

David Petersen Gallery
O le beau le beau le beau
Robin Cameron, Nazareth Major, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt
April 30 - June 4, 2022

1 April 2022

Ah, la belle.

Sometimes you just pick up the pieces of the mess you made and start again. Find a new dump, dust it off, give it a new polish. You begin typing again, writing again. There will always be walls but you can make them open up to the world rather than close it out.

Sometimes you just pick up the pieces and start again. Maybe you made a mess of it before, or were left a sack of trash. Find a new dump, dust it off, give it a new polish. Call it treasure.

You begin typing again, writing again. You write a corny line like, 'There will always be walls but you can make them open up to the world rather than close it out.' Maybe you even believe it.

Sometimes you think metaphors are a sack of trash.

You were never in it for you. You would always be there, of course, but 1 is the loneliest number. You would know. But there are others who know too, and now they are here. There is no you in 'team.' There's no 'I' in Robin Cameron, Nazareth Major or Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt. Ok, just the one.

Sometimes there's a mess of something on the floor. You might pick it up and stuff it into a sack of trash. Maybe you walk it out to the can in the alley. Wipe your hands of it. Move on. Who would blame you? Maybe you made the mess in the first place. You should be able to move on.

Once upon a time there was a bakery in Brooklyn that kept its large bay doors open to the summer air as the bakers baked bread at 4 in the morning when the bars kicked us out and one night/morning I rode my bike into the bakery to grab a few loaves of the French bread they had been baking but for unknown reasons had tossed in the trash. I have never gone hungry.

Bread can be a metaphor. So can trash. Maybe Brooklyn, too.

Sometimes you are told that you, as a writer, do too much work for the reader. You don't know who the reader is, exactly, but this may be true. Sometimes you think this work is just generosity. Mostly, though, you know it is insecurity. You are not a writer, you tell yourself, you just happen to write. Maybe writing is a metaphor. Maybe you are one, too. There are still the bad days when you think you are a sack of trash. The days when you awake in a darkness. Darkness is definitely a metaphor, one that lasts all day.

Sometimes you just pick up the pieces, metaphors and darkness be damned, and start again.

Welcome back to the show. O, le beau.

2 April 2022

Optimism is free. I once told this to a friend as much to reassure myself as a reminder for them. Likely I stole the line from someone else or remembered it from a motivational poster or a fortune cookie fortune. While true, whether or not it is wisdom anyone should wield is up for debate. I may have said it, but I won't die on that hill.

Spring is in the air, they say, although this morning it was 28° F with ice and snow still covering the ground. After it warmed up, I took the dog to the dog park where the ground was turning to dark brown mush and pulp, a gloppy mud and decomposing leaf sludge that may or may not dry out by early June. While Spring is a wonderful time of year, it sure is ugly. Disgusting even. It even sounds gross under your boots. The dog is barefoot and could care less about the aesthetics of Spring, as far as I know.

Optimism probably shouldn't be a substitute for readiness. If you're prepared, maybe you don't need to be optimistic. If you're ready, you can be confident. Confidence don't come cheap. That shit is earned. I sound like a football coach or a motivational speaker or an overbearing parent. But still, do your homework and you'll be just fine.

Sometimes the problem is you don't know what you need to be ready for. That is when optimism comes in handy. I am not talking about silver linings or lemonade. Optimism is a vision, I suppose, maybe even a worldview. Once a friend said you gotta stay positive and I didn't really believe him until he repeated the line a thousand times. Still, I don't always follow along but it never hurts to say the line a few thousand times more.

3 April 2022

Gifts and luck and karma are all on my mind.

Gifts and luck and karma are

The quantum mechanics of gifts and luck and karma. Superposition and Schroedinger's cat.

Superstring theory?

Every Friday at a friend's coffee shop not too far from here, I sit on a stool with a hot cup of coffee and let myself be video recorded while I read the upcoming week's weather forecast from the news on my phone. The bit all began by accident. This is back before the plague came around, when a coffee drinker could sit at a counter and slowly sip their coffee, maybe read the newspaper, or just talk about the weather. Which is what I was doing one day, except to myself. So my friend, the one who owns the coffee shop, began to record it on her phone. She put it on the internet, on the coffee shop's various social media. Another friend asked for it to be a weekly bit. So I have done this every Friday since before the plague, and she has shared it every time.

Shows don't just show up. Gifts and luck and karma make shows. They made this show. It is only after this show was made that thoughts of space and time showed up. Different spaces, different times. Somehow they are all here, now. East Berlin's Pankow, Alabama's Gee's Bend, and NYC's Chinatown. A couple of different thens, and a now.

All this writing. Seemingly about nothing. Or just rambling. I knew this would be the difficult part. Sharing is easy. Explaining why you are sharing, or what you are sharing is not always so simple. But I am trying to show you everything. I can't do this, but I can try, or at least say that I am trying. You may or may not believe me. Some people don't believe anything these days. And some will believe anything. I am not sure which is better or worse, or which is which.

Doing the weekly weather forecast has become a bit of a pain in the ass. I have to get up very early on Fridays, the only day I can possibly sleep in, to get to the coffee shop before the place gets busy with coffee drinkers. I bring the dog. The coffee shop friends give him treats and me a cup of coffee. I sit on the stool and read the weather. Sunny days, cold nights, clouds moving in, maybe some wind, rain, and snow. It's been a while since we had a warm day.

4 April 2022

'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.'

So it turns out there is quite a difference between a blanket and a quilt and while you won't upset the blanketers if you mistake a blanket for a quilt, the quilters will come with burning torches should you do the inverse. First of all, blanketers don't exist. Quilters, on the other hand, have clubs, schools, and even museums. Blankets are merely manufactured, the products of capitalist mass production you can pick up at any big box store and thus they are dirt cheap. Quilts are in fact handmade with human hands and this hand-making tells a story that will be told and retold as the handmade quilt is passed down generation after generation. That also means they are expensive. I don't make the rules, that's just how it works.

