

La Muse

DOCENT DATES

September 8

10 am Docent Recognition Ceremony at Ridley-Tree House

September 22

10 am via ZOOM
Armando Ramos, artist & asst professor at SBCC on casting bronze.

September 29

11 a.m. VTS Patsy

October 6

10 am Susan Tai, Curator of Asian Art on current installations.

October 20

Julie Joyce, former Curator of Contemporary Art, on *In the Meanwhile, Part II*

November 3

November 17

December 1

December 13
HOLIDAY PARTY 4-6

January 5, 2022

January 19

February 2

February 16

March 2

March 16

April 6

May 4

May 18



Noah Davis died in 2015 at the age of 32. In his short life he and his family founded The Underground Museum in Arlington Heights, a neighborhood that had never before been home to galleries or museums. He also created a body of work which *Art in America* said, "envisioned an eerie, ethereal, decolonized world." *Submitted by Ricki*

Dear Docents,

If you attended the grand re-opening August 15th, you'll agree that it was exciting to finally be inside the museum, first stepping into Ludington Court with paintings hung Salon-style alongside a selection of sculpture—Hermes most prominent on his new six-foot pedestal. But for me, it was equally exciting to feel the buzz of visitors once again, bringing the galleries back to life. A big thank you to those who volunteered on opening day, Sunday, the 15th, to welcome the public. By now you have received your email invitation to our first Docent meeting Wednesday, September 8th at 10:00 a.m. in the patio of the Ridley-Tree Education Center when we will honor 2020 and 2021 service pin recipients. Please RSVP by September 3rd. Our next meeting on September 22nd will be via Zoom, as will subsequent meetings for the time being. Although the pandemic continues to impact our lives, we are making progress—our New Actives are being evaluated on *Highlights* so they will be ready to tour later this month, and secondary schools are inquiring about visits in October. Progress, indeed! ■



Patty Santiago,
Docent Council
President

From our Membership Chair
2020 & 2021 Service Recognition Awards



Please be sure to RSVP for Wednesday September 8th. It is especially important to hear from those receiving award pins who are unable to attend. You will receive your pin at a later time. The ceremony starts at 10 a.m., but come at 9:30 to mingle and munch, just like old times.

Thanks,
Pattie

Pattie Firestone

pattie.firestone@gmail.com

2020 RECIPIENTS

10 YEARS

Susan Billig
Vikki Duncan
Andrea Gallo
Rosemarie Gebhart
Molora Nichols
Gail Stichler

15 YEARS

Christine Holland

20 YEARS

Laura DePaoli
Loree Gold

30 YEARS

Ricki Morse

2021 RECIPIENTS

5 YEARS

Erika Budig
David Reichert
Patricia Santiago
Joanne Singer

10 YEARS

Mary Ellen Hoffman
Ralph Wilson

15 YEARS

Scarlett El-Khazan
Paul Guido
Susan Northrop
Gretchen Simpson

20 YEARS

Karen Brill
Jean Smith

25 YEARS

Niki Bruckner

Ridley-Tree Education Center, 1600 Santa Barbara St

From our **Student Teams Co-chairs**



Irene Stone

Welcome to all student touring teams! We hope that you have reviewed the assignments and are ready to hear from your excellent team leaders. (Note that Senior Docent Gail Stichler will lead the 1st and 2nd Fridays team.) As we pour over the wealth of wonderful exhibitions currently on view and begin creating our student tours, we must keep in mind that patience and flexibility are paramount, as tirelessly personified in Patsy and Rachel as they worked with diligence to ascertain the needs of



Teda Pilcher

the school districts we serve. Our docent assignments have been structured to meet those needs as best we can. At this point, local school districts are not planning museum visits for elementary students this fall. However, junior high and high schools, both public and private, are showing interest in having their students participate in tours. For that reason, the fall student tours — 1st and 2nd Tuesdays; 3rd and 4th Tuesdays; 2nd and 4th Wednesdays; and 1st and 2nd Fridays — will all be offered as regular student tours for grades 2-12. The 3rd and 4th Fridays will remain as Special Request tours. We anticipate that Storytelling tours and Artful Making activities will be offered again in January. Teda and I will be meeting with team leaders over Zoom on September 13 with more detailed information.

