



50 YEAR JOURNEY
RON KROUTTEL PAINTINGS



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Edited by Rajko Grlić

Designed by Tom Erlewine

For Pat, my hardest critic and my best pal.

Ron

Ron Kroutel was thirty-two years old when he moved from Detroit to Athens, Ohio—just about a five-hour drive. He soon realized that moving his life from an inner city to a small town and adapting to a new mental landscape would take time, maybe even most of a lifetime.

As someone who's come to Athens from even farther away, I see Ron's art as his way of making that long adaptation less painful; as the journey of a quiet man who worked step-by-step to find out where he is, and where he's been.

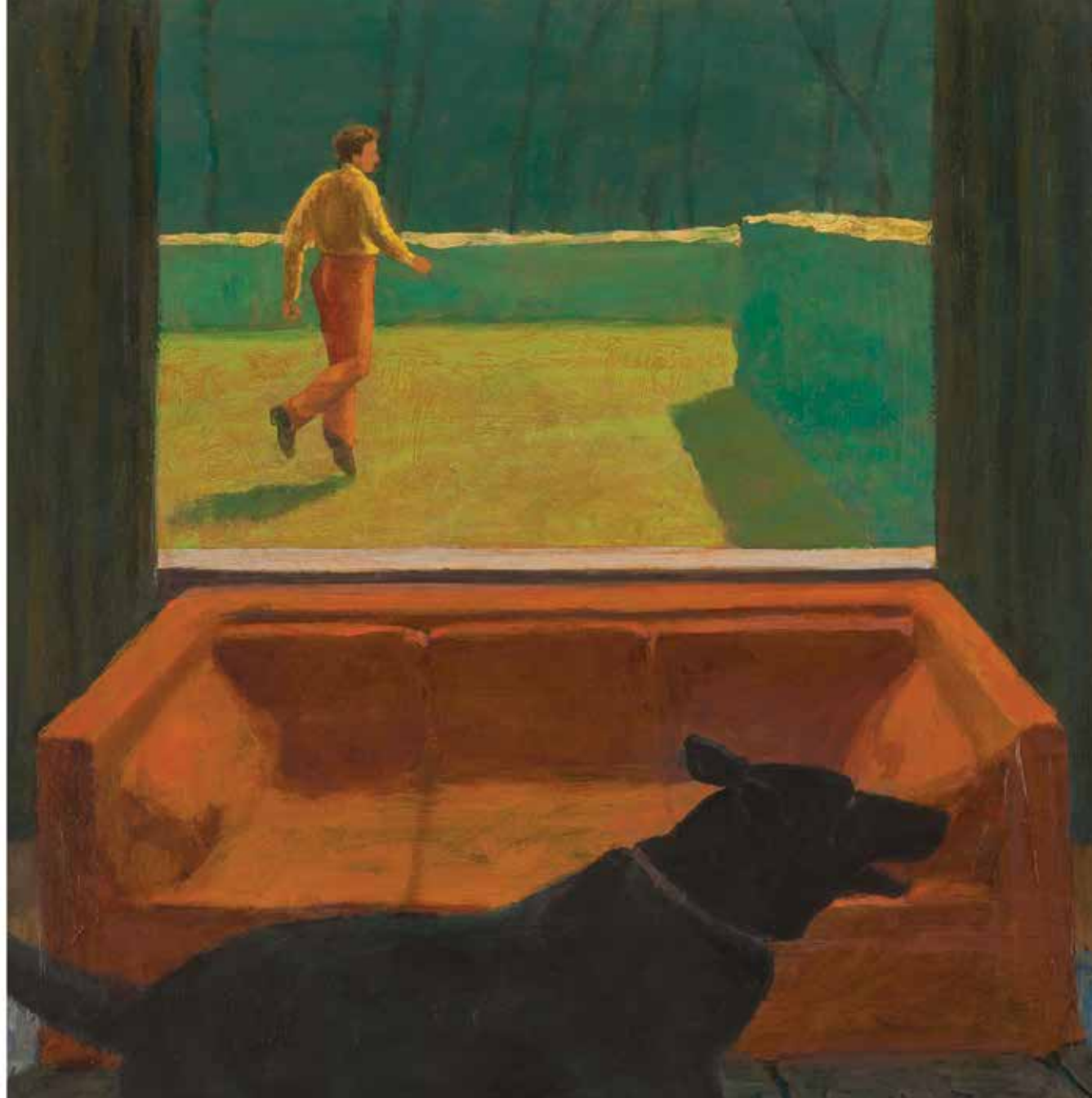
By following his drawings and paintings, we see how on each step of that journey Ron carefully peels back one layer of reality after another. From the details in his black and white drawings to his brutally honest industrial landscapes, from his first use of reduced color in those landscapes to the vivid paintings of flying humans, we can see him feeling more and more at home here.

For me, who knew nothing of Ohio before coming to live here, his paintings have for years been a kind of eyeglasses through which I see local landscapes, houses and roads. I believe this will happen to you as you start to know his work.

His small yellow landscape of an Ohio road, beautiful in its simplicity, perfectly fits the end of his journey. After fifty years, Ron is an Ohioan who has captured the visual and emotional essence of this space, and who is now ready to leave for a new adventure.

Saying goodbye to Ron, I want to thank him for such impressive clues he's left to help me—and I hope and trust not just me—to understand just where I've ended up.

Rajko Grlić



THE ARRIVAL

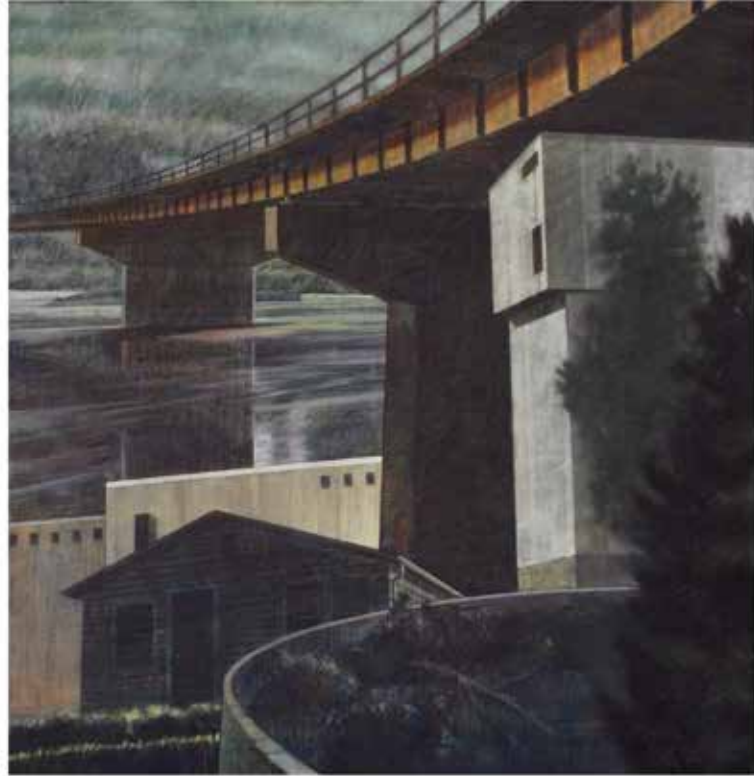
In 1966 I moved from inner city Detroit to lush, green Athens.

