

## MAXINE YALOVITZ-BLANKENSHIP

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*the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself... alone can make good writing*

William Faulkner

My father's pawnshop, my mother's garden, the black women who raised me in the small town of Rome, Georgia and the rawness of Southern life are the stuff of which my art is made.

I try to demonstrate in paint the processes from which creativity springs: that high art can come from anywhere, have lowly beginnings. I want the privilege of sharing the pain and joy with those who already know and profess to those who do not yet know that the core of creative work comes from one's earliest experiences.



## Georgia Blues: a visual memoir of growing up in the Deep South

Walking down a street in Boston I saw a sign stenciled on the sidewalk. It read: NO MORE PRISONS. The sign made me remember. When I returned to the studio I drew a chain. The chain is a symbol of my childhood.

I was born and grew up in Rome, Georgia. The prejudice, poverty and Gothic nature of the Deep South in the 1930's and 1940's is reflected in this work.

Flannery O'Connor said anyone who survives a Southern childhood will have enough material to write about for the rest of her life.

I feel paper to be the appropriate material, for paper is fragile, ephemeral... like memory.

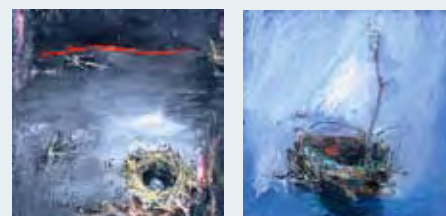
## Grids

In an essay titled Poetry and Happiness, Richard Wilbur says poets are list-makers and quotes Reiner Maria Rilke of the Duino Elegies, who asks:

Are we, perhaps, here just to say House, Bridge, Fountain, Gate, Jug, Fruit tree, Window, - possibly: Pillar, Tower?

It came to me that I am a list-making painter.

With personal imagery in grid formation, I define my identity. The grid, by its very nature, brings unity to that which so easily comes apart.



## Thirty-one Ways of Looking at a Nest

The nest, offering protection, is seen as home; it may be felt as a gift, a mysterious key to Nature's secrets. Nests reveal the fragility of our existence; the egg, our hope. Birds are builders and voyagers - symbols of freedom.

I recall the paper bird from childhood. It spins around and whistles in the wind.

## On Paper

The nature of the medium is expressed in charcoal, cut paper, oil stick, paint, embroidery thread and twine. Although the drawings are graphic, the 'painterly' look comes through. Sometimes a handprint reveals a "connectedness" to what is being said.

The works on paper are immediate and may not always reveal struggle but the light and the dark side remain.



## A One Act Play in Pantomime

Noseless rabbit, matted monkey, mouse queen crowned in gold foil gone dull. I take each from its place stuffed in an attic bin, pat them smooth.

I pin a row of papers, like soldiers, on the wall. With encrusted brush and paint, put the mimes to paper, disguise them as myself, make them mine.

*What is this guilt about - using my children's forgotten playthings as metaphor?*

I am a wind-up toy, dance until the time is done, then, wound up, begin again.



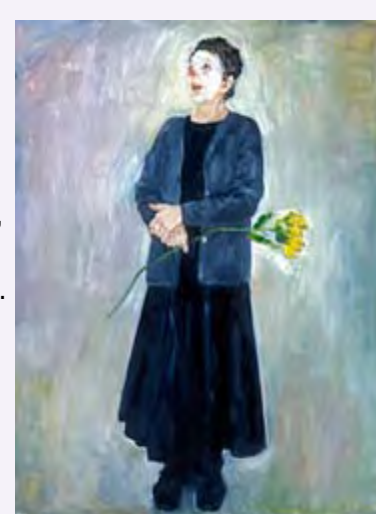
## Mime

Is it air pressing so hard on her shoulders and chest or her lungs expanding against their cage of bone that levitates her almost off her toes, as her locked hands squeeze the small, dark, jacketed, rocket of a body up farther into what she is trying to say? The heart makes its urgent countdown, vocal cords shiver, chin tilts up, lips part:

the sunflower she grips sidewise would flail her toward speech. How hard we listen, straining to hear. But she is not allowed, in this art, to speak. Nor is the pasty white clown face

hers. The air lies against her like clabber. Her eyes are starred black X's, her nose a torch. And still She rises, darkly, into something no one of us should say.