We are also pleased to announce that our wonderful Patsy will present a VTS demonstration for docents, preferably in person on **Wednesday, September 29th at 11 a.m., at Ridley-Tree**. To determine how many of you are interested, please send an **RSVP** to Teda (tedapilcher@yahoo.com) if you would like to attend.

Yes, this will be **another** year of patience and flexibility, only now we have not only the support and camaraderie of docents and staff, but also the rich array of artwork available for our tours. We look forward to the challenges and creative possibilities ahead! Do contact us with questions, concerns, and inspirations.

Teda and Irene

REGULAR STUDENT TOURS Grades 2-12

1st and 2nd Tuesdays; 3rd and 4th Tuesdays; 2nd and 4th Wednesdays; and 1st and 2nd Fridays.

SPECIAL REQUEST TOURS

3rd and 4th Fridays

VTS Demonstration with Patsy

September 29th at 11 a.m. Ridley-Tree

From our Adult Teams Co-chairs



Denise Klassen

Welcome back!

Adult tours start September 14th and we are very excited to be back in the museum sharing our wonderful collection with visitors.

An important note: The Museum has requested a change in tour times: Tours will start at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday, Saturday and Sunday tours will be offered at 11:30 am and 1 pm. Also, in compliance with SBMA policy, we will be wearing masks while touring until further notice.

Please review your assignments to make sure the new scheduling works. If you have any conflicts or concerns, contact Denise Klassen nyceklassen@icloud.com or Laura DePaoli lauradepaoli@icloud.com right away so we can make adjustments. We hope you are looking forward to this touring year as much as we are.

Happy, happy touring,
Denise and Laura



Laura DePaoli

From our Evaluations Co-chairs



Shirley Waxman

Hello fellow Docents and Welcome New Actives!

It's an exciting time for all of us with the newly renovated museum, new exhibitions, new teams, new docents, and new experiences as we continue to share the joy of art with our museum visitors.

For many of us, the start of a new year also means time to be evaluated on our tours. We take great pride in our peer evaluation system.

It was created in 1998 and has continued to be refined ever since. Our goal with this process is to ensure that our tours are factually correct, fresh, well-balanced, interesting and object-oriented.

All of us get anxious being evaluated; this is normal, and we all understand the feeling. (Evaluators are evaluated too!) Please remember an evaluation should be considered not only as an assessment of performance, but as an opportunity for individual growth and improvement through constructive feedback. This collegial process is an important peer-to-peer method for strengthening our tours and ourselves so that we can offer our visitors the best possible museum experience.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please contact me at: shirleywaxman@gmail.com or call 805-252-7909.

Shirley and Paul



Paul Guido

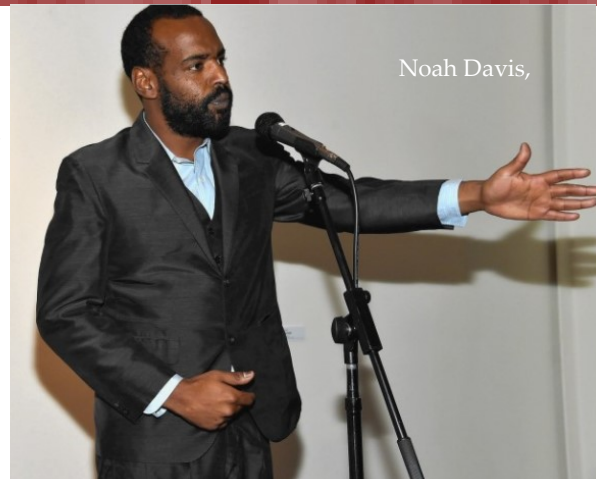
In The Meanwhile II

By Ricki Morse

Reprinted from *La Muse* September & October 2020



The show “In the Meanwhile” was postponed last year due to the pandemic, but is now beautifully installed on the walls of McCormick Gallery. In preparation for Julie Joyce’s exhibition of newly acquired contemporary paintings and assemblage pieces, the following two articles from September and



Noah Davis,

October 2020 are republished here for your review. And what a wonder the show is—recently acquired works by 16 contemporary artists range from large oils on canvas to circular saw blades arranged like plates in a China cabinet. In this issue we will begin with more representational oil paintings, each unique and extraordinary, requiring close observation. The largest of these, 79 x 94 in., oil on canvas, is Noah Davis’s 2010 *in Boil and Margaret*, (below and on page 1) the image as enigmatic as its title. The dark cloaked, masked figure is both ominous and protective, sheltering the girl leaning into his shoulder, cloaked and forbidding, strangely out of place against the soft blue sky. The brush strokes feel casually applied, lighter dripping strokes defining the texture of the cape. Davis pulls us into the surreal nature of the image, as if it might be vanishing. We are arrested by the untold story, the intimacy of the figures, the disparity of their individual worlds.