Detroit was dangerous but it still hadn't exploded in the riots of 1967. I had a strong sense of community and support from the artists there.

I taught at a small Catholic liberal arts college and also at a professional art school. In the summers I worked the night shift on the Chrysler assembly line making 999 power steering units a night to support the family.

While I had many friends in Detroit, the knife fights outside the print shop motivated me to secure a position at a big university. The hippie generation seemed like a distant reality.









Athens and Ohio University first impressed me as a safe paradise,
but I soon saw that I had entered a cultural revolution.

Hippies, Civil Rights, the Feminist Movement and the Vietnam War
all challenged received values and norms.

Most of my students in Detroit were hard working adults, but at Ohio University
I was hit with the hippie generation at full throttle: long hair, bell-bottom trousers
and rock and roll. I quickly learned to pack my sport coat and tie in the closet and
to wear blue jeans, a nice shirt and work boots.



Even more importantly, my artwork and my teaching ideals were sorely challenged.

The rapid increase in enrollment caused the university to be disorganized, near chaos. My first drawing class had 90 students and was double scheduled with another large class for the same room.

After this was resolved, the cigarette smoke was so thick that I couldn't see the back of the room. But the huge parties at faculty homes were great; dancing, food and drink and a potent mix of students and faculty.

This fluid and developing organization, with the student challenges to authority, fostered a creative atmosphere that produced some excellent artwork.

Yet this chaotic party-like spirit had its tragic and dangerous tensions and ended with the Kent State shootings by the National Guard and the riots across Ohio, including Ohio University, in 1970.

Tanks patrolled Court Street and the university closed early.





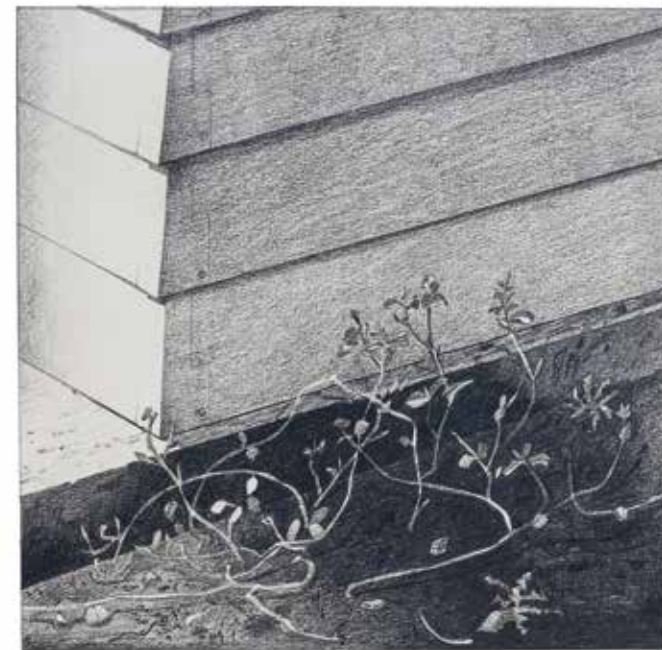
It was in this cauldron of dramatic change that I finally, in 1970, rejected avant-garde art and began a search for a new way of making art that resulted in my first really original painting that spoke in my true voice, my early figurative work from 1970-1985.

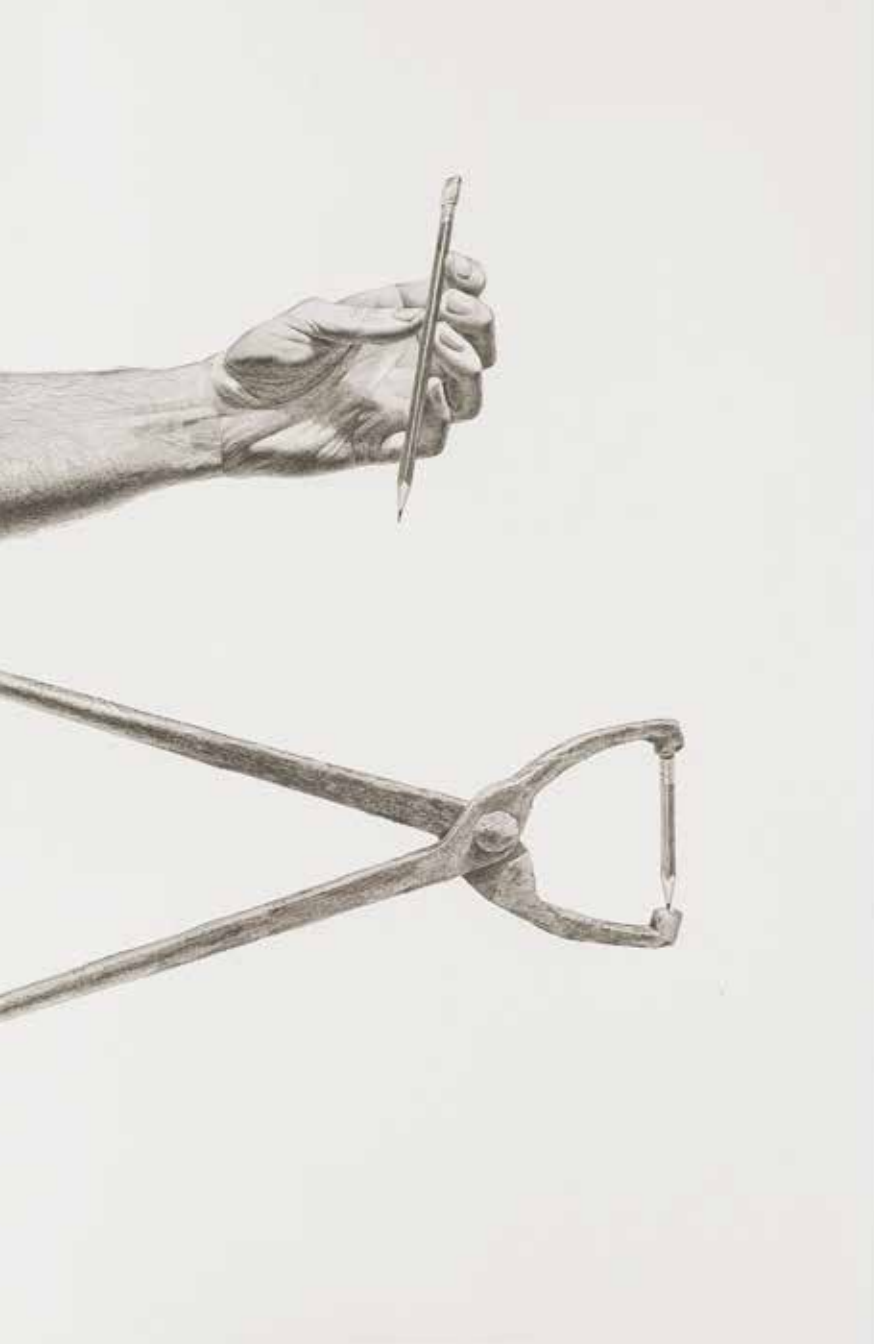
My first painting in this direction was "Animus I: Anger."







