

ACCESS AND EXCLUSION:

**A
SURVEY
OF
WORKS
FROM
THE
WILKES-BARRE
BINGHAMTON
REGION**

**UNIVERSITY
ART
MUSEUM**

**STATE
UNIVERSITY
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NEW
YORK
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**"ACCESS AND EXCLUSION: A SURVEY OF WORKS FROM THE
WILKES-BARRE/BINGHAMTON REGION"**

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**UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BINGHAMTON
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REGIONAL INTERPRETATIONS: GEOGRAPHICAL, SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL

Regionalism, as a term applied to the visual arts, has been used by authors, artists and critics in a variety of ways. Some definitions of regional art focus on a work's appearance, attempting to find evidence of regionalism in subject matter or style. Others emphasize the working conditions of the artist and gauge his or her relationship to a more widely recognized system of art. Still others examine the artist's historical affiliations and processes of self-identification. These interpretations of regionalism can be grouped into three categories which we may call geographical, social and historical ideas of regionalism. To understand regionalism in its fullest sense, we must explore these interpretations of geography, society and history, and recognize the similarities and differences which they suggest.

Geographical definitions of regionalism relate the appearance of a work of art to locationally specific objects or experiences. Most often, geographic elements are expressed through a work's realistic manner of representation or use of emotive content. Traditions which emphasize realistic representations of rural landscapes and lifestyles are derived from a 1930's group of painters known as the Regionalists. Represented by such artists as Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood, the prewar Regionalists feared that American art was being overwhelmed by European philosophies. They rejected international styles of modernism and abstraction, and rejected as well the primacy of global art centers. Instead, working in realistic, often figurative styles, they emphasized local experience and chose to celebrate the virtues of democracy, independence and individualism through images of the American landscape. By highlighting these connections between artistic representation and geographic location, the Regionalists tried to foster a pluralistic American art style that would recognize the existence of creative potential in every part of the country.

The Regionalists hoped their works would create a strong, self-reliant American identity, especially during the uncertain years surrounding the Depression; instead, other artistic groups like the Social Realists challenged what they saw as the narrowness of the Regionalist vision. In the Social Realists' opinion, Regionalist works, with their emphasis on America's frontier and pioneer origins, rarely depicted minority ethnic groups or women, and rarely addressed urban situations. For art historian H.W. Janson, as well as many others, these selective aspects of Regionalism did not represent American freedom and independence. Instead, Regionalist statements about national heritage, "to

anyone conversant with the theories underlying the Nazi purge of art in Germany...[had] a strangely familiar ring."¹

As an art historical movement, Regionalism is said to have ended with the 1930s². Certainly with the postwar strengthening of the New York art scene in relation to older centers like Paris and Rome, much of the early Regionalist emphasis on creating an egalitarian American art system was, for a time, put aside. Many geographical characteristics identified with prewar Regionalism, however, such as realistic forms of representation and locationally specific subject matter, persisted. These forms are retained when speaking of regional artists today. Location, style and subject matter continue to be used as criteria for establishing the regional character of a work of art. The painters of the Chicago School, for example, are distinguished by their midwestern location, use of figurative imagery and representational technique.³ In addition, primitive and naive tendencies in regional art are routinely evaluated and used either to reinforce a work's originality and unpretentiousness or to point out its anachronisms and prejudices. In this way, the work's relevance to contemporary society is undermined.

Critics of regional art have noted that, in an age of rapid transport and mass communication, the development of a geographically distinct art style is implausible. Nevertheless, when the Santa Fe Museum of Art's eight-state juried exhibition "Southwest '85: A Fine Arts Competition" refused to acknowledge any geographically determined similarities between exhibited works, David Bell reported that such actions "[called] into question the geographical, and implicitly, the cultural rationale for the exhibition."⁴ Persistent attempts to establish stylistic similarities within a given geographic region, or to define regional art solely in terms of subject matter, valorize the narrow and stereotypical features of prewar Regionalist imagery. At the same time, they fail to recognize that imagery's underlying concepts of pluralism and individual artistic worth.

Forms of regionalism based on geography are most readily recognized through a work's style or subject matter. Geographical characteristics, however, have been detected in works that emphasize emotive content, rather than formal technique. As emotive content, these elements do not appear as images of any physical locale. Instead, they embody what Donald Kuspit calls the direct, improvisational "provincial spirit" of the American wilderness, and are presented in whatever visual form will most successfully

¹H.W. Janson, "Benton and Wood, Champions of Regionalism." Magazine of Art, May 1946, p. 186.

²Matthew Baigell, The American Scene. American Paintings of the 1930's. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974. p. 13.

³Michael Bonesteel, "The 39th Corcoran Biennial: The Death Knell of Regionalism?" Art in America, Vol. 73, Oct. 1985, p. 33.