His 2015 canvas, *Untitled* (next page), feels spontaneously brushed, a domestic scene of two girls sleeping on a sofa, a man partially viewed seated to the left. Yet the man’s lap is obscured by a strange dripping or frosted object and the colors of the abstract canvas on the wall are seeping down onto the girls’ heads, as if entering their dreams. The black shoes dropped in the center of the carpet exactly reflect the angles of the girls’ bodies. Again we sense a referenced story to which we are not privy.



Noah Davis died in 2015 at the age of 32 from a rare cancer, ending an already-booming career. Born in Seattle, the son of a prominent attorney, younger brother to a noted videographer, and husband to Joan, a sculptor. Noah was a charismatic and widely admired member of the LA art world. Educated at Cooper Union in NYC, he left before graduating, moved to Los Angeles, and by 24 was being shown in galleries. In 2013 Noah and his brother,

Kahlil, and wife Joan founded the Underground Museum (UM) in Arlington Heights. They brought works of art to three deserted store fronts in an area which had never seen a gallery or a museum, a largely Black and Latino community, and expanded the sensibilities of L.A. curators and gallerists who along with his family continue to support and grow the UM.

Our next artist, Nigel Cooke, British, b. 1973, followed his Master's degree in Art with a Ph.D. at Goldsmith College, London, writing his dissertation on the "death of painting." Our 2010 *Shipwreck with Spectator I* (next



page) certainly belies that thought. Another large work, 86 x 76 in., it powerfully draws us into its roiling movement, pulling our gaze into the tumult to catch the movement of bodies tossed in the waves. We become the spectator of the painting's title, our gaze denied explicit details of the unfolding tragedy, searching for answers in the cascading water.

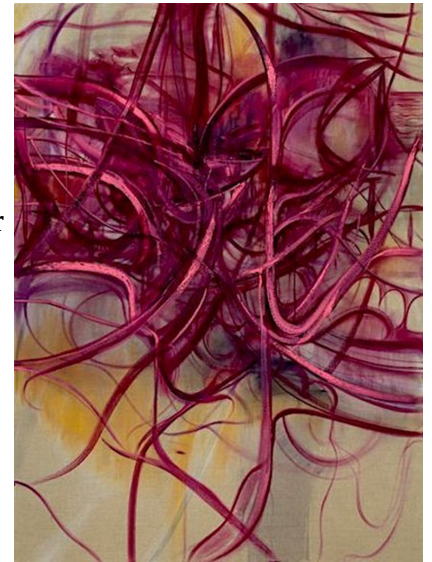
Paired with Cooke's *Love* (2019, next page) the two paintings provide an opportunity to look with eyes set for representation, yet drawn into an abstract expressionist work by the same artist. We find that the vocabulary and ideas stimulated by *Spectator* guide us into *Love*, an awareness of undulating depth, an experience of swooping/swaying motion and of emotional power as well as an invitation to search the canvas for more to be revealed. And we are struck by the emotions evoked, from *Spectator*'s fear of death to *Love*'s passionate life.



Nigel Cooke mounted his first one-man show in 2000 at Chapman Gallery in London and has continued to build a following with works ranging from obscure trompe l'oeil figures and objects dotted on urban landscapes to the abstracted movement of ribbons of energy. He often contrasts the flatness associated with the modern concern about the "death of painting" with Byzantine flattened images referencing the recurring history in art of the dimensionless image. His work consistently explores the interface between depth and surface, demanding that the viewer experience both surface and depth in a single moment. Though he now lives and works at his studio in Kent, he remains very active in London's gallery world. At this Spring's Frieze Art Fair in NYC, a recent Cooke painting sold in the six figures.



Now for something entirely different and simultaneously fourteenth century, meet Jeni Spota, (in her studio, next page) a New York artist, b. 1982, whose hordes of saints and worshipers crowd the canvas and evoke the art of Giotto (1267-1337). She also projects a naïve, deeply held faith belying her intense research into late medieval art history and the resounding technical and artistic sophistication of her painting. She began her art studies at Yale, received her BFA from NY State University, Prospect, and her MFA at the Art Institute of Chicago. At 25 she got her first gallery show at Sister (now Kathryn Brennan) in



LA, which sold out before the opening.