This is the first time I have exhibited a quilt in a gallery before. There's no bells or whistles to it, constructed like a stack of blocks, it is merely a quilt. If you have seen other Gee's Bend quilts before, you know that they can be quite beautiful, full of rich colors and mesmerizing geometric patterns. Dare I say this quilt is ugly, visually anyway. Personally, it is one of the most beautiful objects I own, though, and as mentioned earlier that all quilts have a story, this one has a miraculous tale, albeit one that is personal enough to keep to myself. Anyway, I don't even know much about its quilter except her name, Nazareth, the year she was born, 1947, and the year she died, 2020. Her obituary is short and sweet and from what I can tell she lived a generous and honorable life. It mentions nothing of her quilting, which may seem odd but then again, quilting in Alabama was as a part of life as fishing or cooking dinner. Nothing to make hay about. Which sort makes it a miracle for this quilt to even be in this gallery, which is also a miracle. A miracle quietly laying inside a miracle.

Oh to even be in a gallery again.

5 April 2022

The last gallery closed and I went straight Apollonian, got a job, adopted a dog, bought a house, grew food in the yard, organized the garage, became a citizen. I can't remember the last time I danced. Damn shame. Who cares how well you can dance, you just have to get that dance out. A lame excuse is who even has the time, what with bills to pay, the car is outta gas again, did the kid do her homework, what's for dinner, why is there so much shit in the yard, oh yeah, the dog.

Dionysus called, he wants his mojo back and I aim to see to it. White walls, gray floor, 4000k lighting is business as usual but we can still have some fun. This place has a hand-me-down hi-fi and a \$500 collection of dub records that all sound like they were recorded in a Kingston storm drain and if I am having a good time will vigorously argue that early video games owe every last one of their sound effects to King Tubby and Lee Scratch Perry.

Maybe all this jibber jabber is making this show too much about me. And you know how I feel about vanity galleries. Last thing I need is word on the streets that Petersen is running at the mouth again. Or that this is just another show about nothing. That all this jibber jabber doesn't explain a thing about this, that, and the other things. The stuff in the show. What is it all doing here, what is it saying, what does it mean. I mean, how will I even get the word out if there isn't a press release, or an email list, or gallery hours with a didactic, or a map, or titles, and what the hell is *O le beau*?

Don't worry, I am not going to say a damned thing about Nietzsche. Don't worry, I am not going to dance in public. Don't worry, my dog isn't going to shit in your yard. But we are going to have a damn good time here.

6 April 2022

Kicking it off with a group show. So far we have covered the quilts, pardon the pun, but neither Robin's prints and sculptures, nor Ruth's typographics. Honestly, the word typographics is a little pretentious for me, or at least coming from me it does, but I don't know what else to call them other than typings, but that sounds both trite and like I am being a smart aleck. I love them because they kind of make my head hurt - not in a Bridget Riley sorta way, although my vision does blur if I look at them up close without my readers - and I am jealous of how simple they are while being infinitely complicated, especially when you recall that this was East Germany she was living in and making art was probably infinitely complicated.

Talking about art is not always an easy thing to do, I get that. I certainly have my own limitations. The best art talkers are either really smart know-it-alls, which is a compliment, or tremendous bullshitters, and the best of the best can bullshit all they know with eloquence and élan. Writing about art is a little easier in that you get to take your time and if you write something that you'd rather not share, well, then just keep it to yourself. Or you can just blurt out whatever you want knowing that the reader won't be standing in front of you to punch you in the nose if/when they are offended by something you have written.

Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt called them 'typewritings' so that is probably the term I should be using. She was stuck in East Berlin trying to make art and share this art with her friends and colleagues and did much of this via mail art which was able to evade both the censors and market. These typewritings were art plain as day, but completely camouflaged by the tools of her day job as a typist so that she could get away with anything. Which seems like that is the goal of most any artist, to get away with whatever they want, but the more that I think about that, and if that is all that positive, or how that could quickly be corrupted, or just go too far, well, it gives me the rotten kind of headache. It could be too much. But Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt did it just right. All things in moderation.

7 April 2022

Mailing a postcard ain't what it used to be. A quick and cheap way to send a hello, or greetings from the Grand Canyon. I don't even think the post office sells postcard stamps any longer. 20 cents was a helluva deal, too. Too good to be true.

Letter writing is going the way of the dodo, as they say, or of address books and landline telephone calls. It's just too easy to email or text message or slide into someone's DM's, although I still don't know exactly what this means. Something about the word 'sliding,' its visual connotation just throws me off.

Back in my postcard writing days, a halcyon era of play and poverty, I always thought it was kinda odd, but also sorta naughty, that a message on a postcard could be read by anyone as it made its way from mailbox to mailbox. That you could write dirty words or draw dirty pictures. A little postal streaking. Or that somebody might sneak a peek into a private conversation, a love letter maybe. Maybe someone working a conveyor belt down at the distribution center was curious what some 19 year old was writing to another 19 year old. But then I thought, ya know what, the last thing anyone working for the post office wants to do, with mail moving past them all day, every day, is read anyone else's mail. A lotta people don't even read their own mail.

In my first year of graduate school I would walk to Times Square to buy a stack of postcards off the rack of the shops for tourists to buy I ❤️ NY t-shirts, take them back to my studio and paint on them before mailing them off to friends whose addresses I knew by heart. Then I'd bike down to the post office across the street from Penn Station and away they'd go. My trust in the post office was complete. And I had yet to imagine what it might be like to live under a totalitarian regime.

In my second year of graduate school, the city was attacked and I swore off Times Square. Any postcards I would send would have to be handmade. And I certainly wouldn't be writing anything risqué, definitely nothing political. I did write MN Senator Paul Wellstone a letter though, after he voted for the Patriot Act, which allowed the NSA, CIA, DIA, DEA, FBI and a new entity called Homeland Security, to spy on pretty much anyone they wanted, which I assume nowadays, with AI and nanotechnologies and other crazy stuff I don't even know about, is pretty much everyone. If you think the data Facebook collects is creepy, you don't want to know what certain departments of the US government are up to. The 4th amendment has gone the way of the dodo.

