

Others Books by this Author

Walking Tanzer: Haiku Musings

FOREWARD

During Ric's chemotherapy treatments, he insisted we watch *Breaking Bad*. He was not normally a watcher of TV but he was taken with Bryan Cranston, the production, and of course the story; so many elements of which he had lived as an addict and was currently living while in cancer treatment.

Though his motto was "Gravity Wins", he always seemed to be trying to slip the ties of it whether it was by flying down mountains on his mountain bike or riding his road bike as fast as he could. His early contact with flying informed his experience of a body in space and altered views of earth. I would not have been surprised to see him riding a bike across the full moon like in *ET*.

His life was filled with change as though he didn't want to get stuck too close to this earth. His nomadic life, frequent rearranging of his studio, changing his work medium, and facility at letting things go and bringing new things in seemed to point to this avoidance of being hemmed in or weighed down. He was always shaking off attempts to label and typecast him; always offering up surprising new renditions of himself. Until he found the desert.

I've heard it said that if the desert lets you live, you fall in love with it. He fell hard enough to relinquish all his experiments in living and working. He settled into letting the desert reveal to him his essential self until he was ready to break gravity's hold on him and leave us. I've taken these lessons to heart as I too move forward to challenge gravity's grip and travel lightly on this path.

Elin Holmberg-Rowland
May 2019
Philipsburg, Montana

Title: MEDITATIONS ON PI
Created: 2005
Size: TRIPTYCH
Medium: MIXED MEDIA

Meditations on Pi was a favorite piece of Ric's; so much so that he used it as his banner image on Facebook.



The fact that the clients were his sister and brother-in-law made the work that much more special. Their request specifically called for something that fit the curved elements in their home and mirrored their love of color. The specifications fit perfectly into his fascination with the golden ratio and Fibonacci number concepts used as the foundation of design in nature and a main principle in art. Because the number nine also demonstrated this design, he named our desert home The Number Nine. He had a long list of items in our lives that added up to nine; such as addresses and phone numbers. He named his studio Art Studio 18 because it added to nine.

Consider these connections of the Fibonacci series, the number Pi, and the number 9 explained at: <https://wakeup-world.com/2012/04/27/the-number-nine-the-cosmic-servant-and-master-of-heaven-and-earth/>

Ric had a flare for teasing the taste and sensibilities from clients who requested commission work. He was amazingly successful at translating their often sketchy requests into something they felt fulfilled their inner vision. I witnessed many pieces created which clearly conflicted with his own sense of design or in a medium he was not fond of be accepted with astonishment at their completion by clients seeing their ideas realized.

This was not the case with Meditations on Pi. He jumped into this assignment whole-heartedly. This painting was a joy for him to plan and work on, meditating on the number Pi as an expression of the golden ratio and the special place the number nine held in the world of mathematics and design. It was extra specially a satisfaction that it was a work for family members with similar taste who had a special place for it.



Title: A WALK THROUGH THE DESERT
Created: 1985
Size: 32 1/2 x 50 1/2
Medium: ACRYLIC / MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS

This painting was painted in the basement of our home in West Linn, OR. The house was built in 1929 and was what real estate agents call charming; which means it's small and needs a lot of work. We loved that little house, our first purchase, and Ric turned the scary, wet, dark basement into his illuminated haven. He spent long nights down there making noise and art and then dragged himself to his day job. Those were the galley years, as



Verdi referred to his initial years of composing, for me; learning the wildness of the creative spirit that keeps you awake beyond reason. Oh, innocent me, little did I know then that he was conjuring a dream of the desert. The initial thrill of the Northwest had slowly given way to the horror of the incessant rain, creeping green foli-

age, and eternally gray skies punctuated with rainbows and occasional holes of blue. We called those sucker holes. They triggered seemingly ancient and foggy memories of what a blue sky looked and felt like. The inevitable rainbows seemed to be the sky thumbing its nose at you before the ethereal thrill vanished into the constant gray.

A companion piece, the sparkling blue Desert Nights, sold at the Graystone Gallery that represented Ric in Portland. This one



showed at Mt Hood Community College in 1986 but over the years he seemed to hold onto it as a talisman or a navigating tool as he slowly maneuvered his way to live in the desert. It was always in view in his studio or our living spaces.

