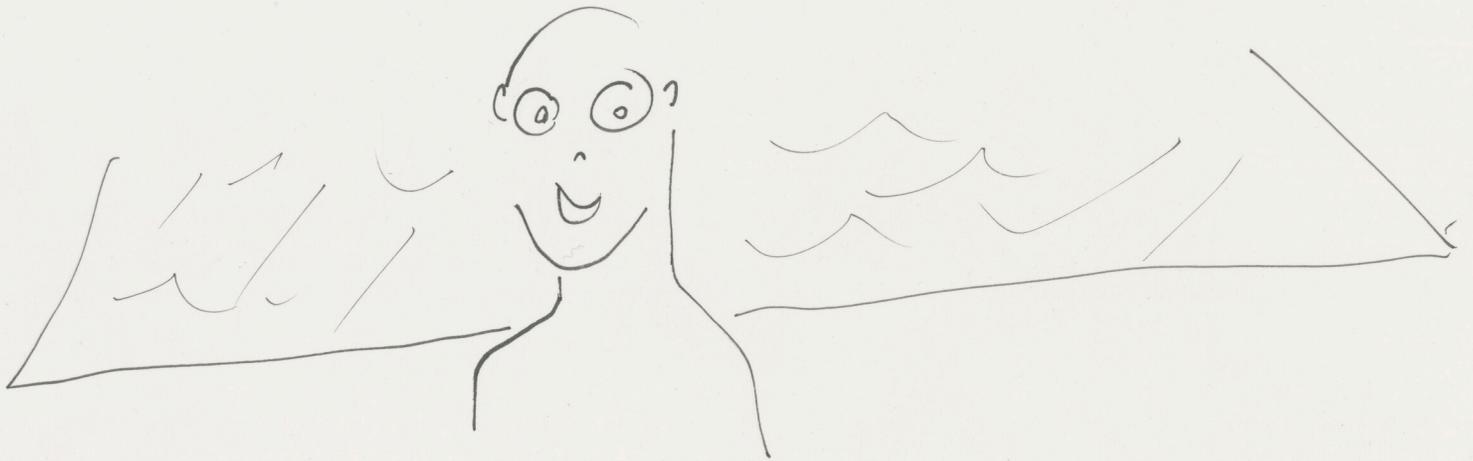


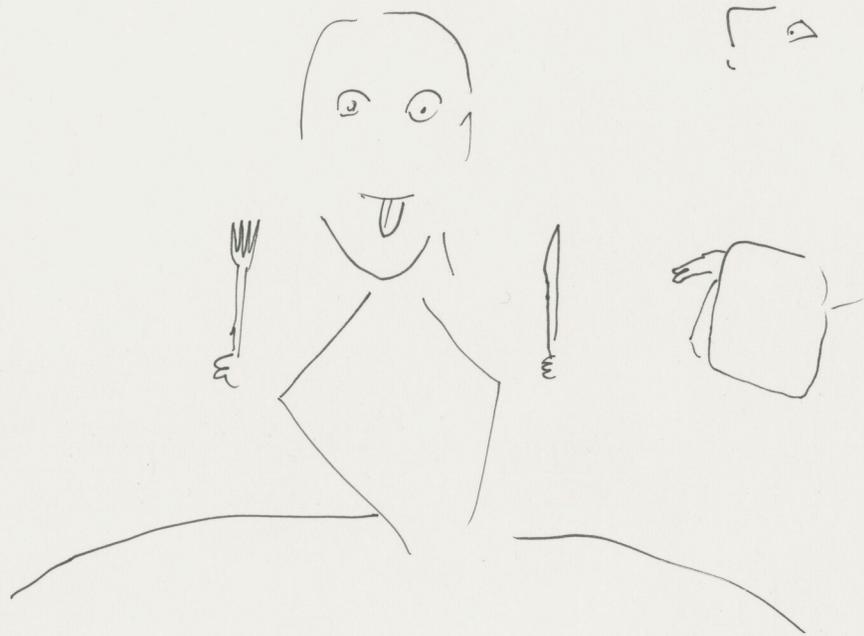
Abstract Art at the



Concrete Lake

Oftentimes you can find me at the concrete lake. I wear a ^{beret} ~~beanie~~
and a turtleneck and I sip an espresso at the café.





I take my breakfast at the bistro, and before leaving I send my compliments to the chef by way of a wink and a blink to be relayed by the server to the kitchen.



