Dieter Hall, The Bar, New York
- 1986 *The City and The Street: Paintings, Photographs and Sculpture*, La MaMa Galleria, New York, curated by Edward Burns
- 1985 *Who's On First?* La MaMa Galleria, New York, curated by Edward Burns
- 1985 *Factura*, Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, New York
- 1984 *Salon/Saloon*, 7 East 3rd Street, New York
- 1983 *Brooklyn Terminal Art Show*, presented by Ted Castle, Brooklyn Terminal, New York
- 1980 *Times Square Show*, organized by Colab, New York

## SELECTED THEATRICAL APPEARANCES

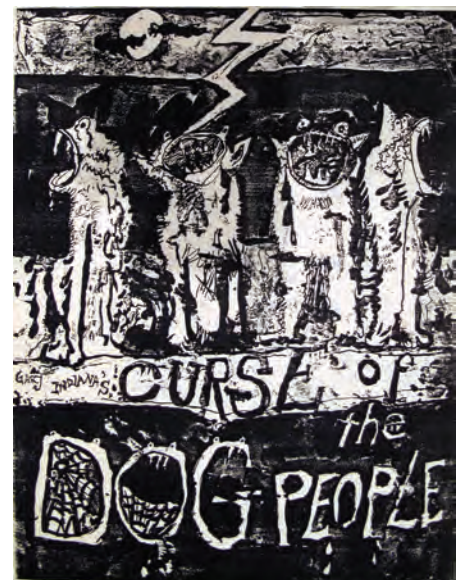
- 2005 *Alone Together*, Jim Neu, Dixon Place, New York
- 2005 *Vintage Wine, or Past Its Prime?* Charles Allcroft, La MaMa E.T.C., New York
- 2003 *Target Audience (The Code of the Western)* Jim Neu, La MaMa E.T.C.
- 2002 *Kiss Shot*, Jim Neu, La MaMa E.T.C.
- 1997 *Mondo Beyondo*, Jim Neu, La MaMa E.T.C.
- 1996 *Snowman Serenade*, Charles Allcroft, La MaMa E.T.C.



- 1996 *The Traveling Companion*, Tennessee Williams (premiere of previously unproduced one-act play), Center Stage, New York
- 1995 *The Floatones*, Jim Neu, La MaMa E.T.C.
- 1994 *Dark Pocket*, Jim Neu, La MaMa E.T.C.
- 1993 *The Wrong Mistake*, Jim Neu, La MaMa E.T.C.
- 1992 *Situation Room*, Jim Neu, Soho Rep, New York
- 1988 *An Evening with Jesse James*, Jim Neu, Performance Space 122, New York
- 1984 *Curse of The Dog People*, Gary Indiana, 13 East 3rd Street
- 1984 *That's How the Rent Gets Paid, Part IV*, Jeff Weiss, Good Medicine & Co., New York
- 1983 *Red Tide*, Gary Indiana, 13 East 3rd Street
- 1980 *Alligator Girls Go to College*, Gary Indiana, Mudd Club, New York
- 1976 *Raisin Pie and the Hermaphroditic Umbrella*, Gabriel Oshen, Harry Orzello's W.P.A. Summer Festival

## SELECTED FILM APPEARANCES

- 2006 *Tomorrow Always Comes*, Jacob Burckhardt/Royston Scott
- 2005 *One Last Thing*, Alex Steyermark
- 2004 *Coffee and Cigarettes*, Jim Jarmusch
- 2004 *Soap (Part 6)*, Gary Indiana
- 2001 *Identity A Poem*, Lei Chou
- 2000 *Del Fuego*, John Dean Alfone
- 1999 *Modern Young Man*, Harris Smith
- 1996 *Chicago Hope* (TV Series), Adam Arkin
- 1995 *The Monkey and the Engineer*, Jacob Burckhardt
- 1994 *The Deflowering*, Alyce Wittenstein
- 1994 *Box Heads*, Gary Goldberg
- 1993 *Big Baby*, Gary Goldberg
- 1993 *Dance*, Gary Goldberg
- 1993 *Hearts*, Gary Goldberg
- 1992 *Last Supper*, Robert Frank
- 1991 *Mesmer*, Gary Goldberg
- 1991 *Usher*, Gary Goldberg
- 1990 *C'est Vrai/One Hour* (French TV), Robert Frank
- 1990 *Plates*, Gary Goldberg
- 1989 *Rain*, Michael Keenan
- 1988 *The Big Blue*, Andrew Horn
- 1988 *Landlord Blues*, Jacob Burckhardt
- 1987 *Thunder II*, Fabrizio De Angelis
- 1987 *Her Name is Lisa*, Rachid Kerdouche
- 1986 *Doomed Love*, Andrew Horn
- 1986 *Sleepwalk*, Sara Driver
- 1985 *Manhattan Love Suicides*, Richard Kern
- 1985 *Where Little Demons Dwell*, Alex Steyermark
- 1984 *Decoder*, Muscha
- 1984 *It Don't Pay to be an Honest Citizen*, Jacob Burckhardt
- 1983 *Turmoil in the Garden*, Kirsten Bates/Allen Frame
- 1983 *Sound Bites in the Garden*, David Wojnarowicz