My trip to Chaco Canyon endeared me to this painting. Seems I took a million pictures of the bright blue sky peeking through the interstices of the rock ruins just as portrayed in this painting. Your eye wanders meditatively through the full range of earth tones from tawny yellow to deep mud and then the slash of blue awakens you. It's the same in the desert, the impossibly blue sky against a million shades of brown.

Besides the heat of the desert that soothed his aching body, Ric sought sun, fresh air, and wide open spaces. Perhaps also he withdrew behind the barrier the desert provides. Only certain people

would bother to reach out to him there, leaving him with stretches of uninterrupted time to do his thing on his schedule. I wonder now if he intuitively knew then how healing a walk in the desert can be. If you surrender to it, the desert can destroy time and absorb every inkling of human distress and replace it with peace as deep as its silence.

When we first moved to the desert, I spent hours walking in the desert. Our property abuts Joshua Tree National Park so there is effectively no end of space devoid of human traces available for wandering. My mind could entertain me for about an hour and a half with a constant flow of commentary and questioning before it ran out of steam. It was the ultimate brain defrag program. I needed only to return to the desert's untimely stillness for a blank space in which to unload or ponder problems.



A Walk Through the Desert Talking to Think Back in the San Pedro studio.

Once the defrag was done, I became enthralled by every rock and plant offered along the path. What previously was drab and uninteresting became magnificent. My mind had put itself to sleep and my heart and soul savored the return trip in what felt like the embrace of home.

Title: THIS JUST IN
Created: 2001
Size: 24" X 31"
Medium: MIXED MEDIA ASSEMBLAGE

San Pedro is the dark underbelly of Los Angeles; the bad boy port town where sailors landed and the seamy life prevailed. In the time we lived there, we saw multiple efforts to shine it up and raise it above its reputation only to watch those efforts defeated by the city's apparent karmic destiny.



The perfect example of San Pedro's reality was the day a cops and robbers scene was being filmed on a local vacant lot for a movie. In the midst of the movie shooting, a real cops and robbers chase played out in the neighborhood. They could have saved a lot of money and just shot footage of the live action!

As in many grunge neighborhoods, it's the artists attracted by cheap rent who begin the transformation. Ric was one of those who moved in and thrived in the outside-the-box atmosphere. He joined a loose band of edgy comrades staking their artistic claim amidst a well-established European immigrant soup of longshoremen and fishermen. In this mix of Italian, Greek, Croatian, and Dalmatian families, it was not a welcoming town. The beautiful thing is that artists rarely threaten an economic balance and Ric found a comfortable place for himself.

It's significant to note that THIS JUST IN is a pre-911 piece and part of a larger series he called the Dangerous Painting Series which commented on what he saw to be the risky areas of our lives at the time. It is definitely a comment on the spontaneous nature of violence to which Los Angeles was no stranger. He was well aware of the dismal performance record of the Los Angeles police department since 1988 when we moved there during which there had been many charges of police brutality. In another painting, he expressed his impressions after having visited South Central during the Rodney King riots.

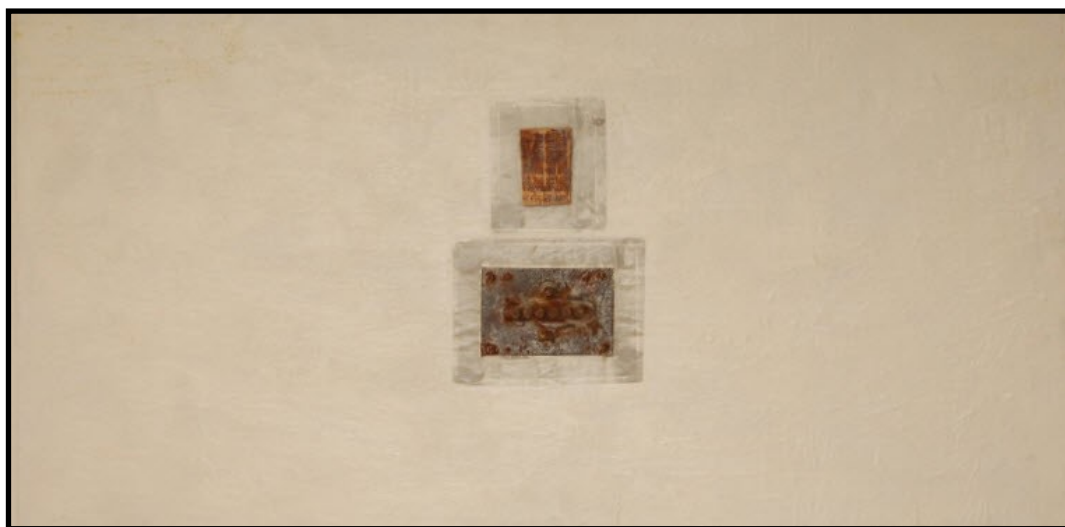
The police tape in the piece is from the scene of a shooting that occurred up the street from Ric's studio. He was always on the lookout for found objects to use in his work and this was not to be passed up! The pieces sticking out beyond the canvas edges, the manipulated pieces of metal, the screws used to fasten the leather,