⁴David Bell, "Once More With Feeling." Art in America, Vol. 73, Sept. 1985, p. 30.

appeal to the viewer's passion, rather than logic.⁵ The provincial spirit can be linked to the raw energies of nature, and so can be contrasted to a "metropolitan" emphasis in art, which explores formal aesthetic concepts like color and composition for their own sake. Works with such provincial content, however, need not necessarily be produced in rural areas. Clyfford Still, Jackson Pollock and the Abstract Expressionists managed to retain this provincial inspiration even while working in metropolitan city centers. These artists are cited as proof that the expressive motivations behind regionalism can be transplanted and that emotive art can be produced in any, including the urban, environment.⁶

Notions of localized form as content can free regional art from restrictive geographic definitions of style and imagery, but the resulting disregard for problems of physical location is equally dangerous. There is something unsettling in a theory that concedes the validity of local artistic inspiration, yet denies the importance of local artistic production. Hamilton Harwell Harris has stated:

"Opposed to the Regionalism of Restriction is another type of regionalism, the Regionalism of Liberation. This is the manifestation of a region that is especially in tune with the emerging thought of the time. We call such a manifestation "regional" only because it has not yet emerged elsewhere....A region may develop ideas. A region may accept ideas. Imagination and intelligence are necessary for both."⁷

Cultural innovation occurs everywhere. Old fears that regional areas, and therefore regional art, were stagnant and inbred due to their isolation from the rest of the world have been overcome, thanks to improved transportation and communication. They have been replaced by a new concern, however. This time, it is feared that in an era when globally accepted standards and styles of art are available and adopted in all locations, such widespread assimilations will result in a uniform monotony of culture or a condition of placelessness.⁸ Definitions of regional art that transplant works into centralized systems of production and distribution, rather than encourage its direct development within a specific community, contribute to this waning individuality of place. While it is impossible to yearn for the integration of geography and ideology advocated by the prewar Regionalists, it is also frightening to imagine the destruction of innovative potential at the local level.

⁵Donald Kuspit, "Regionalism Reconsidered." *Art in America*, Vol. 64, July/Aug. 1976, p. 65.

⁶Kuspit, p. 66.

⁷Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance." *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post-Modern Culture*. Ed. Hal Foster. Port Townsend Bay Press, 1983. p. 22.

⁸Frampton, p. 21.

A second interpretation of regional art is provided by social regionalism. This view recognizes that structures of cultural production, distribution and evaluation form a stratified system, and that many artists are marginalized within that system. In discussions of regionalism and marginalization, writers like Terry Smith propose that contemporary processes of artistic exhibition, discussion and acceptance originate within a network of hierarchical institutions and ideas. This network is composed of galleries, museums and educational establishments in both rural and urban locations. These institutions formulate theories of style and history and critique the success of specific works and movements. When circulated among a larger public, these evaluations of art are generally accepted on the grounds of the system's expertise. Certain artists are promoted within this system and used to set standards of value and achievement. Other artists become marginalized, and are judged in relation to the established standard.⁹

Marginalization can be described as a state of imbalance between an artist and the established art network. What the network says to the artist has more impact than what the artist says or does within it. Credibility within this network is usually gained through exhibitions in major galleries or from encounters with that network in the form of lectures or publications. According to these guidelines, an artist is probably marginal if he or she has never exhibited in New York City or a similar art center and/or has never held a full-time position as a studio faculty member in a college or university. The choices that determine mainstream and marginalized artists are relative, and their processes are by no means absolute. Unfortunately, the practices and beliefs of marginalized artists, who conform to established standards in hopes of advancing within the cultural ranks, perpetuate the same stratified system that excludes them. These artists may be diverse in personal background, geographic location, artistic objective and formal technique. All, however, occupy a position of marginality within the cultural hierarchy. For this reason they may be considered regional.

A marginal position can affect an artist in several ways. First, mainstream systems of art tend to make the artist self-conscious. While an awareness of other works is a necessary part of artistic growth, provincial self-consciousness, as described by Terry Smith, takes this situation to extremes. The marginalized or provincial artist is torn between the possibility of creating art at a local level and the knowledge that standards of quality are determined by outside sources. The result is that the provincial artist's self-image is accepted, rather than invented, and that his or her work becomes obsessed with

⁹Terry Smith, "The Provincialism Problem." *Artforum*, Sept. 1974, p. 55-58.

what its identity ought to be.¹⁰ Such conflicting thoughts on identity and self-construction become even more significant when we recall that the major strength of regional art, as identified by Kuspit, is its passionate, improvisational nature. In order to maintain the emotional immediacy of the provincial spirit, an artist must "recover instinct."¹¹ If Smith is correct in defining the self-conscious nature of regional art, such a rejection of mainstream standards may be difficult to achieve.

We cannot deny that cultural production and promotion are inextricably intertwined. The full realization of an artist's creative abilities often depends on the successful distribution of his or her work. If a marginalized artist manages to overcome the stylistic inhibitions and self-consciousness created by a cultural hierarchy, it may be more difficult to overcome other, more concrete aspects of that hierarchy, like shortages of studio and exhibition space or the absence of financial security needed for the production of an artwork. Distinct and complex facilities, ranging from printing presses and ceramic kilns to well-lighted open spaces, may be required to produce a work of art. While the lack of these facilities does not prevent artistic production, it may make that production more difficult or alter the character of the works produced. Moreover, as art is generally not a profitable profession, artists must often seek additional employment. Hours spent at supplementary jobs could, under better financial circumstances, have been devoted to studio work. Since these vital requirements of time and space are usually acquired by gaining access to the large, possibly paying audiences of commercial galleries in metropolitan centers like New York City, even an artist's ability to produce work becomes tied to success in the mainstream.