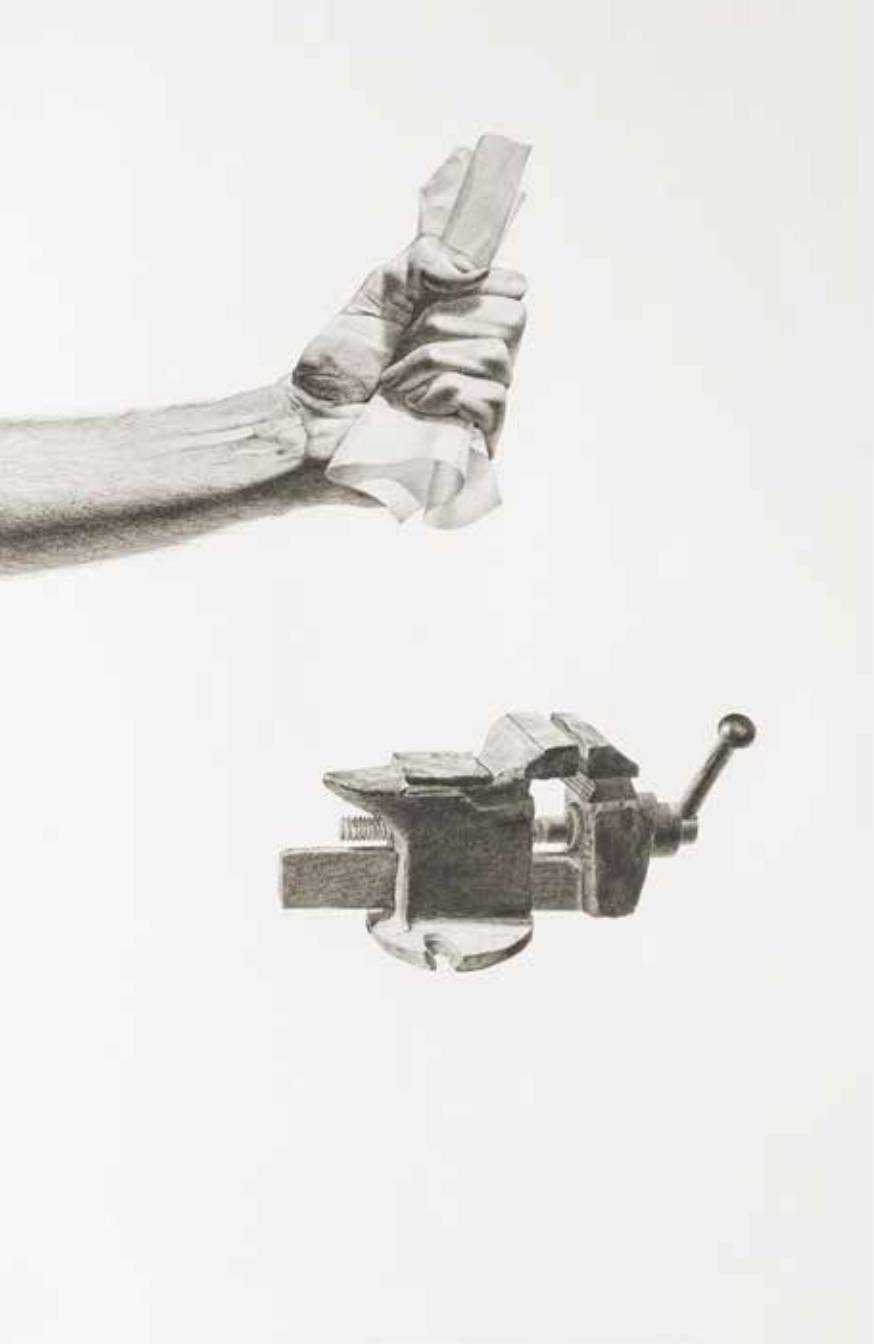




My parents sent me to St. Joseph's Catholic School for first and second grade. This was in Downers Grove, a western suburb of Chicago. The classes were large and strictly controlled by the nuns. Every day school would begin with mass at 8 AM, and then classroom study would continue until 3 PM. On Fridays, however, at 2:30 we would have an art lesson.

On one such lesson the nun, Sister John Louise, IHM, attempted to teach us how to draw a Platonic tree. She went to the blackboard and with white chalk drew a perfect circle, inverted parenthesis for the trunk and a straight horizontal line beneath them for the ground.