8 April

Less than three weeks until the gallery doors open to whoever will come and the show is still evolving, or growing. The three artists are still the same but more art is being collected. I can't say what just yet, except for two sculptures by Robin, to go with the etching monotypes. There remains some uncertainty, but it is kind of exciting, the not knowing. Despite it all, thoughts have begun to stir in regards to how to install it all, even though what that is is yet to be determined. Keeps you on your toes, or at least mine, since I will have to solve the riddle once all the clues are in. Really, though, this is just nuts and bolts stuff. No one wants to know about that stuff, the stuff that makes the thing, or how the things made the show. Everyone wants to know how did they do that when a picture or painting or sculpture is mystifying in its rendering or construction, we have all been there, stupefied. But when it comes to an installation, well, that is just display. True, it isn't rocket science or quantum mechanics or even biochemistry. At best, you could liken it to a solid magic trick, except what you're left with is the rabbit already out of the hat. There's the rabbit and there's the hat. Somehow it's cool, though, because the rabbit is over here while the hat is over there. Somehow.

Installing art is the only thing I am good at. I mean, I am a decent parent, and they love me at the tennis center, and I make pretty tasty soups in the dead of winter, but none of these things give me any sort of intellectual giddyup (no offense, Ruby) that makes me want to try again and again to solve a riddle with an infinite number of solutions. That's not to say these solutions are all correct, because most of them are incorrect, but when you are dealing with the infinite, well, that is quite a lot of options, and a lot of corrects and incorrects, probably an infinite number of both. So actually it is tougher than rocket science and quantum mechanics and biochemistry.

Sleight of hand is a particular type of dexterity and misdirection in which I have never been able to find any proficiency. We used to have a card trick set that we, my daughter and I, would noodle around with one winter, trying our best to fool one another, to get one another to ask, how'd you do that? But we weren't very good at it and soon moved on to learning how to juggle, which is something I am also good at, both literally and figuratively speaking, but from which I derive very limited amounts of joy. The kids get a kick out of it at the tennis center.

So, with less than three weeks to go, I have to start plotting some moves for this magic trick in the hopes that I can generate some oohs and ahhs from whoever will come. They won't know about any of these problems unless they read this, of course, that is if I even make it available to be read. All this writing is really just practice for the show, for the 300 or so words that are written about the show, the words that will make it all official, an actual show, the rabbit out of a hat, and even though you might not have seen me pull the rabbit, which is right here, out of the hat, which is right over there, you will have to take my word for it.

9 April 2022

Knowing that I am out of practice I decided to write everyday, at least 300 words of whatever I could or wanted to, editing be damned, let er rip, with the intention of eventually writing what would be the accompanying text of the new gallery's first exhibition. Or the first exhibition in the gallery space of the old gallery. The same gallery. Same name. New website but with the old shows. Five, six, seven, some almost ten years old. Hard to believe, plus all that has gone down since, most of it obvious and unspeakable. Unnecessary. Unforgettable.

Robin's prints are all titled Memory Palace which refers to the ancient Greek practice known as Method of Loci, a spatial visualization mnemonic for remembering everything. Oral culture required it. How else could Homer recite 400 pages of the Odyssey? The prints are visual records of her past work within both imagined and remembered interiors. Maybe a favorite museum, maybe a space in her mind.

Practicing is never easy. I must admit to this all being rather difficult, writing again. Writing for an audience. I had something else to write about but I have forgotten.

Robin's sculptures are also in the show, as if reified from the prints. From a dream. Reified, now there's 10 dollar word. Picked it up in grad school. Best to be used sparingly but the moment seemed right. Or maybe I should have just gone with manifested? Like much of her practice, collage is always front and center. Piecing things together, using and reusing scraps and shards and imagery. Layering and building, accumulating. Big words again. Just practicing.

Imagine making a website for a gallery and instead of it being chronologically organized by show after show and show, the site was an array of images floating about in no order whatsoever, images from all the shows as if the gallery itself was just one continuous show so that the most previous show was the same show as the first show along with everything in between, that they were all just the same show. Then you wouldn't have to remember all the shows, just one show. Maybe that would be better. Just a thought.

10 April 2022

To do list

Build large platform, 4x8?
Cut panel for vitrine and make pedestal
Paint it all white (except the vitrine)

Repaint floor, it looks like shit already

Do you think the lights are bright enough? Hang a painting and photograph to test
Get brighter bulbs, 17W LEDs, 4000k

Clean the bathroom, discourage its use
Paint the stairs to the basement in case anyone needs to use the bathroom. Get those gripper strips, would hate to get sued

Touch up the walls with white paint. Sweep the floor (nevermind, it's getting repainted).

Should probably get some window tint for the front door. Add vinyl to the front window so people know this is a gallery and when it's open. It's open Thursday-Saturday, 12-7. And by appointment. I really prefer appointments.

The back room needs furniture, a couch and a desk maybe, and if there is a desk then it needs chairs. The stereo and record player need some sort of something, what is that called? It needs that. The back room isn't bright enough but it will have to do.

Start inviting people to see the show. Make lists of people who will hopefully come.

The sink is full of dishes at home and the laundry is piling up. The recycling is overflowing again. There is a stack of paperwork on the dining room table, either sort it out or toss it in the trash. Your desk is also a mess. The car could use a wash. Get the kid to pick up the dog poop in the backyard. Grocery shopping and don't forget dog food, you both need to eat. And the dog wants/needs to go to the park. Yesterday the bald eagle was swooping low, just above the treetops making that strange high-pitched sort of metallic piping sound. The ducks were wading in the inlet made by the river's high water. Cardinals are up to their mating song and dance. And the woodpeckers seemed to be pecking every tree. It's not procrastinating if it's beautiful.

O le beau.

11 April 2022

The various ways we communicate. Casually, formally, digitally, IRL. Orally, visually, tactilely. The written word. Freely or under duress. Surreptitiously. Self-consciously, or not. Always a challenge, maybe. And the things we say when we communicate. Ideas and thoughts and beliefs. Love is grand, flirting is fun. Expressing care or concern. Or being thoughtless, there's plenty of that I suppose. A lack of self awareness, an abundance of self absorption. I honk my horn in traffic too often. Me me me.

Generosity is another way to go. Gifts as communication. For when saying what you want to say is too difficult, maybe. Or beyond language. The milieu of art, too, I suppose. When was the last time you made something for someone? From scratch. Knitted a scarf, or made a painting. A woodworking project, or baked a cake. Soup makes a great gift. Or maybe the gift wasn't a thing but a service, an action, or gesture. Like shoveling the neighbors sidewalk. Holding a door open. Waving at a stranger. Are these gifts? Is it even communication? But don't they still communicate something? I suppose.