Rosanna Warren for Maxine Yalovitz-Blankenship



## Paintin' My Blues Away



Lookin' for a way to lose the blues, cobalt, cerulean are colors I choose. Cadmiums, viridians are all O.K. Paintin' the blues away.

In the studio, comin' to light, freein' myself to make it right, swishin' my brushes, I begin to play. Paintin' my blues away.

Primary, secondary: color-wheel clues; patiently waitin' for my muse. Come and help me save the day. Paintin' my blues away.

Mars black, titanium are all right, too, mixin' with the others for my color stew. Gotta get the demons out today. Paintin' my blues away.

For messin' with the devil I use pthalo. Got no wings, don't want a halo. Just want color to brighten the day. Paintin' my blues away.



## Georgia Moon

Old washerwoman, rolling the waters, Holy-roller moon, beating the sands, part the orange waters of the Coosa River with the line of your reflection-- high waters tinted with red clay.

Narcissus moon, preen your mirror image when the catfish are still and the lake is glass. Wash stones to a smooth white. Polish crab shells into marble.

Light the land where we plant in your phases: the growing moon for the flower, the old of the moon for hay. Take a roller-coaster ride up the Blue Ridge mountains, hide in Confederate soldiers of stone and pine trees up on Kennesaw.

Give a maverick accent to the scene with your messenger crow sitting on a fence rail you've honed to a silver streak.

Light the broom sedge, cotton, kudzu; light the land from earth to water; light tin roofs, tin cans of blossoms planted on porches, the moonflower vine.

Stay with us moon, after hot summer days. Like laying on of hands, send your voodoo rays to cool our nights with incandescent light.

Watch over us, moon, when the crops are laid by. As you were to the Creek, the Cherokee before, be our Moon Mother dressed in a gown of blue dark.

Lay low, possum, lay low, coon, hoop snake, rabbit, snail; lay low, fox, whippoorwill. Moon will seek you out.

## Rome Jewelry and Arms Shop

I love the confluence of jewelry and arms it conjures up plump wrists bedecked with bangles, tasteful watches, dangling charms. . .

but then the storefront's gritty door invites me in to all those secondhand lives on shelves - clock radio, guitar,

assorted rifles, a Luger souvenir of World War II - all waiting to come home though many will not reappear.

Unredeemed, most will go down the river. If you're poor enough to have to pawn your violin

to pay the rent, the dentist, the electric bill, the school clothes layaway, there's little chance that you'll make more music.

Rome Jewelry and Arms Shop. How did the painter's father drift south all the way to Georgia's Rome, a small town proud of the three rivers running prettily through it? Sherman burned the center down before Atlanta. His story's still unsketched

and so is mine, though fainter, older the outline barely penciled in. I too am a pawnbroker's daughter.

Maxine Kumin for Maxine Yalovitz-Blankenship



## The Offer

Inspired by *They Put Their Lives in Hock* painting by Maxine Yalovitz-Blankenship by Regie O'Hare Gibson



FIVE:

For the boat that sails through  
Pearls to kiss a cascade  
Of marbles.

ELEVEN:

For the birdcage dreaming  
Of newsprint-  
& Phantoms of exiled plumes.

THREE:

For the candleholder  
Riddled like ossified  
Sphinx.

NINE:

For the unwound laughter  
Poised in strangle  
Readying to sever the  
Tendons of song.

TWO:

For a chance - snake eyed  
In a fist soon to be  
Skinned by loan and loss.

TEN:

For the key  
Like crucified bone  
Lynched in cathedral gossiped with skeletons.

SIX:

For the half yawning fan  
Begging for bosoms  
Moist & thorny as Cherokee Rose.

TWO:

For the parcel  
Clandestine  
As a Klansman.

THE SAME:

For the one  
Wrecked angle  
In Blight.

FOUR:

For the package  
Defiant as secrets  
Daring exclamatory light.

SEVEN:

For the Ark of the Covenant  
Stripped of all angel  
Cloistering the voice of a Yahwist god

&

TWELVE:

For Death forever cocked  
In a shine pining the reprise  
Of hand & blood.