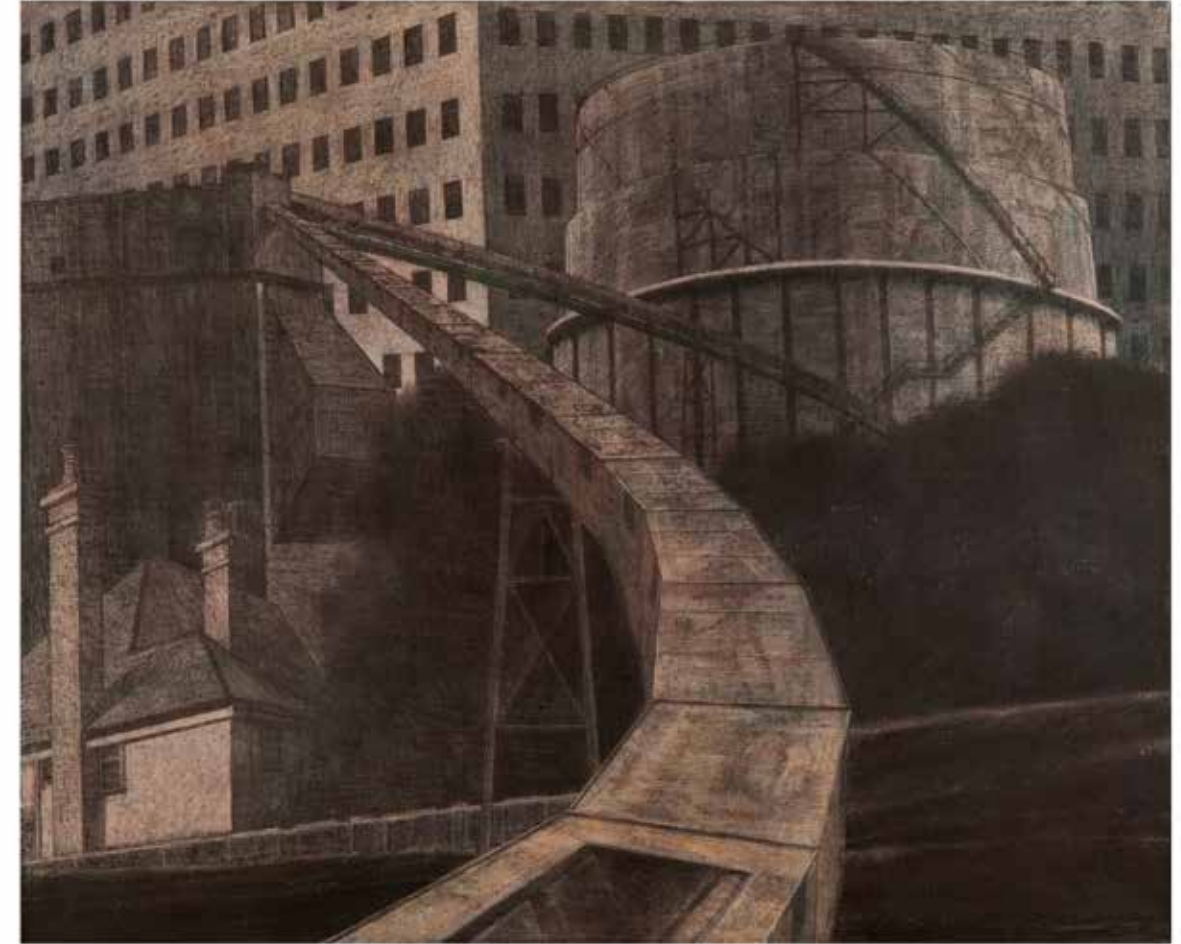
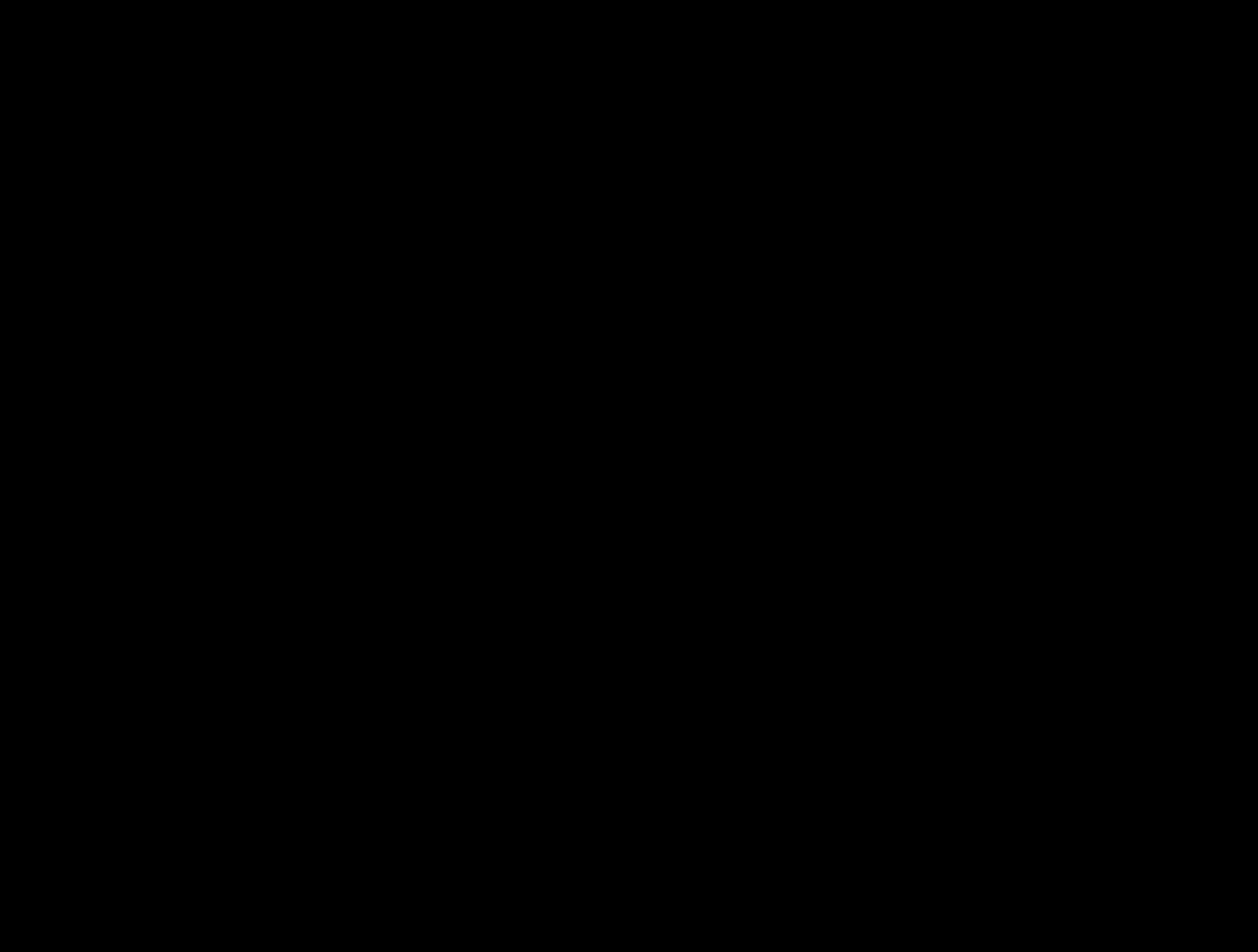
That was what we were to copy with our crayons.



Well, I knew that trees weren't round; they were sort of puffy and irregular, so I drew a true tree with puffy leaves, a crooked trunk, grassy ground and for good measure, red apples on the ground and on the tree. I thought it was a remarkably accurate drawing.

When the class finished just before 3 PM, Sister John Louise came over to me and held up my drawing. I was pleased that she recognized my brilliant accuracy. But then she held up the drawing of the girl who sat in front of me. Suzie had copied exactly what the nun had drawn. Sister John Louise said, "Suzie's drawing is perfect and neat." Then she held up my drawing and said, "Ronnie's drawing is wrong, it's a sloppy, bad drawing." But I was not emotionally crushed because I knew, even at the age of 6, that I was right and that trees weren't round.