I found that to enter her work, I had to go back to Giotto—discovered in my one college art history class decades ago—and focus on the frescos of the Arena Chapel in Padua, completed in 1303. Our image here (next page) of the altar depicting The Last Judgement displays Giotto's unique imaginative design, the river of sinners to the

right off-setting the tiers of saints and angels, flanked by the elders of the Church as they witness the last judgment of Christ. Not only does Spota reinterpret Giotto's subjects and designs—sometimes borrowing specific images, and even borrowing from a contemporary film about Giotto—but she also developed her unique palette and paint application to produce her reimagined “frescos.” The



fresco wall painting technique requires that the paint be applied while the plaster is still wet, thus providing colors and images preserved in the walls, the term fresco being the Italian word for “fresh.”

Jeni Spota's interpretation certainly provides the freshness of the original with her heavy impasto surface feeling like wet paint you could dip your finger into, but also captures tiny details of figures, accomplished it would seem with a pin. Her muted palette of subtle and softened tones, suggestive of an old painting, is applied with a modern

Giotto, *The Last Judgement*, Arena Chapel in Padua, 1303, fresco.



Jeni Spota, *Giotto's Dream (St. Peter's)* 2008, 12 x 14 in., oil on canvas.

flourish, almost an abandon, totally unexpected in a medieval painting. Happily, our donors collected her work, passing on five to us—four oils and a pencil drawing. Three of the oils on canvas works are included in this exhibition, two displayed here.

Jeni Spota's *Giotto's Dream*, (left), draws us into the crowd surging around the Madonna and child, reflecting today's St. Peter's Square and the crowds attending the Pope's mass, the crowd clearing around the crucified Christ, his body forming the cross in their center. The surreal merging of present and future is consistent with medieval paint-

ings, the canvas designed to provide a vision of the sacred story. The grouping by colors delineates groups of nuns or monks or priests by their robes, providing an image of the ancient hierarchy still extant. Each has his or her own place and all is in balance.

To Jeni from Thailand, 2010, (below) is a much more light-hearted piece, including playing cards inserted into the impasto surface, seemingly at random,



To Jeni from Thailand, 2010

observed by the traditional framed central figure (perhaps Jeni herself). From the ridge of mountains at the top the vegetation of the landscape encircles fragments of a letter and an envelope, which shows the wear of having been kept, saved—presumably the one referenced by the work's title.

The challenge of reviewing paintings I have never seen reflects the loss we have all felt in the Museum's pandemic closure, but also adds to my anticipation of actually being able to stand for as long as I want before Noah Davis's *in Boil and Margaret*, Nigel Cooke's *Shipwreck with Spectator I* and Jeni Spota's *Giotto's Dream*. ■



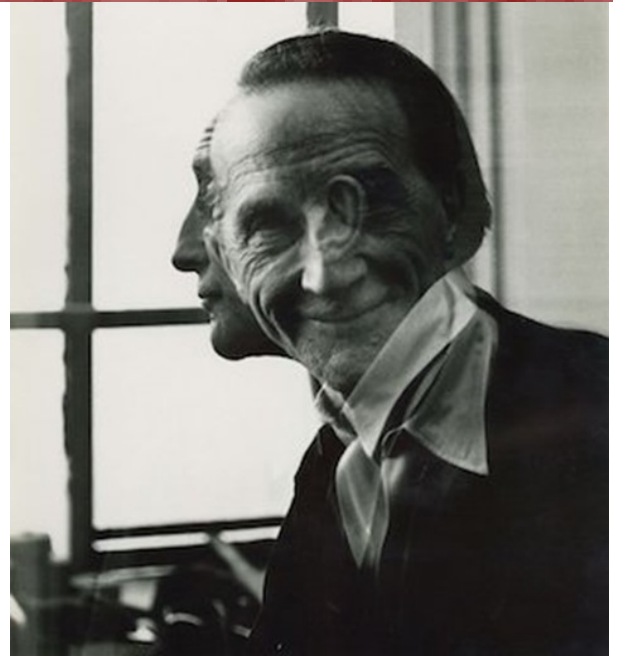
Immersion in Assemblage: *In The Meanwhile II*

By Ricki Morse



Julie Joyce has provided a marvelous opportunity for us to experience two gems from the art of assemblage, highlighted by our recent acquisition of an Edward Kienholz work, *The Little Eagle Rock Incident*. But first, some background.