Art is non stop communication. Which some people love. Others probably find it a bit much. Endless overload. Just shut up already and let me not have anything said to me for once, someone might say. I wonder if that is even possible. I had a wild dream last night where I chewed out my sister because she wouldn't give me a piece of this fancy chocolate so I decided to leave wherever we were which found me in a t-shirt and underwear, no socks no shoes, in St. Louis riding a bus to a movie theater and I missed my stop and was on this bus with a red safety cone for some reason, I think I was going to give it to someone, and when I finally got to the movie theater I had my pants on with my wallet after all. You can't even go to sleep without your brain trying to tell you something.

When the art show is finally open, I promise to keep it quiet.

12 April 2022

Nazareth Major was a Pettway. Her parents were Pettways. Many of the most notable quiltmakers from Boykin, the largest town in the Gee's Bend area, an isolated peninsula surrounded by the Alabama River and voter suppression, were Pettways. Another Pettway was the guy who owned the plantation, the guy who owned the slaves who when freed still had the Pettway name.

The quiltmaking of the Gee's Bend area is six, maybe seven generations old. That's a lot of Pettways. There's Loretta, Lorraine, Lucy, Rita Mae, Missouri, Martha Jane, Nell, Lutisha, Linda, Arcola, Polly, Eddie May, Stella Mae, Quinnie, Leola, Lucy, Candis, Lottie, Jessie T., China, Martha, Emma Mae, Nellie, Lola, Henrietta, Aerie, Plummer, Arlonzia, Louella, Edwina, Essie, Belinda, Beatrice, Joerina, Jennie, Joanna, Mensie Lee, Nancy, Sallie Mae, Deborah, Pearlie, Vera, Ruth, Lucille, Marie, Malissia, Allie, Annette, Indiana, Creola, Annie E., Sweet, and probably some others I missed. Gee's Bend is named after a guy surnamed Gee, another plantation owner.

It makes you wonder if this country wasn't so god-awfully racist and misogynist if the quilts of Gee's Bend would have been as revered as the paintings of the abstract expressionists. Maybe moreso. Rothko's paintings can be great, sure, but were any of them made with the clothes of his dead husband?

In a 2002 review of the Gee's Bend quilts being exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Michael Kimmelman wrote: that good art can never really be accounted for. Instead, all you can do is describe it. Ok. Take it or leave it. That said, the quilt in *O le beau*, looks like an arrangement of bricks, navy blue and a fading gray, mostly rectangles arranged vertically and horizontally, except when shimmed by slivery triangles that fill in the space left by the scraps that didn't quite make it the distance to the next rectangle. A wavy white border frames it all, at times giving the shapes a squeeze. There is a top to the quilt, if you use the signature on the back as an orientation, although I think I am going to install it on a tabletop so it won't really matter, but there is in fact a top. I don't want to put any pins in it to stick it to the wall. Nazareth signed the back, which is all white, 'N Major' in black marker, in case you wanted to know.

April 13, 2022

David asked me to write this entry. He said it has been a long day and just isn't up to it. He said I could write about anything.

I haven't been to an art gallery in nearly five years. Not since he closed his last gallery. I loved that gallery and imagine I will love the new one. He still hasn't invited me to visit, although I know there isn't any art there yet. I look forward to seeing it.

David wasn't interested in art when he was young. Instead it was all sports, sports, sports. I was surprised when he called home from college and said he was taking a drawing class and that he wanted to make art. To be honest, I figured it was just a fad, or that his girlfriend at the time was also taking art classes. I loved her but I am still mad that he became a vegetarian.

In 2012, when David told me he was opening an art gallery, I wasn't surprised but I was worried. I didn't really understand how galleries worked or how he would make money. Plus, he was never very good at making money. He made it sound like it would be almost impossible. Don't let him tell you that he is an optimist. Still, he always wanted to try to do things that he probably shouldn't do, or that people told him he couldn't. He even tries to do things that he tells himself he shouldn't.

I am excited that he is opening a new gallery. I didn't think he would again. He teaches tennis now and is apparently good at it. He has even given me a few lessons. I know, though, that he has missed having a gallery. I don't know what he has in store but he is beginning to sound more excited, I think. Sometimes it is hard to tell, and he keeps so much to himself. I think his favorite way to express himself is by doing things for people. I hope he does this gallery for himself. His mother is already so proud of him.

14 April 2022

Collage is a French word, derived from *coller*, which means to glue. As far as I can tell there is no glue in this exhibition although all the work seems to be a form of collage. Maybe I am being too liberal with the term, or the idea. That a typed mark is, broadly speaking anyway, in the milieu of collage. This may be too liberal. Maybe one could argue that taking letters out of their normal context of spelling and sentences and legibility and gluing them back together into a typographic is a collage.

Milieu is also a French word, its literal meaning is 'middle place.' The sweet spot.

When you look up the history of collage, all you get is Picasso and Bracque and the Cubists created the innovation by sticking things together. Hmmm. Seems like the ladies in Gee's Bend might have been sticking things together far before these French fellas, literally with needle and thread. Nevermind that their materials were all textile. Weren't Pablo and Georges mostly using paper or other 2-D materials? Maybe I am wrong. I also always forget that Picasso wasn't French.

I once had the thought about the expression 'coming unglued,' particularly as it relates to mental health. For example, "I have often come unglued." The idea of falling apart, falling to pieces. I brought this up to my therapist once, told him that I needed him to stick me back together. I mentioned the Cubists. Told him he was a collage artist. He chuckled and said 'time's up.'

Sure, Robin's prints are prints, but the imagery of her studio and past work is collaged together. And the vase, too. Kintsugi as collage. Her entire practice is collage, really. It is her milieu. Maybe everything everywhere can be collage. Making things, doing things, going about your day, living your life. Keep what you need, discard what you don't, keep yourself together.

15 April 2022

Things fall apart. Things get put back together. Maybe not as good as you'da liked but something is only new once. The expression 'good as new' is just a metaphor. It's not really true. I don't mean to be a buzzkill, them's just the rules. No need for an ontological foofaraw.