Protests against these conditions of marginalization are not new. Eleanor Heartney writes that "the familiar lament of the regional artists is an ode against elitism." She continues:

"These complaints mask a real ambivalence toward the distant kingmakers, and anger at the lack of attention the local scene receives from national institutions, an anger which serves to reaffirm their authority."¹²

In other instances, this anger towards mainstream institutions is even thought to be valuable. Jane Livingston, curator of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., says, in relation to her experiences jurying the New Orleans Biennial:

¹⁰Smith, p. 57.

¹¹Kuspit, p. 67.

¹²Eleanor Heartney, "West of the Hudson: Regional Art on Exhibition in New York." *Arts Magazine*, Vol 58, June 1984. p. 99.

"The fact that you have in New Orleans a museum which is a solid reality gives artists something to struggle against....Most of those artists know damn well they're never going to show in the museum,...but they complain a lot, and that's good; it gives them a sense that something's there...Art is such a fragile, elusive thing, and it's very hard to go through life doing something which seems totally useless, so if they can rationalize their activity in relation to some institution whose existence validates what they do, then I think that helps them to continue."¹³

These interpretations of marginality fail to recognize the relationships that exist between the availability of time, space and materials and an artist's ability to produce a specific work. More importantly, they forget that art, for its fullest expression, needs a viewer and interpreter, as well as a creator. Art is not a self-fulfilling activity. Unless it can be viewed, and generate a response, art runs the risk of becoming lifeless. Practices that, in the name of quality, discourage artists from exhibiting and communicating with an audience reinforce this isolation, and are more likely to frustrate than inspire.

The final interpretation for establishing whether or not an artist may be considered regional is historical. Historical regionalism can be seen as a record of previous attempts to define artistic identity based on characteristics found in an artist's work, geographic location or social position. Many factors, including the issues of representation, content and marginalization discussed here, relate to the concept of regionalism. A regional label is often applied indiscriminately to works exhibiting any or all of these characteristics. If an artist continues to work in the same location in which he or she was born, has participated in a "regional" exhibition, is affiliated with "regional" artists' groups or alliances, or has at some time been described in a catalog or review as being "regional," a regional condition, whether stated or implied, is already present and must be contradicted or accepted.

The intentions of these categorizations are varied and range from the purely descriptive, in regard to geographic location, to the blatantly critical, in reference to culturally uninformed or low-quality works. Most striking in discussions of historically determined regionalism, however, is the imposition of a regional categorization from an outside source. Essentially, the role of the regional artist in this categorization is passive. Any active discussion involving the artist is less likely to be in the form of an initial statement than a comment or response. Even Thomas Hart Benton, when speaking of the

¹³Joan Simon, "The Itinerant Curator and the Museum," *Art in America*, Vol. 64, July 1976. p.89.

early Regionalist title, stated that its adoption was not initiated by the artists who later became identified with it, but was bestowed by critical sources.¹⁴

For Stuart Hall, the formation of an identity from the outside comes as no surprise. Hall maintains that the great collective social identities that were founded, like those of the prewar Regionalists, on concepts of location and nationality, have fragmented and can no longer be discussed or expressed in a single comprehensive manner.¹⁵ Neither, according to Hall, can one define one's identity as the total of his or her experiences. Instead, identity is always formed outside oneself and reflected back in the gaze of others. It is a "splitting between that which one is, and that which is the other: the attempt to expel the other to the other side of the universe is always compounded by the relationships of love and desire."¹⁶

Identification with a marginalized group is not necessarily a sign of weakness, for the marginal position can also be a position of power. Identity is always a matter of politics. When certain groups are denied a place within the majority, then the very identity of those people becomes a position from which to challenge established social practice.¹⁷ Identities are not simply biological or cultural. They may also be consciously formed and bound together in order to serve specific interests and achieve certain goals. This union, however, "is not the disappearance, the destruction, of difference. It is the construction of a collective will through difference. It is the articulation of differences which don't disappear, don't go over the side."¹⁸ In order to effectively present the cultural concerns that exist on a local level, definitions of regionalism must recognize the persistence of difference between individuals, and understand and work through them, rather than deny difference in the name of a unified totality.

Existing descriptions of regionalism seem to be either too broad or too narrow to accurately represent the challenges facing a contemporary regional artist. Geographical ideas of regionalism which focus on factors of representation or emotive content are either too restrictive to accommodate the diversity among artists working in a given geographic location or too willing to sacrifice a concern for the production of art on a local level.

¹⁴Matthew Baigell, The American Scene: American Paintings of the 1930's. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974, p. 13.

¹⁵Stuart Hall, "Old and New Ethnicities," in Culture, Globalization and the World System, ed. Anthony King. Current Debates in Art History 3, Department of Art and Art History, SUNY Binghamton, and Macmillan, London, 1991 (forthcoming).

¹⁶"Ethnicities," p. 12.

¹⁷"Ethnicities," p. 19.

¹⁸"Ethnicities," p. 29.

Likewise, social interpretations of regionalism, which locate the position of the regional artist within a cultural hierarchy, cease to identify common regional characteristics other than those produced by the marginal condition itself. Instead, they tend to overgeneralize the marginal position. Marginal status is not enough to constitute a state of regionalism. It does not fully investigate the artist's conscious and individual acceptance or rejection of that position.