A little over a hundred years ago Marcel Duchamp, a French-



The two faces of Marcel Duchamp, father of conceptual art, 1953, photo by Victor Obsatz.

American conceptual artist and proponent of Dada, submitted a work named *Fountain* and signed "R. Mutt" for display in a New York City exhibition. It was an ordinary wall-mounted urinal. The work was photographed by Alfred Stieglitz, published and heralded as an avant-garde landmark of "readymade art." The fact that a manufactured object was presented as a work of art is of great significance, heralding the primacy of the "idea" in conceptual art, proclaiming that the artist's idea IS the artistic act, not requiring the skill of making an object.

Artists had been appropriating everyday objects for some time. Picasso and Braque included newspaper and collected objects, which we think of as *collage*. Picasso began to incorporate found fragments into his Cubist sculptures. Salvador Dali and other Surrealists incorporated mannequins and other found objects. European artists were free to incorporate whatever was at hand, but it was an American, Edward Kienholz, who brought the appropriated detritus of modern society into its sharpest focus with his installations, from car interiors to whole buildings.

What Kienholz brought into being in the Los Angeles art world expressed his horror at man's inhumanity, through people constructed from stuffed gunny sacks with clocks for



Marcel Duchamp, *The Fountain*, 1964.



Back Seat Dodge '38 in 1964.

faces, wrecked cars, whole deserted and tilted bars, sliding into oblivion. His work is hard to look at and even caused the County Board of Supervisors to threaten to defund LACMA when they exhibited Kienholz's *Back Seat Dodge '38* in 1964.

Edward Kienholz (1927-1994) grew up on a wheat farm in eastern Washington State and learned carpentry, mechanics and the value of labor from his

Swiss father. With no art education but a desire to make art, he moved to Los Angeles where he initially did odd jobs and drove a truck with the sign "Expert" on the door. A self-taught artist who initially painted with a broom on rough wood, he quickly became a part of the L.A. experimental artists' group and opened the Ferus Art Gallery with Walter Hopps in 1957. His early paintings on carved found wood are reflected in our *Little Eagle Rock Incident* (next page)—paint and resin on plywood with inverted mounted deer head, commemorating the 1957 attempt by the governor of Arkansas to block the entry of nine black students into an all-white high school in Little Rock, which was prevented by President Eisenhower's dispatching of troops to escort them. I look forward to standing with you before the work, getting a sense of the upside-down deer head surmounted by the rising swoop of a flying bird, or is it the sweep of a river?

In reviewing his one-man show at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Roberta Smith described his work in the *New York Times* as "assemblage with a vengeance. It's been nearly 35 years since *Roxy's*, a life-size environment depiction of a Nevada whorehouse, replete with gruesomely distorted girls and a madam with a boar's skull for a head, established Kienholz as one of L.A.'s premier artists. Indicting male lust and female complicity with equal ire, *Roxy's* introduced an art-



Edward Kienholz



Edward Kienholz (1927-1994), *The Little Eagle Rock Incident, 1958*, paint and resin on plywood with mounted deer head.

of ideas by extreme juxtaposition, as in his tattooed pigs, whose skins were harvested when they died and sold to art buyers, or in his Gothic collection of modern objects seemingly redesigned in the 15th century.

Wim Delvoye grew up in Flanders, visited art exhibitions with his parents and, though not religious, was fascinated by the processions led by carved religious figures which imbued him with the significance of sculpture and images. He studied



Delvoye, *Pig taxidermy* 2008.

ist who mixed strands of Expressionism, Surrealism, Pop, Happenings and Conceptualism with the often fetid detritus of everyday life, no holds barred.”