I make my presence known at the tiki bar on the main drag of the concrete lake. I gesticulate wildly without regard for my surroundings, swearing like a sailor, trying my hardest to keep track of which stories I've already told, and otherwise enjoying the company of the regulars, most of whom either go by a mononym, a nickname (for instance, The Cardinal) or use only the first syllable of their given name. Bib can corroborate the frequency of my evenings there. (Bib has an endearing affectation; asking you to drop that second B to insinuate an air of familiarity.)



I go to the nanobrewery and drink with great deliberation a nanobrew from the espresso cup I swiped from the café. (I am a swipecy after all, a.k.a. a thief.) I like to discuss the merits of obscure ingredients like nutmeg. My catchphrase at the nanobrewery, an inside joke with myself, is "Methinks I sense nutmeg!"

These are just my whereabouts; they do not matter nor hardly make a dent in that matrix of Ws and the H which describe the ^{minutiae} details of my existence. For now I will spare you the who, what, why and how. (If anyone asks, yes, I ~~am~~ ~~one of those people who~~ pronounce "minutiae" to rhyme with "me.")

As far as the concrete lake is concerned I am a man without a country, indifferent, floating, a consumer of my environs, a connoisseur, a mercenary (except it is I who pays these establishments and not them me).



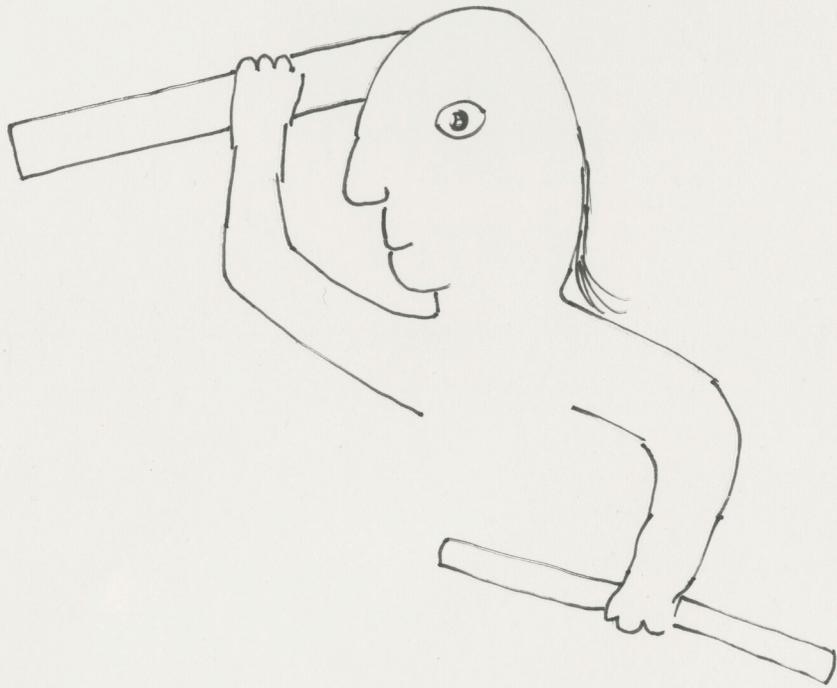
But if I were to encapsulate my being, I would say above all that I am an abstract artist, a creator of abstract art: a raconteur, an iconoclast~~er~~, ne'er-do-well!

You who paint that which is there to be painted:

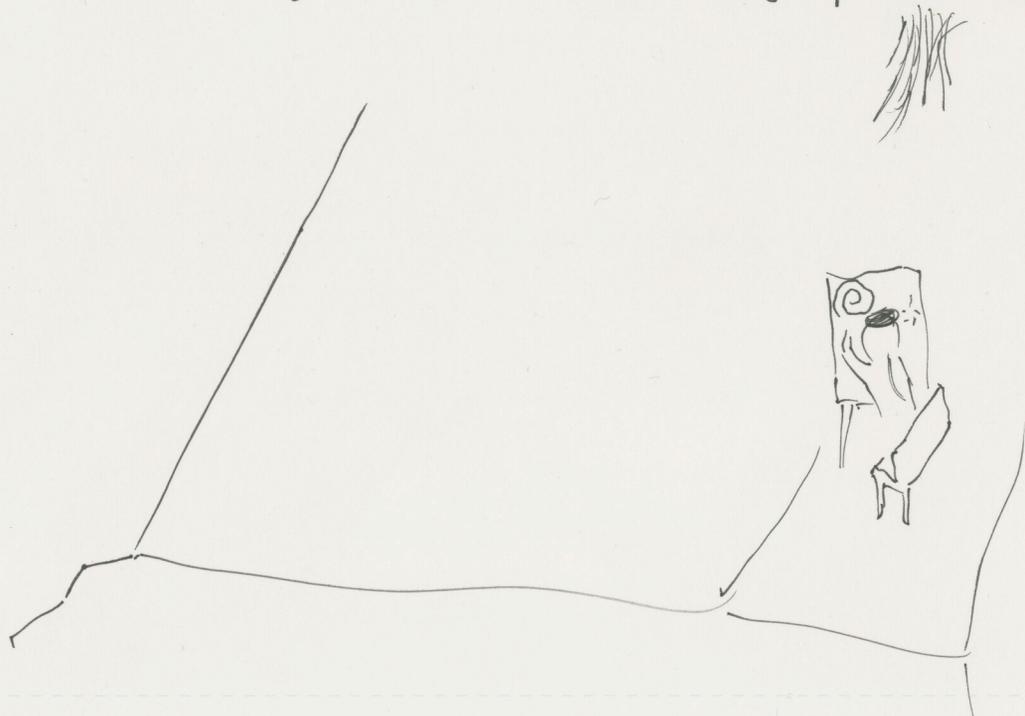
You who dream the already dreamt:

I wish so dearly for you to be in awe of me! And this is what leads me to the concrete lake.

Among my myriad talents I am a findy, a.k.a. a paleontologist, and I was able to reconstruct a wooden artist's easel from fragments in one of the sinkholes in the parking lot by the concrete lake. And the tableaux I then staged was to be my finest creation...

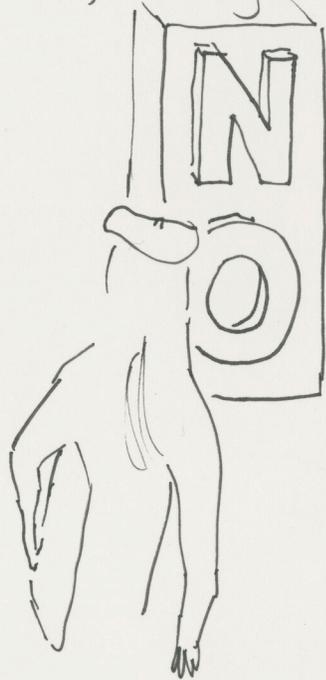


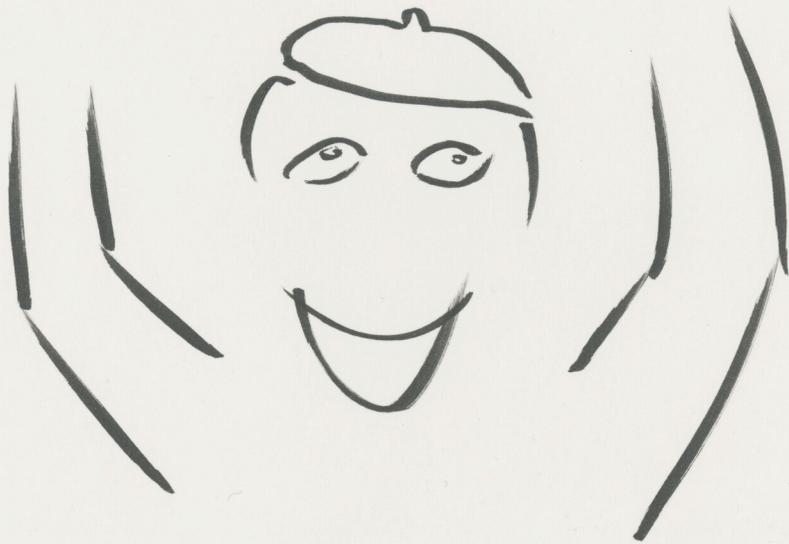
A dock is for three things: fishing, embarking on and disembarking from a boat. But I situate myself on a bench on the dock with my easel and I stare out at the fountain that sits in the middle of the lake. I angle the easel such that the locals walking nearby notice that what is on my canvas has no referent in my field of vision. I hope to impress upon them that I paint only intimations of pangs of feeling — not the fountain nor the rainbow from its spray (which I find so cloying and predictable a subject), nor the sky, the concrete wall, nor the children who jump from the west sentry lookout.



There are two art galleries: a municipal one and a private one (you can't miss the latter; the word ART in various media marks the entrance). Regularly I take my portfolio with me and beg for a chance to exhibit my work, even a single painting. I call it my "Begging Portfolio." The answer is roundly "no"; in fact the curator commissioned a sculpture of the letters N and O to make sure I understood. I appreciated this rare display of here at the concrete lake, damaged ego aside.