This isn't such a bad thing. Honor your scars. Or dents in the fender. Or the duct tape holding together whatever it's holding together. People get creative with duct tape. It's an entire cottage industry at this point. The point is that there's nothing wrong with some imperfection. Wear your scars on your sleeve. Draw a bandaid on the bumper on your bumper. Make your flaws fabulous.

I break dishes all the time, by accident of course. Nobody bats a thousand with the combination of soapy fingers and slippery glassware in a hard unforgiving sink. But none of these dishes would be worth chopping down a tree to repair. Which is the story of *kintsugi* in a nutshell. Dishes so valuable that when some butterfingers dropped a bowl in the sink, or knocked a bowl off a table, that it was necessary to cut down a tree to get at the sap that could be turned into the lacquer that could repair the broken bowl. Eventually gold or silver was added to the lacquer making the valuable but broken bowl valuable and beautiful again. Good as new. But different. Maybe even better.

The process of repairing a ceramic bowl or pot or vase is very slow and painstaking and requires the dexterity of a neurosurgeon. And the price of a cup of lacquer is the life of a tree. So you better believe that these pieces of pottery were passed down from generation to generation. That is some strong glue.

16 April

Some beautiful things:

Flowers, tigers, smiles, acts of generosity and/or kindness, cardinals and most every bird, my daughter and all the daughters, special flowers like rose bushes and orchids, sunsets, Costa Rica, rainbows, the name Amelie, silk, leftovers, Vermeers, mornings slept in, Beck's 'Morning Phase' album, same for Sufjan Steven's 'Carrie and Lowell,' and don't get me started on Cat Power's 'The Greatest,' sadness is pretty beautiful if done right, pathos, ya know, a field full of sunflowers, cobblestone streets, bird's eye views, dandelions, vegan options, Joan Mitchells, terrariums, finding stuff, the Mississippi River headwaters, 'A Little Life,' by Hanya Yanagihara, the coffee aisle, the Milky Way, petty crimes, dumb jokes, card tricks, Mexico City's Condesa, chocolate shops, smoothies, fresh guacamole, really hot baths, soup, my mom and all the moms, horses, the color of blood, gold, road trips, gardening in healthy soil, parallel lines, massages, frozen lakes, sandy beaches, wildflowers instead of lawns, no-look passes and towering home runs, Hilary Hahn on the violin and Víkingur Ólafsson playing piano, waking up next to someone you love, cake batter, protest marches and civil disobedience, cops going to jail, bonfires, doodles, those clouds that look like cotton balls even though you know a storm's coming, my sister and all the sisters, trees how could I forget trees, kittens, indoor plumbing, Jane Campion and Terrence Malick films, restorative justice, Cascadia, occasionless gifts, getting picked up at the airport, payday, Gordon Parks and Roy DeCarava photographs, cacti and succulents, our dog sometimes and most of the dogs, fancy jointery, dirt roads, free food, butterflies and some moths, corals, peace and quiet, a light rain, bunnies, chocolate covered almonds, morning tai chi in Chinatown, humility, honest mistakes, epic failures, public transportation, public libraries, public parks, tax refunds, out of the blue phone calls when you're lonely, donuts, Planned Parenthood, real maple syrup, takeout, tipping more than 20%, learning something you thought you never could, baklava, brownstone stoops, snowdrifts, eyeball irises, freshly painted nails, The Muppet Show, a cold beer on a hot day, record collections, chai lattes, a lot of that mid century modern furniture I can't afford, optimism, happy accidents and dumb luck, Halloween, hardwood floors, the moon.

17 April 2022

Just a quick update, I finished uploading all the old shows to the new website today. It was rather cold for a Sunday in mid April, and as most everything was closed anyway and I didn't have to work, I spent several hours getting everything back online. So now if you would like to take a trip down the memory lane of the previous location of the gallery, there ya go. Feel free to begin all the way back in 2012, when *Make Hay* opened with a group show of six artists. I barely knew what I was doing but we pulled it off. Ryan Foerster and JPW3's *Sump Pump* was a wild ride, so many images and I really didn't bother being particular about their viewing order. The show was pretty disorienting at times anyway, so it seems to fit. Rose Marcus made one of the most memorable shows, in my opinion, plus I recall receiving a lot of nice emails from out-of-towners who also enjoyed it and wished they could have seen it in person. Always best to see the art in person. Lukas Geronimas made an outstanding show of sculpture, *Geatest Show on Rearth*, that got a printed write up in Artforum, also one of my favorite shows, I even wrote a little about it in the book I've been working on for the past four years. Then there are the six shows that all had the title *Future Developments*, and took place over three plus months. Every couple of weeks or so, depending on how I felt, I would rotate or swap out artists' work to make a new version of the show. The title was a subtle jab at the real estate development that would eventually buy me out of my lease about a year later, thus closing the gallery. It was a hoot of a show, though, with 13, 14, or maybe 15 artists, including Robin Cameron, who is in the new gallery's first show. So that's pretty cool.

The new show is also on the website, alas with no photos, just the pertinent information. We are less than two weeks away. Come check it out.

18 April 2022

Take things apart, put them back together. Things could be old clothes, the alphabet, one's art career, one's life. I think that is what ties this show together, along with the reincarnation of the gallery. Maybe you have done something similar lately. Things fall apart. They get put back together. Get knocked down, get back on that horse. Lose everything. Less to carry around as you start over. Rise from the ashes like a phoenix. Easier said than done, but still. Out with the old, in with the new. How many more clichés are out there about new beginnings? Not enough.

Not everything can be put back together. Sometimes something, or someone, is lost for good. This is never easy. We have all been there. Maybe you are there right now. Maybe you are falling to pieces over it. I understand, I have fallen to pieces more times than I'd like to count. These words probably don't make it any easier. You wouldn't be wrong to dismiss them, even hate them. You're here, somewhere. That's all that counts.

I suppose there is always reincarnation. Either generally, or the Hindu life cycle, samsara, the soul carrying on, indestructible. Not that I am a believer in life after death. Sometimes I don't know what I believe, but I know it's not that. Sometimes that seems like a bad choice, since belief is choice. Believe whatever you want. Now that sounds like something I could get behind.