When I was about eight, I wanted to take piano lessons.

My mother, Elizabeth, could play our old Steinway upright pretty well, so I thought that I should know how to play, too. Miss Rosine was my first teacher. She came to the house for my weekly lesson and sat at my right side with a ruler. If I made a mistake on "Swans on the Lake," she would whack my hand with the ruler. I almost had a nervous breakdown before every lesson, so after a year my mother said that I didn't have to continue.







But I still wanted to play despite Miss Rosine's severe methods, and when I was thirteen my mother found another teacher for me, Wellington D. Schiller. He taught classical theory—scales, reading, etc.—but he also taught jazz improvising and arranging of basic American tunes, like "Sunny Side of the Street." I progressed rapidly and after two years of lessons he had me play on a local radio station, live! When the "On Air" sign went on, I had to hit it. I played "Honeysuckle Rose." It was quite a thrill.

One reason I was able to play on cue had to do with Mr. Schiller's teaching method. He had a direct disk recording system in his studio. With a mic by the piano, he'd drop the cutting needle on the virgin vinyl and would point to me and I'd play the tune that I arranged for the week. There was no possibility of correcting a mistake. This gave me the ability to play on cue and has been an immeasurable help to me over the years.



After two and half years of study, my piano lessons ended because Mr. Schiller had to go back in the army as a second lieutenant of a mortar platoon in the Korean War. That was the end of my formal music lessons, but he taught me enough so that I could continue learning on my own. And now, 65 years later, I'm still at it.

Mr. Schiller was my first true mentor and I owe a great deal to him.



At the age of about nine, I got obsessed with comic books. Batman, Superman, and all the rest were what I lived for. How I scrounged the money to buy enough comics to fill my red wagon I'll never remember, but it was a passionate, greedy and slightly nauseating fixation.

I think in retrospect that the drawings of action figures fighting, BIFF, BAAAM, leaping and flying in these comics have had the single most profound influence on my art now.