and the mixture of texture and materials are signature Ric; but the penultimate element is the bullet suspended on a wire above the surface of the piece as if it were the item that is JUST IN. You can see the impact marks he marked in red where he actually shot the painting to make the point, so to speak. I am happy to see scraps of my needlepoint canvas in the mix there. Nothing went to waste!



Title: RECESS
Created: POST 2012
Size: 24 x 48
Medium: MIXED MEDIA ON WOOD

I have avoided writing about this piece as it has so few attachments to my memory of time and space with Ric. He hasn't left many clues for me other than the name and its ease on the eye and mind. I never lived with it hanging on a wall and don't even have many pictures of it.



Knowing Ric's history with schooling, recess was the 'home free' of his childhood. Release from the bonds of enforced sitting amongst a squad of fellow victims with imagination corralled and strict guidance of his attention. He didn't do well in that environment. He never spoke of happy times in school or any special teachers. He was small and bullied. He was poor and shunned. He was mistrustful and avoided.

Many said he fought authority but in actuality, he only fought what he perceived to be the abuse of power. He had been at the mercy of tyrants from birth, had found his own ways of throwing off their chains, and was careful to avoid being captured again. All his life he sought a father figure who would not throw him away as his biological father had and treat him kindly, as his stepfather had not. There were few who fit the bill. In the end, he had to find his recess within himself. Perhaps we ultimately each do that in a life well lived.

Art was Ric's healing medicine, his safe haven from the trauma of his youth, his playground in which to work out the struggle of finding his place in the world. His innate artistic talent was never groomed or guided by formal schooling. He honed his skills through his own exploration and thousands of hours of experimentation.

This painting was created in his favorite and final studio in Sky Valley CA. In contrast to his earlier politically and socially inspired works born of the chaos of San Pedro and the Bush regime with which he struggled, I feel this is one is a collection born from the desert's soothing influence. The work became simple, organic, and meditative. Almost like meditation tools to beckon you into the safe haven of your own essential self as the desert had done with him.



He's given us the small comfort of a center of focus that seems to be a gentle challenge into the surrounding whiteness. It's as if he's saying, "If you can't immediately dive into nothingness, here is an island of safety. Land here first." He gives us metal and darkness in the midst of a sea of light. From there, our mind can jump into the comfort of nothingness when it is ready and discover the haven he found there. He had no motivation to make a statement but rather presents us with a colorless field by which to overwhelm the senses and serve as a portal into a profound quietness of mind.

Ric eschewed most art critiques. He did teach me to trust my feelings about experiencing art. To him an art piece's legitimacy comes from the uniquely personal reaction informed by the viewer's life experience. And so, though I am surprised by this writing inspired by the piece, I feel more bonded with it and insightful about what Ric was experiencing in the last years of his life when this was created. He was entering a place that no father could have provided, transcended his needs for worldly pursuits, and created his ultimate recess playground.

This painting was never shown nor did Ric hang it anywhere we lived. I think it was highly personal and perhaps another of his experiments steered by his mind and soul seeking comfort and security.

Title: RENOIR OF A GEISHA

Created: LATE 1990's

Size: 36" x 36"

Medium: ACRYLIC

Boy did Ric ever have fun painting this piece for one of his favorite people. The punster in him just couldn't help creating this in celebration of Arthur's massive success with *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Ric loved playing with words and delighting people with twists of meaning. Some of his mastery came from having to find ways of talking his way out of delicate social situations or defusing escalating verbal conflicts. He had skills worthy of a politician or diplomat but mostly he loved to make people smile and maybe see a lightness in heavy situations.