Wim Delvoye, the bad boy of Belgian neo-conceptualism, is in some respects the opposite of Kienholz, yet ideologically they are brothers. While Kienholz works roughly, using grungy materials, overwhelming us with the emotional impact of his installations, Delvoye is meticulous, devoting sometimes years or life cycles to a single work, designing by computer and more recently overseeing the production of his designs by assistant artisans. They share a love of notoriety and relish public display. The work of each artist is generated by an idea, for Kienholz those beliefs were deeply held anti-establishment, social/humanitarian ideas. Delvoye’s ideas are much more esoteric—the meaningless of art, the absurdity of decoration, the expression



Wim Delvoye at The Louvre exhibition, 2015

at the Royal Academy of

Art in Ghent and now lives and works in Brighton, England. Our elegant cabinet with beautifully painted disks (next page), which we first take for Delft China, embodies Delvoye’s central theme—the contrasting of disparate objects which jars our usual understanding and allows our perceptions to shift. The circular metal sawblades could hardly be more different from the Chinese inspired plates painted in Delft, Netherlands in the 17th century. Yet their enameled beauty, enhanced

by the elegantly carved cabinet, initially disguises the saws. The artist's pronouncement, "Art is useless," could hardly be more explicitly expressed than in conflating a saw blade and a China plate. We feel the questions arising: What is beauty? What is the value of art? Is it just pretty but useless? Delvoye's sharp humor and keen contrasts lead us to consider what art means.

In viewing these two artists, Kienholz's raw shock and horror and Delvoye's startling, unanticipated contrasts, we touch the core of neo-conceptualism—the intent to rock our boats, to question assumptions, and to look more carefully. ■



Wim Delvoye, *Dumptruck*, 2012, laser-cut corten.

Wim Delvoye, Belgian, b. 1965, *Installation of (23) Circular Sawblades*, 1989, enamel paint on sawblades and wooden cabinet.



THE LAST PAGE

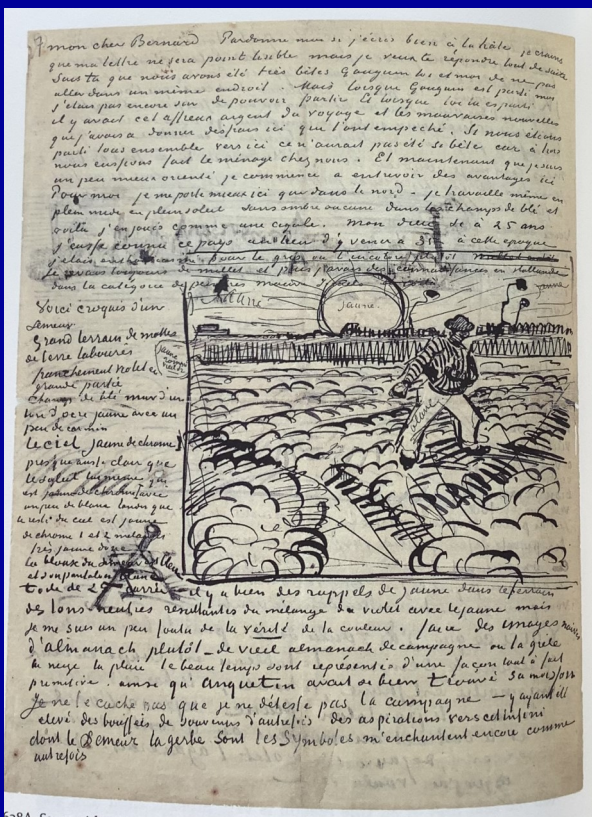
Van Gogh and Color Theory

[Arles, June 19, 1888, letter to Emile Barnard]

“My God, if only I’d known this country at 25, instead of coming here at 35—in those days I was enthusiastic about grey, or rather, absence of colour.

[Sketch A] Here’s a croquis of a sower.

Large field with clods of ploughed earth, mostly downright violet. Field of ripe wheat in a yellow ochre tone with a little crimson. The chrome yellow 1 sky almost as bright as the sun itself, which is a chrome yellow 1 with a little white, while the rest of the sky is chrome yellow 1 and 2 mixed, very yellow, then.



The sower’s smock is blue, and trousers white. Square no. 25 canvas. There are many repetitions of yellow in the earth, neutral tones, resulting from the mixing of violet with yellow, but I could hardly give a damn about the *veracity* of the colour. Better to make naïve almanac pictures—old country almanacs where hail, snow, rain, fine weather are represented in an utterly primitive way.

I don’t hide from you that I don’t detest the countryside—having been brought up there, snatches of memories from past times, yearnings for that infinite of which the Sower, the sheaf, are the symbols, still enchant me as before.

But when will I do the starry sky, that painting that’s always on my mind?

From Vincent van Gogh: A Life in Letters

Editor Loriwindsormohr@gmail.com