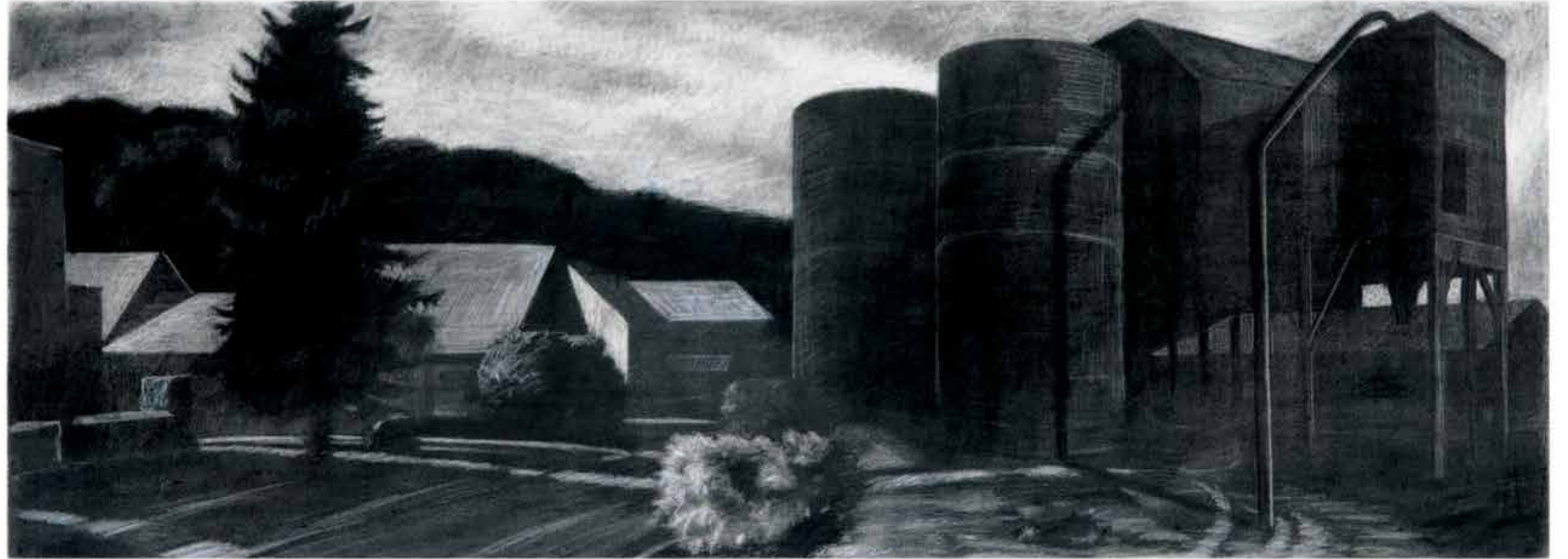
YELLOW HOUSE/MOUND



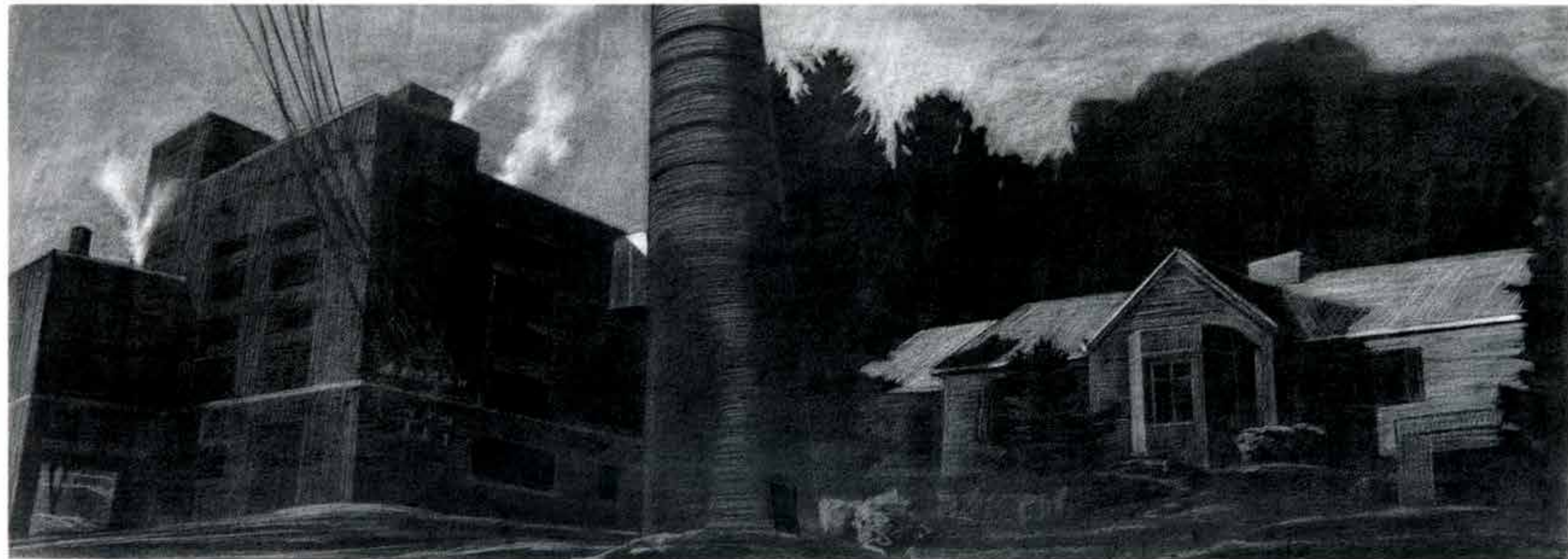




First, I blackened paper with compressed charcoal.
Then, I drove around in my van until I found a likely subject.
On a drawing board in the back of the van, I erased the charcoal to create the image.







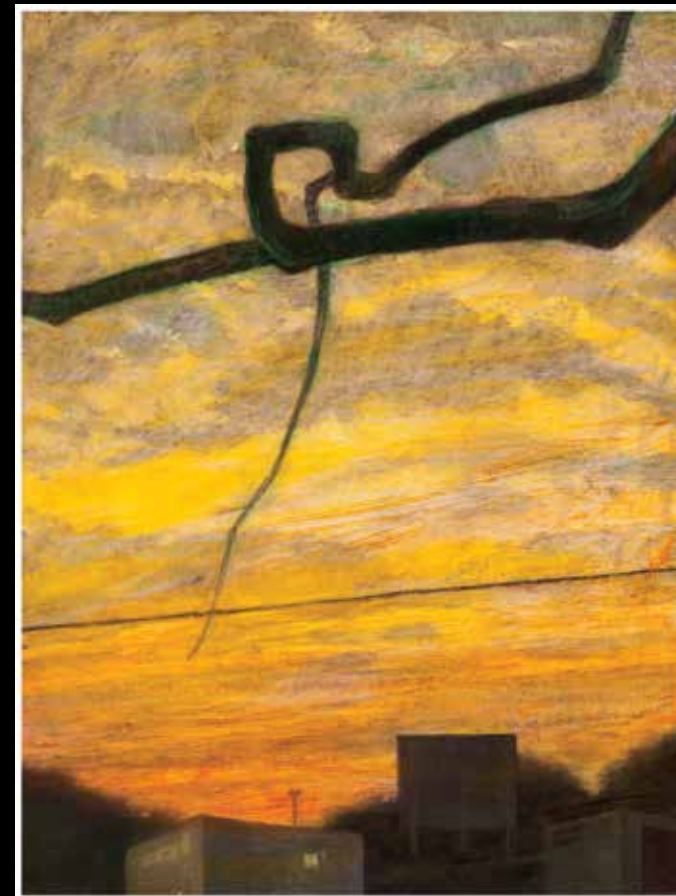


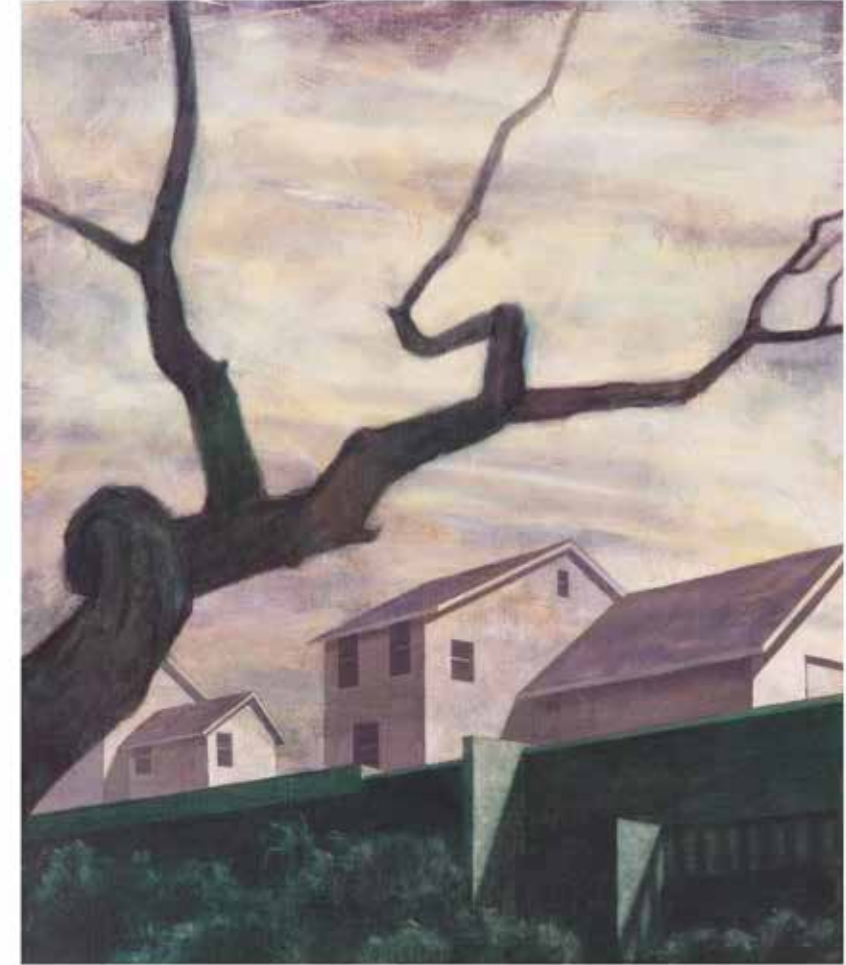






US 33 has been a spine of Ohio for me. Countless trips gave it an important symbolic meaning. This is a scene along the highway. It's one of the few paintings that I've been able to do of US 33; most attempts have failed.