His schooling in art techniques was self-determined. He



spent hours honing skills in different media and studying the world's art masterpieces from books. When he worked as a law clerk in D.C. in the late 70's, he spent his lunch times at the National Gallery taking in the brushstrokes, the sense of scale, the use of light and color by the masters. He brought all this to bear in creating a portfolio of work that covers a large range of styles. He never settled down to one technique or even style. When his life's body of work is reviewed, it can be seen how he was constantly exploring new ways of expression, even when his hands and eyes were failing him.

Renoir's *The Swing* was the perfect template for this visual pun. I can still feel how much he tickled himself with this transformation of the woman on the swing into a geisha. I know what tickled him most was the prospect of eliciting Arthur's mirth upon opening the crate and seeing the painting for the first time. I'm sure he wished he could have delivered it in person. Despite the fact that all those hair sticks indicate a lower level geisha, the pun still works and I love his joyful celebration of Arthur's success.

Title: ESTUARY

Created: EARLY 2000's

Size: 24 X 24

Medium: MIXED MEDIA ON BOARD

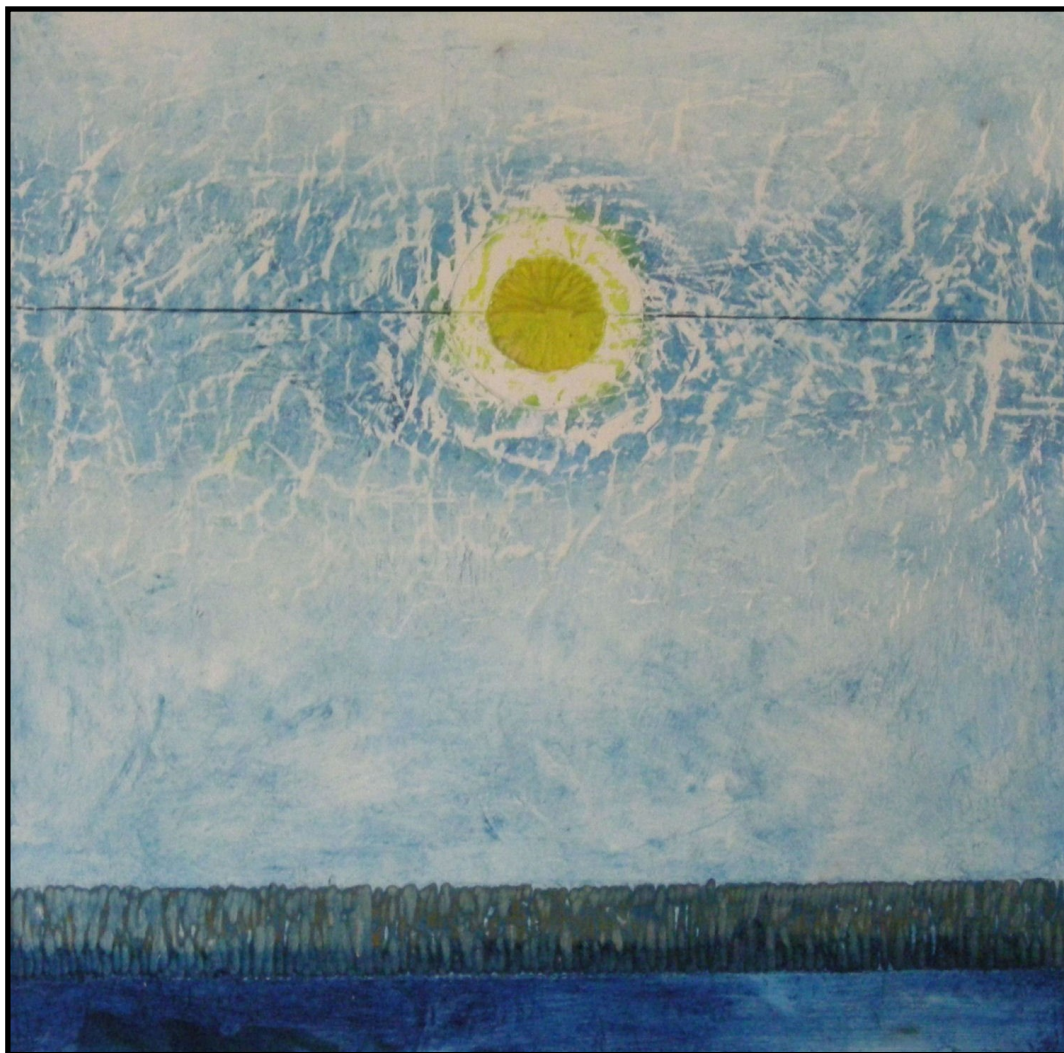
Ric lived on Weems Creek off the Severn River in Annapolis Maryland when I met him in 1977. His apartment had a large screened in porch overlooking the dock where he kept his treasured catamaran that he named First Things First. We spent 4 years there together before moving to Portland, Oregon.