This really took a turn. I was going to write about how losing something permanently is all the more reason to celebrate the things that we can put back together. Including ourselves. But that sounds like a self-help spiel and nobody came to an art gallery for that. Although I do sometimes wonder why people go to art galleries, other than the art. None of my business, other than the art. That said, I'm glad you came.

19 April 2022

The Quilters Hall of Fame is located in Marion, Indiana, which, for those of you not familiar with the middle of nowhere, is about an hour and twenty minutes northeast of Indianapolis, which is about a thousand hours from anywhere. Vonnegut always mentioned Indianapolis as being "the crossroads of America," but that turned out to be the state's self-proclaimed motto, not something that could be called objectively true. You shouldn't get to choose your own nickname. Who am I to argue, though. Marion, a city just shy of 30,000 people, claims it is conveniently located between Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Muncie, and Lafayette, although by the looks of the map, these distances appear about as convenient as Kansas being equidistant to Winnipeg and Mexico City.

The Quilters Hall of Fame was founded in 1979 by quilter Hazel Carter, after the 1978 Continental Quilting Congress had such an amazing turnout, that by the time the 1979 Continental Quilting Congress rolled around, well, it was time to start a hall of fame. However, it wasn't until 1991 that the Quilters Hall of Fame found a home in the former house of hall of famer Marie D. Webster in, you guessed it, Marion, IN. It is still there.

The Quilters Hall of Fame has, by my count, 54 inductees. They hail from towns such as Akron and Redmond and Houston, and there's a woman from Yorkshire, England, and there's a fella from New Bedford, Mass, and another from New York City. There are five men all told in the hall of fame, one of them for his collecting and mounting an exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, in 1971, and another for his endless research about quilting.

The Quilters Hall of Fame does not have any Gee's Bend quilters amongst its inductees. Turns out, there are more men in the HOF than there are people of color, both of whom are women. Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi is a quilter, as well as an author, historian, and curator from Los Angeles who was inducted in 2016. In 2014, she was awarded the Distinguished Scholar & Celebrated Artist Lifetime Achievement Award by Faith Ringgold's Anyone Can Fly Foundation, which is interesting. She was also trained as an aerospace engineer, which is even more interesting. Cuesta Benberry is a 1983 inductee who the HOF claims has done the most exhaustive research on quilting, quilters and everything from its infinite patterns and their histories to its regional styles and techniques. It also touts her expertise on quilting by African Americans, as well as a champion for black quilters who were overlooked by the broader quilting community. However, her HOF biography does not mention anything about the quilting of Gee's Bend. But I bet she knew all about them. Sadly, she passed away in 2007.

The Quilters Hall of Fame has a mission to celebrate quilting as an art form, by honoring the lives and accomplishments of those people who have made outstanding contributions to the world of quilting; by restoration and preservation of the home of quilt designer Marie D. Webster in Marion, Indiana; by promoting educational programs, exhibitions, publications and research; and by collecting, preserving and documenting materials related to the Honorees of The Quilters Hall of Fame. Their words, not mine.

20 April 2022

The Quilters Hall of Fame offers the opportunity to nominate a quilter to the HOF. Their website provides a simple form as well as info about the supplementary materials required for the nomination, such as a 'curriculum vita' (sic), 2-10 letters of recommendation, and images of the nominees quilts. Nominations must be submitted by August 31, and they remain active for five years. Just like baseball.

I wonder if any of the Gee's Bend quiltmakers have ever been nominated for the HOF. Like tides, their work's popularity in the art world has been in and out over the years, with exhibitions in museums and galleries and several book publications. My guess is that they don't have any sort of PR agency hyping their work, so it is up to curators and galleries and collectors and historians to keep the story of their quilting firmly in the canon, rather than just a fad.

Old Pants is about as imperfect as they come. The denim is dingy and worn, its blues and grays fading. There is a stain or two. And it's wrinkly. I wasn't sure if I should gently iron it, so I played it safe and decided against it. The construction is nothing special, just rectangular blocks going one way or the other, and where they don't meet up, small triangles shim the empty spaces. As the white stitching crosses the field of the quilt, it wanders. It says, "I am getting the job done here, leave me alone." I can relate. And the quilt isn't rectangular at all, its edges wobble. If you need straight lines in your quilting, move along. One side doesn't even bother trying as it not-so-subtly tapers into itself. Although the quilt is installed flat on a platform so who will really know which way is up. I don't know if I want to keep giving it a hard time, or loudly proclaim it's the most beautiful thing I have ever seen.

21 April 2022

I went through the David Hockney show at the Walker today. Quick trip, about 20 minutes, if that. I will go back. Time constraints dictated the brief visit. Later, I installed an art show for the first time in five years. No big whoop. I was excited to do it, but I didn't get all emotional or anything. Nuts and bolts, very matter of fact, almost perfunctory. Felt about right. However, I did it all alone, which felt weird. At the previous gallery there was always someone else around, usually an artist or two, or an intern, maybe a friend. Somebody with another set of eyes, a second set of opinions. For this show, I just did it myself. To be honest, it kind of felt *for* myself too. Let's come back to that later.

While installing Robin's prints I was struck by some of their visual similarities to Hockney's. Some of the drawn lines, the marks and their making, the touch and timbre of them as they resonate on the paper. There are interior spaces, exterior spaces, and psychological spaces, often all three layered atop one another. I was thinking these might be some of those thoughts best kept to myself, but here we are, giving it a go. Talking about art again is never easy, especially after five years off, but I will remind myself once more, you just have to start.

The new gallery is smaller, boxier. This smaller size seemed to make the installation easier. Less walking around. A little tougher to stand back. Plus there is the big table in the way. Doing a lot of dictating. The art also told me where it wanted to go. That's not a joke, although I am sure it sounds corny. How else would I know where it goes though? I put a picture somewhere, and it tells me to move it left or right or across to the other side of the space. It knows how much space it wants between it and the adjacent piece/s. The only thing I knew, which I wasn't sure if I remembered correctly, was the height. Everything hung on the walls is 56 inches on center. I don't know if that is industry standard, but that's what I remembered. 56.