Finally, ideas about historical regionalism cannot be used to gauge regional status. In light of the varied and ever-changing interpretations of regionalism, we remain forever uncertain of what was meant when regional terminology was used to describe an artist's work. We must investigate further, then, the relationships between these geographic, social and historical interpretations before we attempt to offer a definition of the regional artist. "Access and Exclusion: A Survey of Works From the Wilkes-Barre/Binghamton Region" is an attempt to explore these issues. It acknowledges past misconceptions and present potential and addresses the definitions and concerns of regional artists, as held by artists who have experienced these concerns for themselves.

ACCESS AND EXCLUSION: ARTISTS' STATEMENTS AND WORKS

"Access and Exclusion" is an invitational group exhibition featuring works by twelve artists located in the Wilkes-Barre/Binghamton area. Each artist has submitted two pieces. The first, created especially for the exhibition, reflects the artist's views, reactions or beliefs concerning regionalism. The second is an earlier work completed by the artist in his or her usual style. While the exhibitors included in "Access and Exclusion" live in a common locale, no attempt has been made to define them as regional. Rather, the artists were chosen for their ability to comment on the geographical, social and historical conceptions of regionalism presented here. All have encountered, in their work or working circumstances, the conditions these conceptions describe.

In addition, artists were invited to participate in the exhibition because of the strength and quality of their work and their willingness to think about the implications of regionalism. The ability to confront such an issue, particularly if it is not a motivating force in one's work, requires open-mindedness, patience and courage. The consideration and insights provided by the artists included here are greatly appreciated.



John Stascak: New York, NY / Wilkes-Barre, PA. Pictured: Still from "Buried Artist." Black and white videotape. Live-action piece created at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD. Nov. 1, 1972, 8:00 AM. Also exhibited: "Binghamton Demons." Cloth, wire, string, helium. Installation piece to be created at SUNY Binghamton, NY. 1991.

JOHN STASCAK: NEW YORK, NY / WILKES-BARRE, PA

I believe that there are regional parameters in art, but with today's international communications and travel, we no longer live or work in a set regional esthetic.

GABRIELLE FELDMAN: HONESDALE, PA

Phillipa Whiting rejects the idea that Benton, Curry or Wood are regional artists. If this assessment was justified then, how much more must it be now, fifty-five years later. For my own part, although I have done landscapes locally, they do not portray local scene, but illustrate a state of mind or emotion. I can't say that I have ever felt impelled to immortalize a local scene, nor for that matter, a foreign one. There is something else that stirs my desire to make a picture that pertains to our condition as mortal, though self-aware, animals. Hopefully the results will be supported by as strong qualities of design, tonality and color as I can muster.

As for New York, it doesn't seem worth the bother and multiple rejection. I'd rather save my energy to do the best work that I can and not worry about being on the cutting edge or coming up with a new gimmick. I can't say, as I have heard some say, that "I don't care if anyone sees it, as long as I can do my ART!" I definitely need an audience, but it doesn't have to be in Manhattan.

WARD V. ROE: SCRANTON, PA

If, by virtue of where and whom I photograph, my work is deemed regional, then so be it. These photographs are inspired by a small circle of family and friends, far removed from the din of New York City, and the art world per se. Only when a work begins its spiral of exhibition is the audience of some consequence. Initially, I am the audience, and the work must fulfill my own vision and expression. My own geography and location in time affect the work through culture and content, but this is inescapable. We are all products of our particular time and place in history.

I have been influenced by photographers outside my immediate circle, but they too show a similar assertion of personal concerns. Their work is influential because the larger art world has reached into their own. Frankly, I feel very far removed from New York. Since my work is produced here and now, its influence is at best minimal. Current art trends merely set the tone in the short term. The work I do is of longer duration than fashion. Whether or not I am part of the mainstream is of little consequence, and I, like so many artists who are not directly connected to the New York art scene, will continue to produce images of personal importance regardless of geography.



Gabrielle Feldman: Honesdale, PA. Pictured: "Water IV." Oil on linen. 30" x 40." 1990. Also exhibited: "Lackawanna." Oil on linen. 36" x 36." 1990.



Ward Roe: Scranton, PA. Pictured: Untitled selections from the "Family Diary" series. Gelatin silver prints. 8" x 10." 1988. Also exhibited: Untitled selections from the "Figures" series. Gelatin silver prints. 8" x 10." 1990.



David Higgins: Binghamton, NY. Pictured: "The Queen of Mirth." Oil on panel. 90" x 72." 1990. Also exhibited: "Bradley's Driveway." Oil on panel. 22" x 28." 1990.

DAVID HIGGINS: BINGHAMTON, NY

Light is my real subject. My landscapes are pretexts for inventing and recreating that light, especially in the gentle eeriness of the night world. I strive for realism, but work from memory, never photographs; thus I feel there is an arbitrary and imaginative quality that enlivens my scenes of the commonplace and familiar.

My work fits neatly into nearly any definition of regionalism. I fit the traditional criteria because I really do paint scenes of my roots/surroundings that are purely for my own pleasure without an eye toward the New York art scene. Perhaps because I'm so self-guided, I certainly fit the alternative definition as a marginal artist scrabbling for patronage in a rinky-dink arena. Ultimately, the reasons that drive me to make art are the same reasons that drive me into the category of marginalization, but I can accept that.