He painted each room a different color with the miss-matched paints he picked up at the local hardware store. He painted beautiful renditions of vegetables on the kitchen cabinet doors including eggplants which, though I really don't like to eat them, I love their color.

The ebb and flow of the tide is what makes the estuary a special ecosystem. I learned all about them in my environmental biology class. It is the great meeting place of sea and earth; salt and fresh water; a transition zone of creatures and vegetation that can tolerate an uneven and changing mixture of salinity and moisture. Not being especially attractive or comfortable for humans, the estuaries of the world have taken a beating. Human land hunger has filled in many important estuaries for use in agriculture and building development and the creatures have had to move on or die. The birds have had to find new homes and safety stops on their migrations.

The toll of this destruction is mostly noticed only by scientists who study estuaries and those whose livelihood is based on the species that thrive there. The adaptive toughness the residents of estuaries have developed in order to live in these special conditions is exactly

what makes them so fragile. Add more or less water or salt too quickly and it becomes a desert type environment where only those flexible enough to change or free enough to move survive.



An apt metaphor for a life in which nothing is constant but change, the estuary reminds us that we all have to remain plastic enough to grow with the changes life throws at us. Will we remain rigid and attached to the way we are used to or are we able to flow with the tide? What are the essential conditions or values that we can take to sustain us and keep us strong no matter what change occurs. Each human must solve this problem alone. Many are irreparably

damaged by change; others thrive and morph into something new; others maintain a code that remains valid through all change.

These musings about the metaphor of the estuary are mine and I can't say what Ric was thinking when he created and named this piece. However, he was a person who had a strong sense of values that he tested constantly for relevance. The changes of his life and location changed his essential self very little. Rather ebb and flow of life seemed to cleanse and titrate his essential self into a refined version that fit into whatever situation he was in, whether fresh or salty.

This painting was a major break from what Ric had been painting. It has a measure of simplicity that marks a shift from the larger, more complicated assemblage body of work that precedes this. He loved blue and he loved the sun. This painting was the beginnings of his use of encaustic. The piece was shown in a couple of shows in California and once in New York.

Title: ABOUT GOLD I AND II

Created: PRE 2012

Size: 24" x 24"

Medium: MIXED MEDIA

Ric really didn't like me hiking alone in the desert hills above The Number Nine. I gloried in it. Though aware of all the possible dangers and some imagined ones, I could not resist the call of the silent emptiness. When the sun woke me, I could hardly stand the time it took to don the necessary outfit and get to exploring some new ridge or canyon I had seen on a previous outing. The desert called to me as I've heard that the sea calls to others. An unexplainable siren's song over which I was truly powerless despite a rational mind that showed me images of me fallen and injured, rattlesnake bit, or disoriented and waterless. It was as if I was in search of gold.

Wandering those hills alone gave my mind a wide arena to play in. There were times when it worked hard on a current problem, brought to mind old hurts or joys to reprocess, or played out a myriad of future scenarios. Like an unbroken colt, I let it plunge and crow-hop, twist and dive, or get down and roll convulsively until it had run its string. It usually didn't last more than an hour and half. Then I would be left in the desert's nothingness. All my mind had conjured was absorbed by its timelessness and I became part of its beingness almost without consciousness. Emptied of self, I sucked up the air, savored the silence, reveled in gravity, and absorbed the energetics. Unfettered by human input, my senses found a golden playground beyond their normal scope.



Close to the house are the remains of an outcropping of white quartz. A common companion of gold, I imagine some prospector in the past must have dug it out in hopes of hitting the jackpot. Such an icon of our western mythology; the old prospector and his trusty burro. I often wonder how many combed these hills in pursuit of their own gold. How many found that it was the pursuit of it in complete freedom that was the treasure itself? I rather fancy being one of those old coots and wonder what I would name my little burro carrying my treasures and tools.