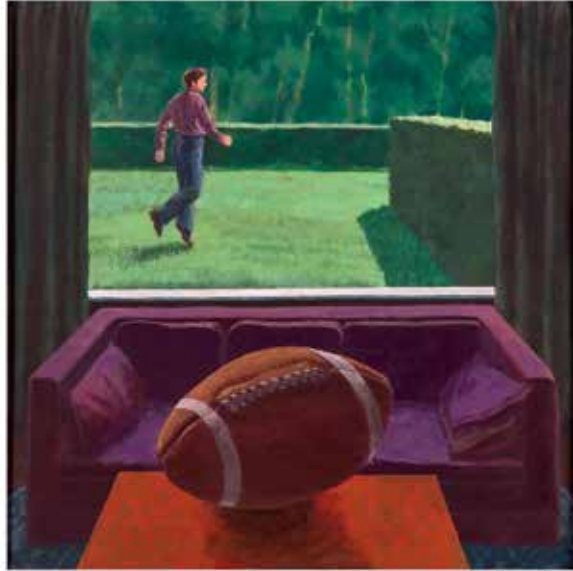




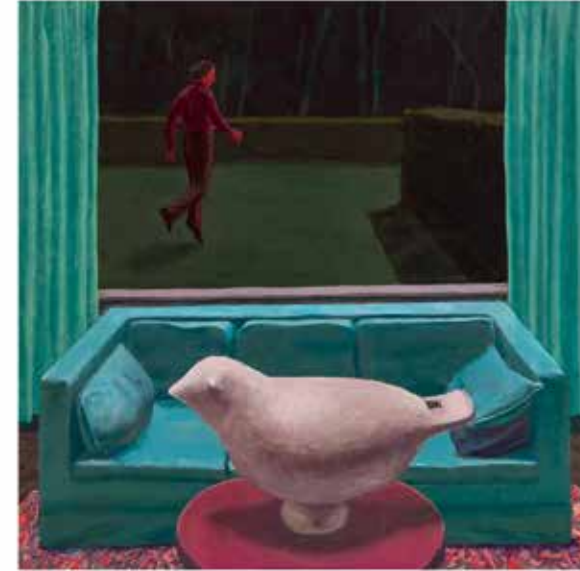
PICTURE WINDOW: DOG



PICTURE WINDOW: GLOBE



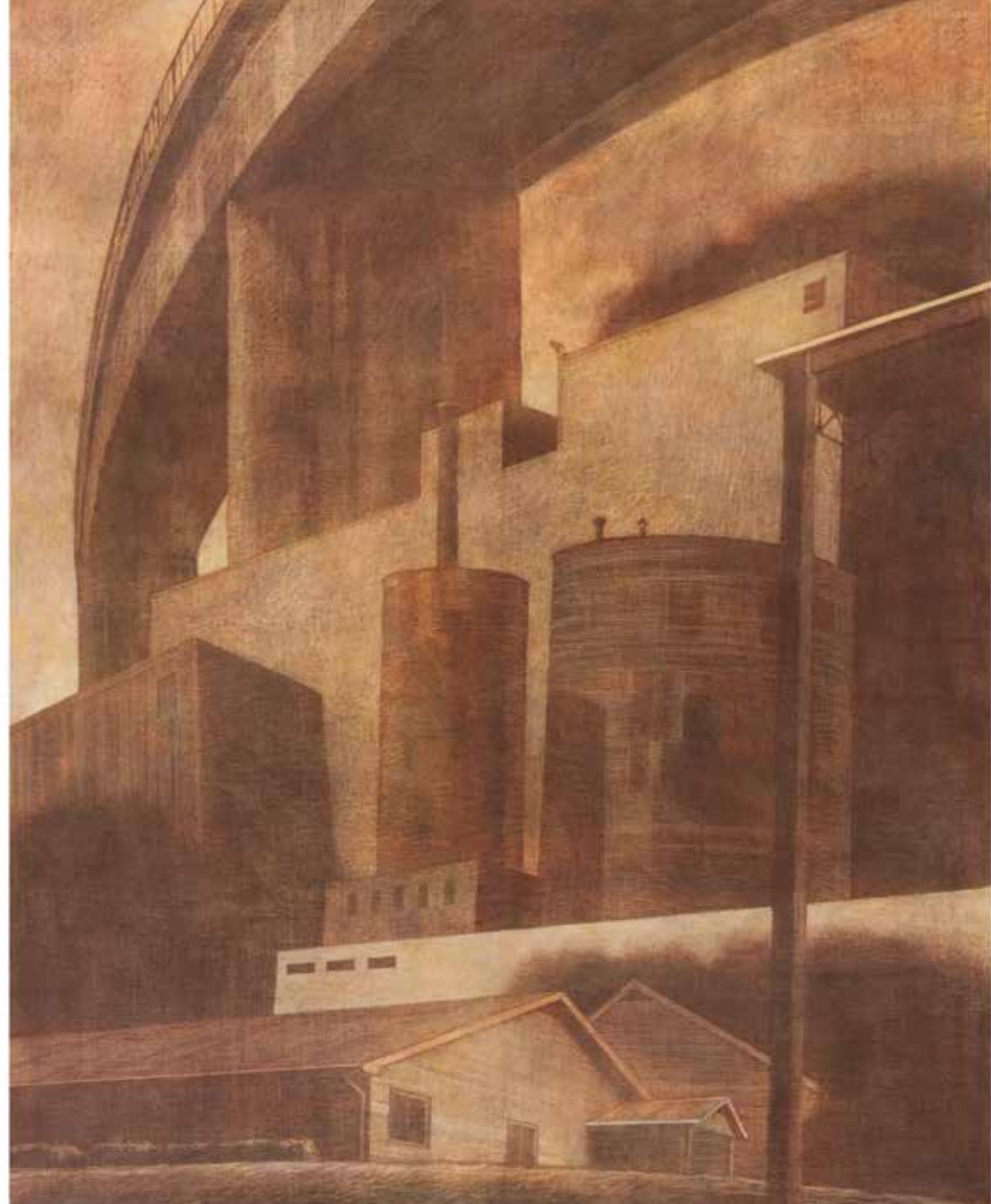
PICTURE WINDOW: FOOTBAL

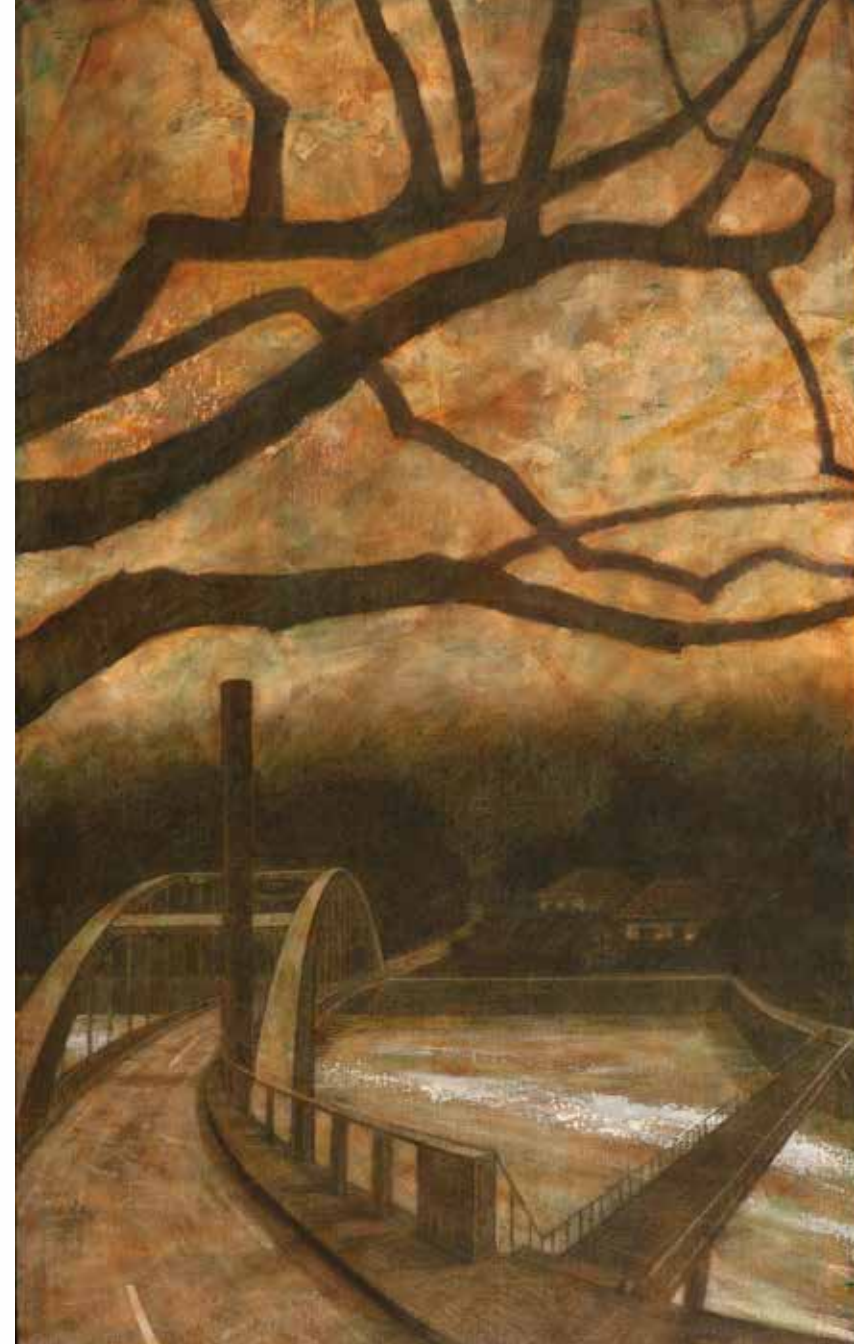


PICTURE WINDOW: BIRD WHISTLE











DEPARTING FOR COLORADO

For 50 years Ohio University, Athens and Ohio have proven to be a fertile soil for my personal and professional growth. My many friends, family, former students and artists in Athens and across the state have sustained me for all these years.

Leaving all this for Fort Collins, Colorado has been an emotional and professional challenge. Luckily I have my wife, Pat, to work with and to rely on in this new adventure.



Ron Kroutel

Born in Chicago, 1935

Educational Background

B.A.E., School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of Chicago, 1958

M.F.A., University of Michigan, 1963

Present position: Professor Emeritus of Art, Ohio University

Selected Collections

Huntington Museum of Art; Detroit National Bank; Mercyhurst College, Erie, PA; Ohio University Kennedy Museum of Art; State of Ohio State Office Tower; Prudential Collection, Chicago; Two Centennial Plaza, Cincinnati; Celina Collection, Cleveland; Holzer Medical Center; The Parkersburg Art Center; The Hocking Valley Bank; Zanesville Museum of Art; Chubu University

Selected Exhibitions

Butler Institute of American Art 79th Midyear Exhibition, Youngstown, OH, 2015

Watermedia 2003, American Watermedia Societies, Houston, TX, 2003

International Traveling Exhibition of Ohio and Michigan Artists in Hungary and Russia, organized by Ohio and Lake Erie West, Toledo, OH, 2000-2001

National Drawing Exhibition, Parkland College, Champaign, IL, 1992

New Work, Struve Gallery, Chicago, IL, 1987

Narratives II, Joseph Gallery, New York, NY, 1981

More than Land or Sky: Art from Appalachia, Smithsonian National Museum of American Art Washington, D.C., traveled throughout USA 1981-1982

Boston Printmakers Fifteenth Annual Exhibition, Boston, MA, 1962

Momentum Annual Exhibition, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL, 1957

Selected Solo Exhibitions

50 Year Journey: Ron Kroutel Paintings, Kennedy Museum of Art, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, 2018