While installing the show, the record player was playing some old dub reggae records. Dub sounds really nice in the gallery, despite the less than ideal acoustics. I was really relaxed, I think. Not on drugs, not even drinking. Just taking it easy, installing art again. I think the record player will be on a lot at the new gallery. Hopefully people don't mind too much. If they do, I may turn it down, or not.

Robin has two sculptures in the show, a ceramic vase on the big table and a small brass tower on a pedestal. Again, I thought of the Hockney show and the elements that seemed to be born from his drawings and paintings and onto a stage set. I mean, maybe they aren't exactly the same, but it sure did feel that way. Similarly, while Robin's vase and tower may not be visible in the prints in this show, trust me, I have seen them in other prints. There are also objects in the prints here that have a similar feel to the vase and tower, like her books and chine collé, other brass works, other vases.

So I installed this show and I did my best, and I am pretty happy with it, happy that I did it, but if you don't agree or think it doesn't look quite right, well, that's ok too. It's a start.

22 April

So the show is installed now so I should be able to write about the show but I still can't seem to find the words that I want to use, i.e. the words that are good enough to say what should be said about the show.

I have been writing around the show for three weeks now.

Two people asked me to send them the Press Release of the show and I provided a link to the website (oh, hey, the website is working again) that states "I am working on it." Which is true, but I sure can be a brat. I also told them, though, that since April 1 I have been writing at least 300 words a day about the show, which is bending the truth just a bit since, really, I have been writing around it. Who knew this could be so hard?

Actually, it's not so difficult. I just prefer noodling around with words so that is what I have been doing. Maybe, eventually, on April 30, I will wake up and write a very concise didactic full of nuts and bolts that makes everything make sense, so that everyone who sees the show can very easily understand everything as it is spelled out and spoon fed...

Ok, now I am just being a jerk about it. Let's get back to having a good time.

When you walk into the gallery you are standing in a space that I made with my own hands, looking at a show of three artists who made the art you are looking at with their own hands. Each of them come from a different place and time and culture and their work is a product of their respective places, times and cultures. I may or may not be playing a record on the stereo, just ignore that if it's bothersome to the experience.

23 April 2012

That's not a typo, we are time traveling. To be fair, it's not that difficult to go back ten years. Yeah sure, much has happened and the world appears to have dramatically changed, but really has it? Yeah sure. Ten years ago David was preparing to open this gallery in its first location. He was working on a business plan and looking for investors and by June he had found the 1200 sqft space with 12 foot ceilings and a concrete floor and parking conveniently located in front. From a certain vantage point, things probably looked pretty sweet, that it was an exciting and optimistic time and Petersen was going to make good of himself finally. But if you had the inside scoop, you knew that his life was crumbling all around him, his relationship was imploding, his dog was dying, he didn't have a job or any money, rent was about to double once the relationship ended, which it did in July, he had no idea how to run an art gallery as a business and he was on the front end of what would become five years of steady insomnia. Plus, as stressed out as he was before it was open, he wasn't so certain he should be opening a gallery after all. Whatever neurochemicals were raging in him those days are still easily triggered causing a sudden, stiff tension in his chest that instantly transports him to April 23, 2012.

This is all probably too much info, and he will kill me for sharing any of this story. He had just returned from doing studio visits in Los Angeles, a five day trip in which he couldn't eat, couldn't sleep, and, against his better judgment, only consumed coffee. He was sober, which was the only thing he had going for him, but he was seriously considering resuming a steady diet of alcohol. He hadn't seen his daughter in nearly ten days, nor his dying dog who lived most of the time with his daughter and her mother. He was convinced his girlfriend was cheating on him, which turned out to be not far from the truth, but what was way worse was not knowing, or thinking he knew, but not being sure so that he thought he was just being paranoid, or going crazy, which might not have been far off either.

So, April 23, a Monday, that morning first thing, he calls his therapist and pleadingly asks how soon he can get in. The next day. So, reminiscent of a scene from the 1991 Frank Oz film, *What about Bob?*, starring Bill Murray, whose character spends hours in a Lake Winnepesaukee cafe repeating the line "baby steps til 4 o'clock, baby steps til 4 o'clock..." while staring at a clock, clutching his beloved goldfish Gil in a large plastic Ziplock bag, and waiting to call his therapist, played by Richard Dreyfuss, he paces around his apartment for 24 hours, loop after loop after loop, until the sun goes down and he tries to go back to bed, which usually means staring at the ceiling until 3 or 4 in the morning, if he is lucky, before succumbing to exhaustion, only to wake up uncannily at 6 on the dot.

"I am falling to pieces, doc, can you stick me back together?" You know, like a collage artist.

Time travel is pretty easy, except one of the bugs is that you shouldn't be away for very long. If you get stuck there, well, that's trouble, and you will wind up in therapy if you're lucky. Avoid insomnia. Move forward. It's always easier to move forward than it is to go back.

24 April 2022

David Petersen Gallery presents the work of three artists, Robin Cameron, Nazareth Major, and Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt in *O le beau*.

Robin Cameron is a Canadian-born artist living in New York City and, from her ranging practice, has contributed five works to the exhibition each from distinct years of her career.

Nazareth Major lived and died in Boykin, Alabama where she learned quilting from her family and friends in the impoverished and secluded area known as Gee's Bend.

Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt is a German artist whose work was a response to the repressive regime of the German Democratic Republic. She stopped making art when the Berlin Wall fell.

No inherent connection links these three artists. Their respective work has little in common. An argument could be made that *collage* ties them together. Let's pretend it doesn't.

Instead let's imagine that the works in the exhibition are not connected by anything other than the fact that everything is connected. That despite any possible similarities and the obvious differences in the work - when it was made, where it was made, what is it made of, what it might be *about*, where it exists in the canon, why it may or may not be valuable - it has to be connected the way a star 93 million miles away is connected to the lilies in your front yard, bees are to your most recent meal, and bacteria in your belly is to the thoughts in your brain. Consider that this show has 11 pieces of art and they are all the same, their DNA only slightly rearranged. Ask, what if this show has always been together, across spaces and times? What might that mean? And would it even matter? Sometimes it's ok to ask dumb questions.