Poster for *Curse of the Dog People*, 1984

- 1983     *Wild Style*, Charlie Ahearn
- 1982     *Vortex*, Scott and Beth B.
- 1981     *Subway Riders*, Amos Poe
- 1980     *The Trap Door*, Scott and Beth B.
- 1980     *The Offenders*, Scott and Beth B.
- 1979     *Seduction of Patrick*, Michel Auder
- 1978     *Final Reward*, Rachid Kerdouche
- 1978     *G-Man*, Scott and Beth B.

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- Castle, Ted. *Art in America*, 1984.
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## RESEARCH/EDITORIAL WORK WITH ULLA DYDO & EDWARD BURNS

- The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten*, edited by Edward Burns (Columbia University Press, 1986).
- A Stein Reader*, edited and with an introduction by Ulla E. Dydo (Northwestern University Press, 1993).
- The Letters of Gertrude Stein & Thornton Wilder*, edited by Edward Burns and Ulla E. Dydo with William Rice (Yale University Press, 1996).
- Gertrude Stein: The Language That Rises: 1923-1934* by Ulla E. Dydo with William Rice (Northwestern University Press, 2003).

This catalog was produced  
on the occasion of:

*Bill Rice: Paintings & Works on Paper*

June 2-July 1, 2011

shfap/steven harvey fine arts projects

24 East 73rd Street, #2F  
New York, New York 10021  
www.shfap.com · 917-861-7312 · info@shfap

Catalog production: shfap & Richard Morrison  
Catalog design: Nimble Eye Design LLC & Richard Morrison  
Photography: John Goodrich

All works from the Rice estate courtesy of  
steven harvey fine arts projects (www.shfap.com)

*This exhibition and catalog would not have been possible  
without the singular generosity of Ulla E. Dydo.*

*The Estate of Bill Rice would like to thank the curators,  
Steven Harvey and Richard Morrison, who worked, from  
inception to completion, to make this show a reality.*

*Particular thanks must go to the lenders for their  
generosity in making their drawings and paintings  
available for use in the catalog and exhibition: Ulla E.  
Dydo, Edward Burns, Francie Lyshak-Stelzer, Larry  
Mitchell, Steven Harvey, Richard Morrison and  
Marc E. Weksler, M.D.*

*Special thank-yous to those who gave invaluable  
assistance in creating this exhibition: Francie Lyshak,  
Nurit Tilles, Edward Burns, Larry Mitchell, John Goodrich,  
Jacob Burckhardt, Ulla Dydo, Joe Fyfe, Lisa Rosen and  
Richard Kern.*

*Finally, sincere thanks to the artists who made accessible  
films in which Bill appeared: Charlie Ahearn, Jacob  
Burckhardt, Scott and Beth B., the Gary Goldberg estate,  
Gary Indiana, Jim Jarmusch, Tom Jarmusch, Richard Kern,  
the estate of Jim Neu and Royston Scott.*

*Right:*

*Untitled*

1967, ink on paper, 11" x 8½"  
Private collection

*Back cover:*

*Don't walk (detail)*

1995, oil on canvas, 24" x 24"  
Estate of the artist,  
courtesy shfap



*Bank Street (detail)*

1953, pencil on paper, 11" x 8½"  
Estate of the artist, courtesy shfap





*William R.*