BRUCE LANNING: WILKES-BARRE, PA

My imagery refers to the physical world and my relation to it. Often my paintings are based on a particular place and show man-made structures like billboards and highways in the natural landscape. Copying an image for form's sake is insufficient. The act of painting goes beyond literal representation of place. Painting is exciting because it is the act of creating something totally new. The real billboards or buildings I confront must be questioned and interpreted; so must the creative process and the painting that is produced.

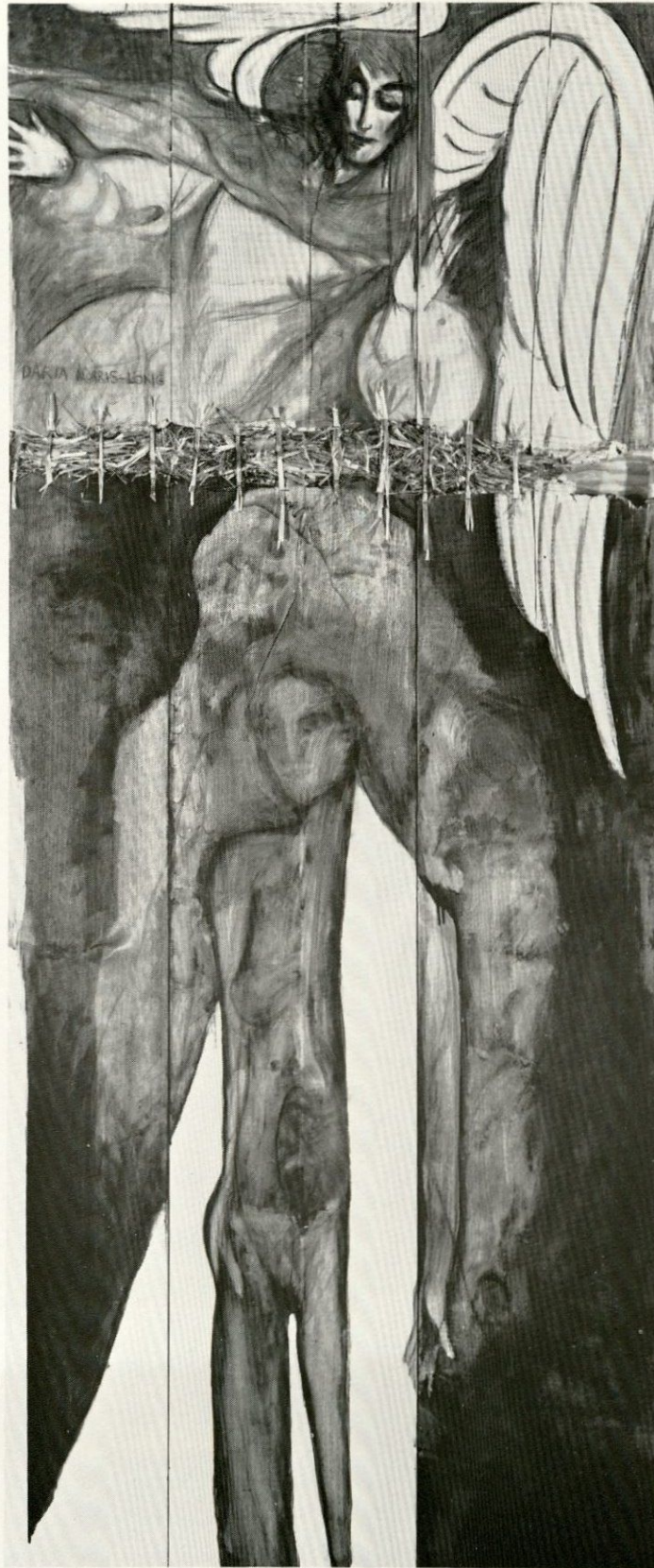
Being an artist requires an awareness of one's self and beyond one's self--the ability to see universal implications of particular subjects rather than focusing on familiar sentiment. This is true for the artist of the most remote town or largest city. I must educate and learn from both. Any artist with this awareness and understanding, in my opinion, cannot be associated with the negative connotations of the word "regionalism," such as local isolation or mainstream mimicry.

DARIA MORRIS-LONG: EDWARDSVILLE, PA

To speak categorically of art in an effort to define or understand an artist's intention, for me, diminishes the experience of the work and may even alienate the viewer from having any real or personal insight. I think it is the mark of a successful work when the viewer has a sense of the artist's struggle and pleasure in creating the piece. I enjoy work that has an unfinished look to it, leaving the viewer in the active role of creating what the eye doesn't see. This involvement in the creative process inspires the imagination and broadens perception. This is the true experience of art.