One day Ric met some modern day prospectors wandering down our wash. Despite their obvious signs of being meth users, he confronted them. When he asked what they were doing there, they said they were looking for gold! We found out later they had robbed the house up the wash. This story became part of The Number Nine mythology and was just another item that Ric added to his fears of me wandering alone in the desert.

He bought me a navigational device to carry so he could watch me on the computer. It gave him some peace of mind and I thought it was sweet that he cared. I remember occasionally having an irrational feeling of a possible ambush by Indians or cougars in a slot canyon or being silently watched by who knows what; but most of the time I either was in blessed denial about the possibilities or counted it worth the risk.

I was used to having my own way with Ric and he with me. It was an unspoken vow – that we allowed each other too much freedom. Often we seemed to be going in opposite directions until the pull on each other threatened to snap the bond. Instead, we got slingshot back to each other when we had reached the end of our relational tether. Tired from bucking against restraints, we both eventually settled back into the haven of our space together, grateful for the other's tolerance and steady care saving us from our own blind foolishness. We never seemed to run a wild river together; rather one always remained on shore while the other ran their emotional rapids.

Then it happened one day; I found real gold. To my amusement, I found an old stencil with just the two letters AG while wandering in the middle of nowhere. It's really odd to laugh out loud at a cosmic joke where there is no audience to witness the irony of the event.

The lizards sleep and the rocks remain unmoved. It's my special joke in the universe that tickled me all the way home. I couldn't wait to get home to make the grand announcement of finding gold and watch Ric get the joke with me. He delighted in it and immortalized it by using the stencil in his paintings About Gold I and About Gold II.

The unspoken joke for us was that Ric was never a seeker of the gold most men fever for. His sense of deserving great wealth or fame was beaten out of him, as when a horse is brutally broken. He learned to treasure the things that no one can take from you and



count himself a rich man in each freedom he achieved. The freedom from an abusive family, the freedom of giving and receiving unconditional love, the freedom from the whip of substance abuse, and the freedom of healing himself through art; all were hard won for him. In the end, he settled into the peace of having made his own golden treasure. I thank him every day for it.

Both paintings were created in Ric's final and favorite studio at The Number Nine in Sky Valley. These paintings are the product of what I felt was his most comfortable and secure time as an artist and as a man. It was a time when I felt he had made peace with his demons and settled into working from his essential self.

About Gold I was shown at the Palm Desert Community Gallery in a 3-man show called "Three" in 2012 shortly after its creation. Ryan Campbell was another artist in that show. He came to Ric's celebration of life and I found him weeping in Ric's office. He shared with me how powerfully he had connected with Ric and I continue watching his growing career with a special interest; as though Ric is somehow carrying on through him.

Title: MORE OF THE PATH

Created: 2007

Size: 24 X 48ish

Medium: ENCAUSTIC ON BOARD/STRIPS OF FENCING MATERIAL

The years in the grit and grunge of San Pedro eventually pushed Ric to make his final move to a place he had been looking for all his life; the desert where it was 90 at night. It was a long circuitous route both physically and psychically, but it was home. The house he found was built like a tank. Its borders are riddled with easements that scared most perspective buyers off but made it all the more attractive to us. It seems like this was a pattern for us; we wanted things no one else wanted.

At the end of the rocky, unwelcoming driveway were two features built with considerable effort for purposes no longer meaningful. One was a



wooden fenced enclosure with a beautifully weathered gate. The rusting hinges appeared to have stained the gate with years of red tears. Opening the gate brought the screech of hinges while the accumulated sand grabbed the lower border with greater resistance as you applied more force only to reveal the rocky hill that climbed above the house. To the west of this unused storage area, was a

railroad tie staircase that deposited you on a higher level of the hill but for no result seeming worthy of the effort to build it. We called it the stairway to nowhere.

I had seen his studio dissolve and reanimate so many times over the years we moved about and I was anxious to see what kind of work would emerge from this new environment. His art spaces were chock full of stuff he accumulated, not as a hoarder, but as art material to trigger his muse. Now he seemed unfettered by environment and circumstances.