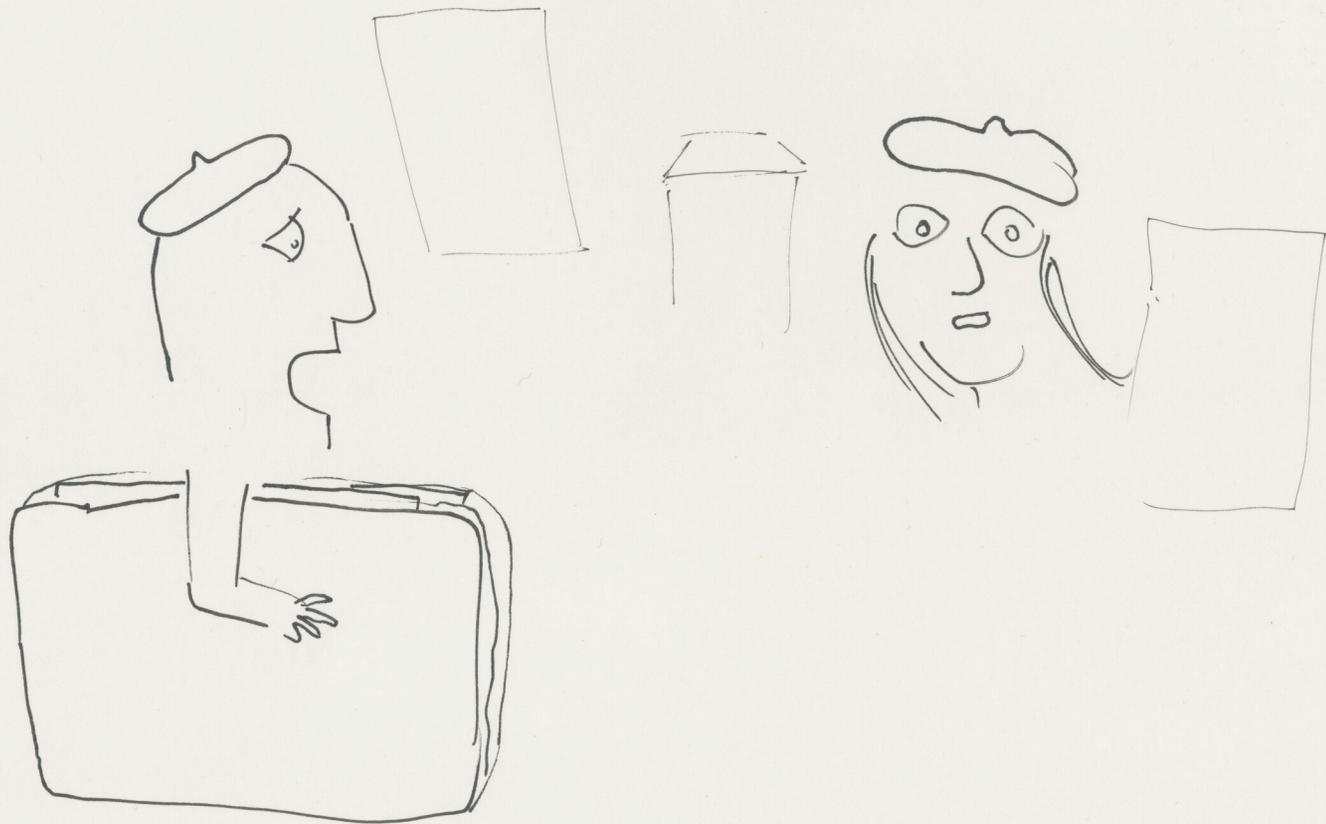
humor and whimsy



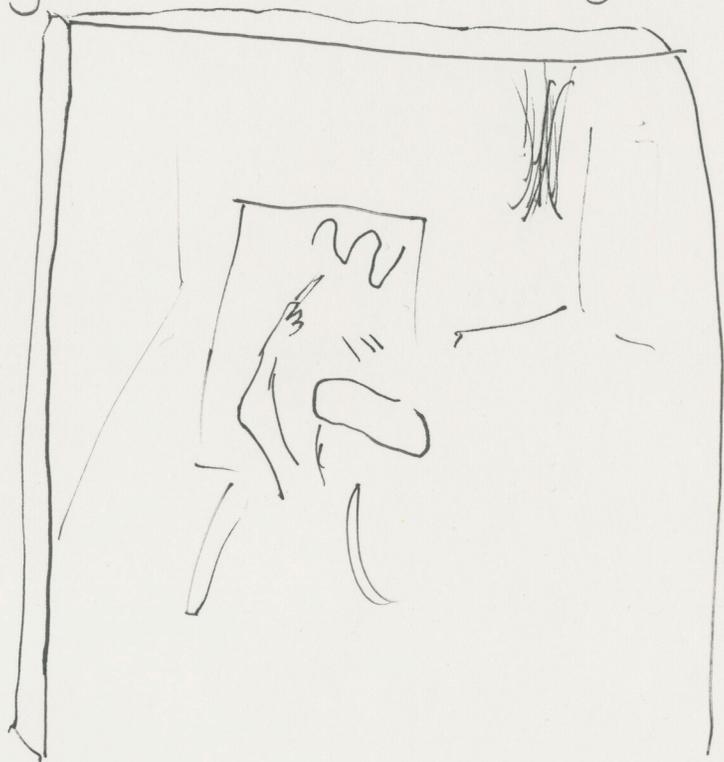


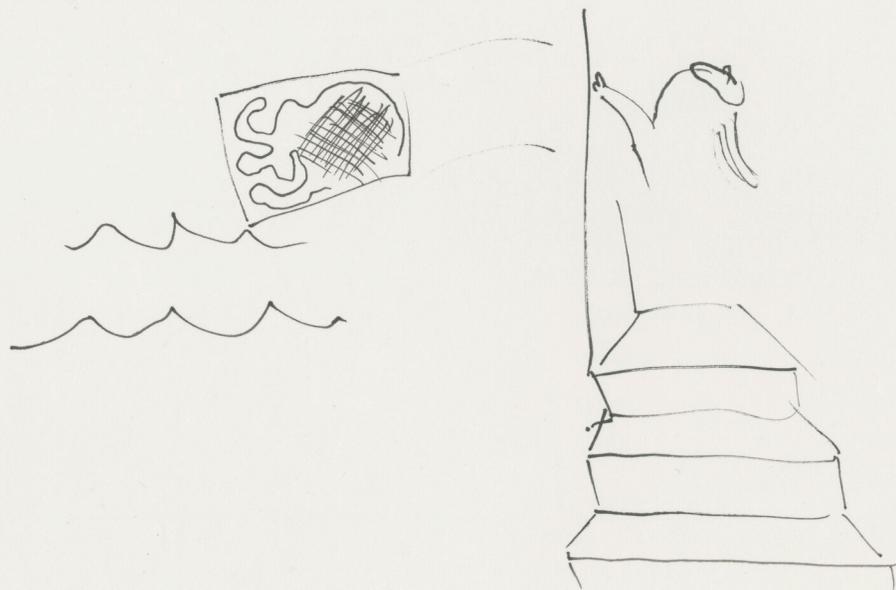
On a lovely spring day there was a silent art auction. The art was silent and so was the auction, a dangling participle so dangly you could hang it from the ceiling as a mobile in the art gallery where the auction was. To my surprise I was allowed to participate!

The silent art auction was conducted with poker chips and a small fraction of the sales would be given back to the community. Incidentally there were only two artists: your humble narrator and a Biboroviusnissmus, who seemed familiar... Bib?



From all the time we had spent together at the tiki bar, I never would have guessed that she had this particular passion. Her works were oil on canvas, meticulously detailed and ~~true to life~~^{hyper-realistic}: yours truly painting abstract art with obnoxiously obvious would-be source material in the background but absent from my own canvas.





Each of her paintings sold until she had no more, and then only mine were left. Bib won each of my paintings unchallenged by any other bidder, and after each purchase left the gallery to climb the moon observatory and toss it over into the lake. While I cried, upon her return she painted a new portrait of me, which was subsequently auctioned as it dried.

The purchaser of Bib's pieces was a fellow from our town who had had some success in the music industry. He went by the name "Jamin Ben Jammin" and he had an art collection to rival Europe's finest musea.



'J.B.J' commissioned a sculpture of me in this exact pose and had it installed at the concrete fountain. The sculptor ~~called~~ it "Unsold Paintings." Of course, my portfolio was empty because ^{titled} Bib had bought all of my pieces, only to toss them in the water so I as her subject would become increasingly distraught. "Unsold Paintings" complemented the plaza's brutalist architecture nicely: a bronze likeness of me weeping and eating quesadillas with a portfolio upright and parallel to my shins, canvases poking out of the opening. The inaccuracy of this last detail amused me; it was a relief to see a tiny bit of artistic license in this cesspool of dull-mindedness, unless the sculptor actually thought my begging portfolio had paintings in it, in which case this was just shoddy journalism.



And so, fair reader, with the fruits of my labor 14 feet below sea level there remains no visible trace of...

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