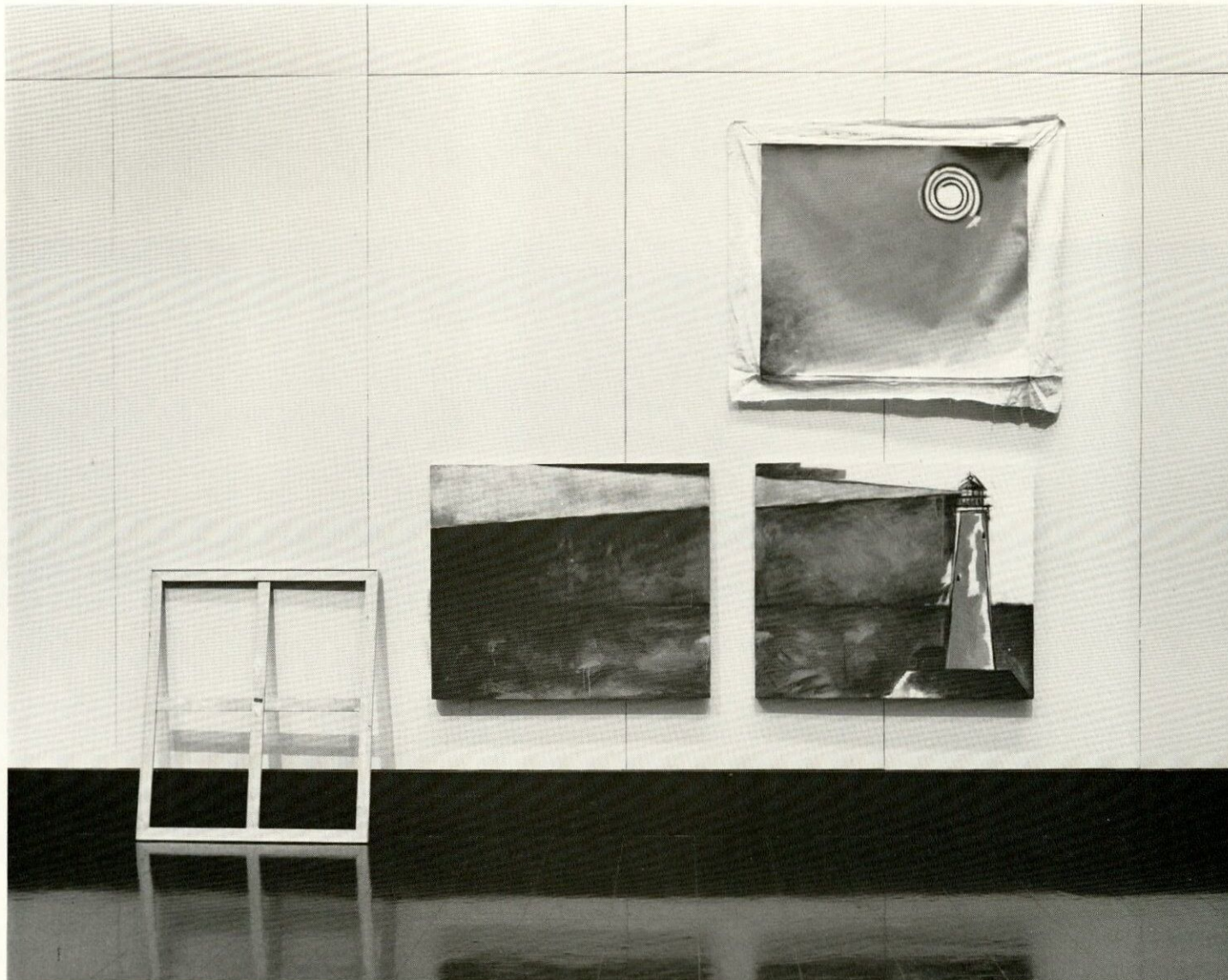
Bruce Lanning: Wilkes-Barre, PA. Pictured: "Stadium Light." Oil on canvas. 42" x 54." 1990. Also exhibited: "Wing Dings." Oil on canvas. 40" x 68." 1990.



Daria Morris-Long: Edwarsville, PA. Pictured: "Wood Piece: Passage Tale." Oil stick, pastel, oil paint, graphite, stain on wood. 72" x 48." 1990. Also exhibited: "Shroud Piece: Ascent." Coal ash, rust, dark corn syrup on Indian cotton, blank canvas and blank canvas book. 96" x 48." 1990.



Ronald Gonzales: Binghamton, NY. Pictured: "Coneman." Cloth, wax, ashes over welded steel. 12' x 23" x 22." 1990. Also exhibited: "Gold Cross." Cloth, wax, gold leaf over welded steel. 10' x 2' x 9.' 1990.



Henry Long: Edwardsville, PA. Pictured: "Slow Turning." Gesso, rust, graphite, oil stick, turpentine, acrylic paint, Damar varnish, aluminum powder. 144" x 100." 1990. Also exhibited: "The Descent." Graphite, gold leaf, beeswax, pastel, oil stick, Prismacolor stick, Permtine, turpentine, Scotch tape, acrylic paint, Damar varnish spray. 33 1/2" x 50." 1989.

RONALD GONZALES: BINGHAMTON, NY

Born with eyes on my hands and feet,	cold wind.
the power of the underground is always	I watch the steel bed turn as big as a
with me	mountain,
To see where it is always twilight beneath	the crosses turn upside down without pity.
the waters of absence.	And I can hear sorrow's faint voice,
And the land below is trembling with the	talking of memories that have died in sleep;
souls of paper burning in rooms	and bees wild from their terrible hive,
and victims breathing in mirrors,	cover the walls of the universe.
with trees stuffed into hearts,	And I know I will always leave through
and bodies heavy with skulls,	immense doors
with mouths hungry for color.	transparent as tears.
And the time is dropping through holes	And dream of this plaster city of forgotten heads
while the crippled man turns into a	as I fall through the fragile surface.