Three "path" paintings were the first products of this new environ-

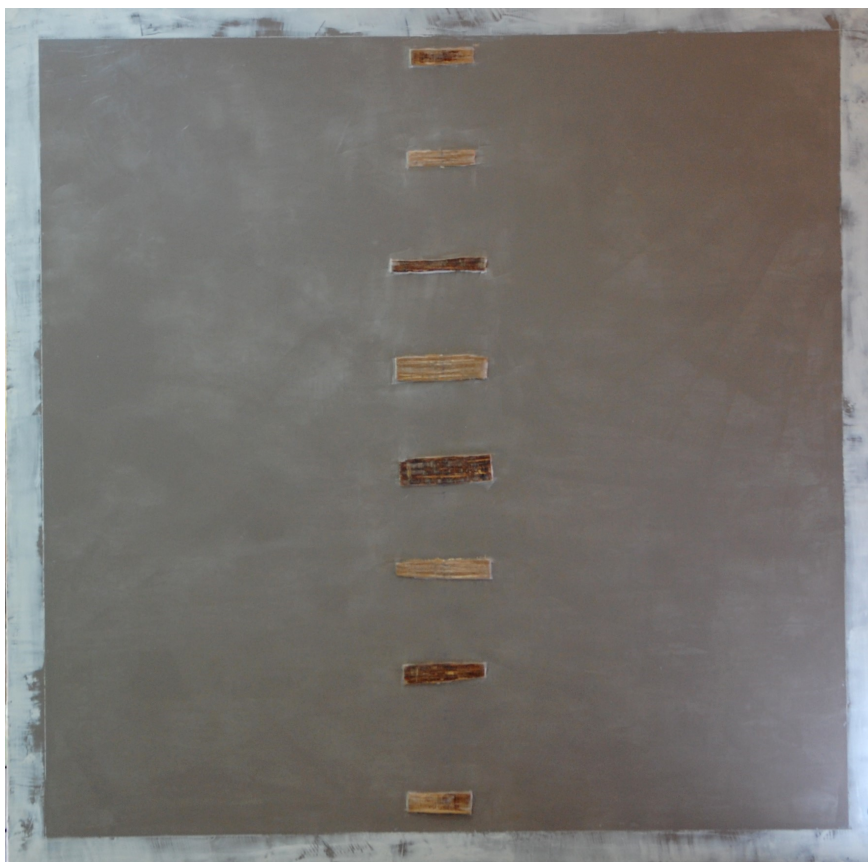


ment. Each is adorned with wood strips from the fenced enclosure; such a Ric thing to do! The taupe hued *This Part of the Path* is the first of the three paintings of which the blue bordered *Another Part of the Path* is the second and green bordered *More of the Path* is the third. I feel a sense of tranquility and calm in all three pieces that I like to think mirrors how he felt having found the place he had worked towards. I'm not sure he knew what he had been looking for but he knew it when he found it and his work changed.

This desert series of work follows two edgy bodies of work. *Dangerous Paintings and Fetishes* was a series of paintings commenting on the risky borders of contemporary life. The *Hole in....* series challenged viewers to find a portal to a different level of understanding through physical and psychic realities such as the moon or the heart.



In *More of the Path*, the spare composition, muted colors, and mixture of heated wax seem to all point to the desert influence. Inviting quiet contemplation, the painting sets a mood in which the timelessness and enduring qualities of the desert sink deep into the



observer. The unvanquished march of time and nature overcomes all things and stamps firm the understanding of our temporary nature and the eternal quality of the now.

Title: DAYDREAM CATCHER
Created: 2002
Size: 48" x 24"
Medium: ASSEMBLAGE ON BOARD

Does anyone daydream anymore? I think it may be a lost art, scolded out of us in elementary school. If people do it, I think they probably don't admit it. I've rediscovered it under the mask of meditation. I look like I'm meditating but actually I'm day dreaming. I don't even pretend to push the thoughts away. I just watch them bubble up and follow them where they want to go. If I don't like where they're headed I steer them back to a comfort zone; but basically, I let my mind wander and often find that, like sleep dreaming, day dreaming is a great defragging process for my brain. Sometimes the unfinished edges of stories get wrapped up or niggling problems get solved or I get to extravagantly wonder about something or explore some extraneous thought. But mostly nothing happens except a deep relaxing calm. Sometimes I add cloud gazing to the mix – a long forgotten skill that has re-emerged for enjoying the desert version of tantalizing moisture.

I wish I had a daydream catcher. Sometimes I want to catch a thought bubble that entertains me but I'm too relaxed to write it down. Ric, too, was a great day-dreamer. Perhaps I learned it from him. I imagine he was chastised often in school for his wandering mind but it didn't stop him. He used his art as a guise for day-dreaming. He could spend months seemingly doing nothing and then spew out a rich body of work that drew on his cogitations.