If anything, this is a show about containers. Everything holds something. Universe, galaxy, solar system, planet, continent, region, area, community, family, individual, breath and heart beat. And we are bags of blood and tissue and bone, carrying around beliefs and judgements and feelings and loves, resentments, hopes, fears, dreams, regrets, thoughts about our pasts, ideas about our futures. The gallery contains the art. A postcard carries a message, its codes contain secrets. A quilt will hold the body, or the memory of the loved one lost. The vessel will hold water until it is full of holes, bearing scars. And images comprise a thousand words, the past, present, and future, and sometimes beauty. What of beauty, what does beauty hold?

O le beau.

25 April 2022

With its first exhibition in five years, David Petersen Gallery is pleased to present *O le beau*. Bringing together three distinct artists from different backgrounds, locations and eras, *O le beau*.

Robin Cameron, Nazareth Major, and Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt share a variety of *O le beau*.

A quilt, typewritings, unique prints, a brass tower and a reconstructed vase create *O le beau*.

Upon walking into the gallery, it is my hope that the first thought crossing your mind is *O le beau*.

It wouldn't be unreasonable to say that Robin Cameron, a NYC-based artist whose work employs elements of collage, printmaking, text, film, photography, and cyanotypes, never imagined exhibiting her work alongside Nazareth Major or Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt. For one, no one knows who Nazareth Major is, at least no one in the art world probably does. Fairly or otherwise, Major, who passed away in May 2020, is considered a minor quilter of the Gee's Bend oeuvre. Not everybody gets to be a superstar I guess. And Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt doesn't even make art any longer, not since the fall of the Berlin Wall ended the totalitarian censoring of art and correspondence, amongst other things, and thus her work's *raison d'être*. The point is, this is unfamiliar territory for Cameron's work, which has either been exhibited alone, or with contemporary peers. Likewise for the other artists, of course, the unfamiliar ground, but I didn't have to ask them to be in the show since their work is all on loan from some generous individuals.

The epicenter of the exhibition is a low, generously sized, platform that hosts work by each artist. A kintsugi-inspired vase, shards of ceramics that Cameron has crudely adhered together, creating a new, yet less functional vessel; a small square vitrine containing a collection of Wolf-Rehfeldt's correspondence with Aart van Barneveld, a colleague of hers in Amsterdam who published a monthly bulletin dedicated to rubberstampworks; and a quilt made of old pants, as noted on the underside in black magic marker by who I can only assume was Major herself. There's more than enough ways to make your mark.

Surrounding center stage are the works on paper. Four typewritings by Rehfeldt and three etchings with a unique watercolor monotype printed by Cameron. Seven imaginary worlds, dislocated from time and space, Cameron taking us inside the mosaic of her practice, Rehfeldt attempting to escape the oppressive grip of her reality.

Punctuating the exhibition is a small brass tower and ladder atop a pedestal. Here, Cameron's memory palace is manifest as if delivered from a dream, or fashioned as a way to hold onto its imagined image. The tower is delicate, even dainty, a structure of both interior and exterior, a childlike three-dimensional drawing in brass wire that wouldn't surprise you if it were all an illusion.

26 April 2022

What do you do when you don't want to lose something? Or someone is trying to take something away from you? Or you don't want to let go of a thought or a feeling? When you need to remember where you left your keys?

Information, misinformation, disinformation, fake news, fox news, deep fakes, Blade Runner, 1984, of course, newspeak, propaganda, Triumph of the Will or The Great Dictator, gaslighting, book burnings, Fahrenheit 451, oral histories, the Iliad and the Odyssey, psychoanalysis, hipnosis, regression therapy, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, maybe a lobotomy, Hitchcock's Vertigo.

Why do we so often forget our dreams right after we wake up? What do you do when you can't forget a nightmare? Isn't it amazing that we remember anything at all? Do you ever recall something from long ago, yet something so banal or unmemorable and wonder why they hell would I bother to remember that? Why is that lodged in my hippocampus?

Simple questions probably with obvious answers. That's ok. If this exhibition gives you even one new thought, or conjures a question as yet unasked, it's done its job. Or maybe it provides some nostalgia for that favorite childhood blanket, getting a letter in the mail from a faraway friend, or playing with Play-doh. Gosh, remember that smell? Nothing in this show really smells like anything, which is a shame, since so much of it seems to be about memory, and our olfactory sense does such a terrific job transporting our minds to a past. Those scents that just stop you in your tracks, like Play-doh, or the creosote after a rain, or a certain cigarette that seats you back in your grandfather's Oldsmobile as you take a summer drive down a midwestern highway.

David Petersen Gallery is pleased to present *O le beau*, an exhibition of print, sculpture and textile by Robin Cameron, Nazareth Major, and Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt that is open to interpretation.

30 April 2022

Saturday, April 30th, 2022, David Petersen Gallery reopens after a five year hiatus with an exhibition featuring the work of three artists: Robin Cameron, Nazareth Major, and Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt. Hey, that's today.

Believe it or not, I am writing this in the back gallery right this moment, the moment that the gallery is finally open again. Except I forgot to tell anybody. Well, that's not entirely true. Begrudgingly, I made an announcement on social media. Appointments encouraged, though. No one seems to have taken me up on my offer, except a few folks to whom I personally reached out. They stopped by, then I ran out to pick up a pizza at the place around the corner.

So here we are. My last 300 or so words of writing about the show, except I don't want to write about the show any more. Ten thousand words is enough. I don't know if I have even been all that helpful. In some respects, I have possibly failed. Someone else is welcome to take the torch, though, light the way for any future viewers. Certainly there must be more insights into what I have done here. Generate some more meaning. Add more context, or at least provide a proper description. I am researching local writers in various other tabs on my laptop. The ones I don't already know, while trying to remember the few that I already do.

What is the longest art exhibition press release in the history of art exhibition press releases?

I can't imagine anyone wants to read a 10,000 word press release for a show that isn't all that complicated. Or even one that is complicated. This is a simple show, no need to make it otherwise. It just wants to be a show. And that is what it is. And if that isn't enough, if it needs to be more, well, I have no objections. I bet it could be. But the only way that works is if you see it for yourself. The only way it becomes more is when you add to it. When you think about it. When you have that question. If more is what you want. It can be ours.

Welcome back to the show.

O le beau.