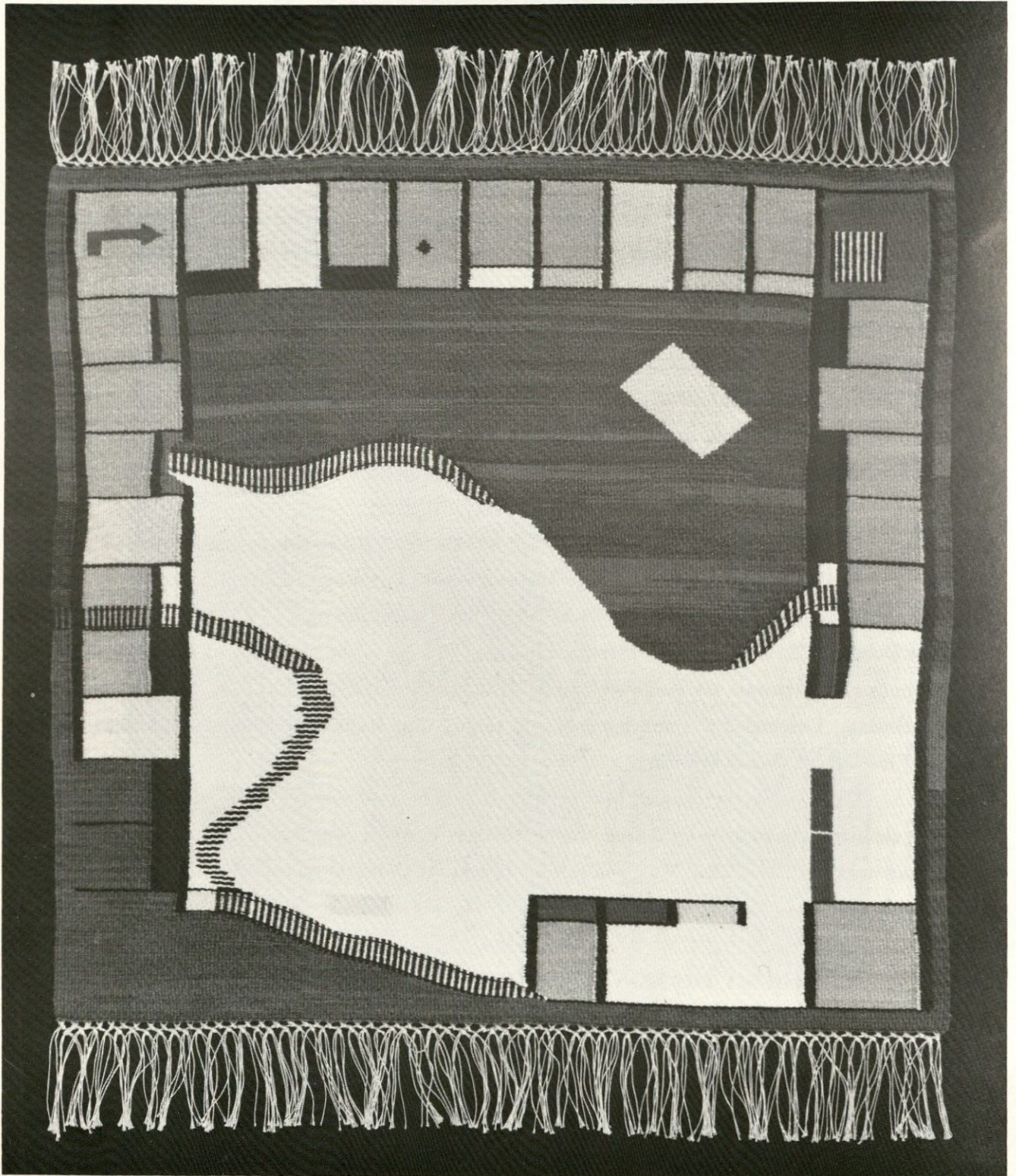
HENRY E. LONG: EDWARDSVILLE, PA

In the last week of September, while my wife Daria and I were on vacation in Cape May, New Jersey, I had a vision. There is a lighthouse on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean and the Delaware Bay. People are permitted to enter. To get to the top requires a slow climb on a wrought-iron spiral staircase of one hundred and ninety-nine steps, turning counter-clockwise. I ascended the one hundred and ninety-nine steps to just below the beacon light, and looked out over everything.

That evening Daria and I sat comfortably in the salt-mist sea-sprayed air and watched the slow-turning shaft of light from the lighthouse. Above us was a universe full of stars. The ocean was dark and big. My hand felt for her hand and held on tight. I kissed her on the mouth, and closed my eyes, and made a wish. My vision was slow-turning.

SHIRLEY TRAMONTANA: WEST PITSTON, PA / CANTON, NY

The word tapestry is often misused. In its truest sense tapestry refers to a particular structure of weft-faced weaving. The generic definition often includes any pictorial cloth hanging. I do not like tapestry that replicates painting; I prefer that it remain true to weaving and its structural characteristics. The works shown here are part of a series of tapestries based on simple game boards, including Monopoly, Clue, Chess, Camelot, Parchisi and Cribbage, and were designed to be viewed flat, not hung on the wall.