Go Figure, The Galleries at Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH, 2016

Long Moments, Alice F. and Harris K. Weston Art Gallery, Arnoff Center for the Arts, Cincinnati, OH 2013

New Realism, Castleton State University, Castleton, VT, 1987

New Narrative, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, 1986

Narratives, Joseph Gallery, New York, NY, 1981

Paintings, J. Walter Thompson Gallery, Buhel Building, Detroit, MI, 1966

Selected Reviews and Publications

Gene Blocker, The Philosophy of Art, 1979; Art News, 1977; Dialogue (cover), 1982; International Painting Annual, 2011; International Drawing Annual, 2008

Selected Prizes and Fellowships

Ohio University Research Grant, 1981

Ohio Arts Council Fellowships 1981, 1983, 1997

Arts Midwest NEA Regional Visual Arts Fellowship, 1993

National Architects Association Award, through Glasser Architects, for the ceiling mural at Two Centennial Plaza, Cincinnati, OH 1991

Ohio Watercolor Society Gold Medal First Prize Award, 1999

Selected Work as Curator

Chicago Cross Section, 1989; The Big Picture, 1983

The Legacy of Danna A. Loomis, 2004

The Art of Murray P. Stern: Portraits and Politics, 2008

Presence of Place, The Dairy Barn Cultural Arts Center, 2001

Catalogue essays were written for all these curated exhibitions.

Teaching Awards

University Professor Award, 1975

Nominated for Graduate Professor of the Year 1985, 1986, 1987

Rajko Grlić

Ohio Eminent Scholar in Film at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio

Tom Erlewine

Creative Director, Stewart-MacDonald, Athens, Ohio

Rajko and Tom first collaborated on the multimedia project, ***How to Make Your Movie—An Interactive Film School***, for which they received Grand Prix and Best Design awards at the New York Festival, 1998. Four years later they worked on the book and Kennedy Museum exhibition, ***Face to Face***. This book and exhibition, ***50 Year Journey: Ron Kroutel Paintings***, is their third joint project.

The exhibition was coordinated by **Jeff Carr**, the Kennedy's Exhibition Manager.
Photographs in this book are by **Scott Marx** of Big X Studio, Athens, Ohio



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