Shirley Tramontana: West Pittston, PA / Canton, NY. Pictured: "Derailed in Atlantic City." Tapestry: hand-dyed, handwoven at 30 ppi, 3-ply fine wool weft on 8/5 natural Irish linen warp, sett 6 epi. Number one in a series of rugs based on gameboards. 41" x 41." 1990. Also exhibited: "Battle for Gender Equity." Tapestry study: stitched, hand-dyed wool. Study for number four in a series of tapestry rugs based on gameboards. 42" x 72." 1990.



Zoja Forsberg: Clarks Summit, PA. Pictured: "Light at the End of a Mine Shaft." Mixed media. 32 1/2" x 40 1/2." 1990. Also exhibited: "Sunset." Mixed media. 32" x 40." 1988.



Phyllis Kloda: Binghamton, NY / Rochester, NY. Pictured: "Untitled" White stoneware with polychrome slip and stain decoration. 12" x 6" and 4" x 3" 1990. Also exhibited: "Untitled." White stoneware with polychrome slips, stains and lusters. 50" x 80." 1990.

ZOJA FORSBERG: CLARKS SUMMIT, PA

My medium is fibers and found objects, which I use for collages. I find inspiration mostly from colors, designs and textures in nature. Each material has its own intrinsic force, which guides what the design will be. I feel more like an observer; the material is the artist. I do not feel any limitations in what is acceptable to do or not. I have overcome the fear of "what will my audience say." There is a tremendous freedom and eager desire in experimenting with new materials.

My regional affiliation will probably fall under a socially determined category, since my roots are not in this country. This has, however, been my home and environment for the last seven years. In an almost borderless world, I feel there is a need for familiar subject matter and things to relate to, in order for people to feel at home. The regional artists have a big role to play. The self-motivation it takes for an artist to go on would be tremendously helped by institutions who validate what artists do, and for the local population to support their artists.

PHYLLIS KLODA: BINGHAMTON, NY / ROCHESTER, NY

"The creative process...is the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other....The mainspring of creativity appears to be...man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities." -Carl Rogers

DAVID KLEVINSKY: WILKES-BARRE, PA

An Interview with the Artist by Jacquelyn Beck

Since returning to Wilkes-Barre in 1982, Klevinsky has also returned to his art. Carpentry materials used in his trade are now the medium for recollections of his history and roots.

J.B.: In regard to the show "Access and Exclusion," how did you respond?

D.K.: We were asked to submit two pieces for the show; one to directly address the issue of regionalism, and the other, a taste of our own work. I chose the "Knox Mine Disaster" as the vehicle to express my thoughts on regionalism and "Here Am I," my feelings .

J.B.: Before going any further, would you define regionalism?

D.K.: I believe regionalism deals with an individual and where they come from; their roots and personal history. Imagery can express this relationship of regionalities to thoughts.

J.B.: Would it be correct to say that the whirlpool imagery ("Knox Mine Disaster") beginning and spiraling to an end, represents the course of life and its influences?

D.K.: Yes. You will always have decisions to make because of outside influences, but you are never far from your roots: because, "no matter where you go, there you are."



David Klevinsky: Wilkes-Barre, PA. Pictured: "Knox Mine Disaster." Coal, driveway seal, glue, joint compound, latex house paint, leaves, Solomon's Creek bed and water, straw. 108" x 144." 1990. Also exhibited: "Here Am I." Black and white framed photograph, driveway seal, fire, glue, gold leaf, grout, joint compound, latex house paint, twine, water. 108" x 60". 1990.

THE REGIONAL ARTIST: A SECOND LOOK

After evaluating geographical, social and historical conceptions of regionalism, we can recognize the regional condition as one of access and exclusion. Artists working outside mainstream networks can, through reproductions, publications and lectures, gain access to the ideas and images promoted by that mainstream. At the same time, they are excluded from participation in mainstream processes of production, exhibition and validation.

These are the conditions confronting the regional artist. A regional artist, however, must not be judged by his or her circumstances, but by his or her reactions to them. First, a regional artist, in response to an awareness of mainstream art scenes, would work in and with any style, imagery, medium or contextual focus he or she should choose. The artist would recognize his or her ability to access current artistic dialogues, and would use them towards his or her own creative ends.

Next, a regional artist would acknowledge his or her exclusion from the mainstream, and understand the value of cultural diversity. He or she would take advantage of and attempt to contribute to any and all cultural opportunities existing at the local level. This local participation would combat the hierarchical domination of artistic activities, including production, exhibition and peer support. At the same time, those activities would be promoted locally as both an alternative and supplement to established mainstream institutions.

Finally, the regional artist, by actively advocating, rather than passively accepting, his or her designation as regional, would be capable of creatively understanding his or her own identity. By admitting to personal origins, yet remaining involved with the contemporary world, he or she would cease to debate the concepts of place. The regional artist would come to realize, in the words of Lewis Mumford, that "centralization and decentralization are merely directions of movement; and the question for regionalism is what sort of life, at any particular point, such movements produce."¹⁹

¹⁹ Lewis Mumford, "The Theory and Practice of Regionalism," The Sociological Review, January and April 1928, p. 26.

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