Perhaps he was day-dreaming when he assembled all these items. His studios always held a collection of materials for him to select from. He had trash barrels full of scrap metal waiting to be hammered and I imagine these aluminum pieces were very satisfying for him to smash into the glittery light-reflecting attachments. My red suede skirt made it in there along with the feathers of a heron he had found as roadkill. I wish I could remember the kind of veneer he attached with the foam insulation but all that is left of that memory is that it starts with an M and isn't maple or mahogany. The black bamboo pieces came from a friend who knew Ric would put them to good use in his work.



I've often wondered what Ric was thinking in creating this painting. I know that he hated how commercialized the native American dream catchers had become as just one example of cultural hijacking that has trivialized and polluted the sacredness of objects and rituals. He thought only Scottish people should play golf and he gave up learning to play the didgeridoo because he considered it a kind of sacrilege for him to play an instrument with deep ties to the healing rituals of the Australian aborigine. He was fascinated by native cultures and danced on the edges of fortune telling with his I Ching readings. I think this was his playful way of expanding his dreaming toolkit.

The companion piece to this is Nightmare Catcher which seems to me to be just as important a tool as a dream catcher. It lives outside at the Number Nine and is standing up to the elements with remarkable pluck. On a framework of a discarded lawn chair is woven cat gut and rose bush clippings that everything sticks to.

While the day dream catcher has reflective qualities that fit the activity, the Nightmare Catcher is a thoroughly functional tool on guard to capture any passing malevolence.

Both pieces were created in his San Pedro studio on 7th street and were in his 2005 show called Penetrations in Redondo Beach and 2006 show in San Pedro called Perforations.

Title: MONOCULAR DIPLOPIA
Created: After 2007
Size: 24" x 24"
Medium: MIXED MEDIA ON BOARD

Ric had double vision and he loved the sound of its name; monocular diplopia. Everyone who knew him, knew that he had a different way of looking at the world but he really did on a physical level. I don't remember hearing about this diagnosis until later in his life. He had corrective lenses for it but I know that he was very frustrated with his failing eyesight and gnarled hands after 2012. Both made it difficult for him to feel free in making his art. Both changed his perception and ability to create on the level he was used to. It explains the slowdown in his production in the last few years as well as what I feel sure was undiagnosed lung cancer.

I imagine the metaphor of double vision did not escape him. He was a master of seeing multiple sides of a situation or an object. He was adept at flipping



images or social situations on their head. As he said himself, "I'm an artist, I am trained to make you see something that isn't there." This was endlessly fascinating for me. I was never really sure how he would interpret something or what amazing insight he would come up with.

I learned to be quiet while his brain processed things and then developed some marvelous theory that entertained me. Shortly after I met him I was wondering aloud why ice cubes shrink in the freezer. He proceeded to explain how they sublimated and when I asked if that caused vapor to be created he took a turn away from the actuality of the vapor depositing on the freezer walls into it created clouds of vapor to which I asked about thunderstorms in the freezer. He stepped right off the cliff and said yes and we melted into hysterics! But, you could do that with him. He had a huge compendium of knowledge in his brain that was often waylaid by his imagination into fantastic stories. I began to lose my strict pursuit of truth in order to revel in his unfettered storytelling.

Perception is such a mysterious thing. How we take in the images of the world and interpret them in our brain is endlessly varied. Ric's special vision informed his art work and how he interacted with the world. Ric actually had a friend who had the same visual defect so when he died, I gave Paul all of Ric's glasses. We are both tickled by the fact that he looks at the world through Ric's lenses!

This painting was in a show in Palm Desert in 2009ish along with Ryan Campbell's work. They sparked a relationship that was cut short by Ric's death. I continue to keep in touch with Ryan and get great pleasure watching him create!

Title: THE SUN
Created: 2007ish
Size: 48" x 60"
Medium: OIL ON CANVAS

The Sun was one of the first paintings Ric painted when he set up his first studio in Sky Valley. He never showed this work; I think it was an experiment with using oils in the dry desert air. There was a companion piece that was green with a red center but it had no name. Though the obvious inspiration was Ric's new home in the desert, it points to a deeper role the sun played in Ric's life.

He spent a lot of life-force in pursuit of the sun though the trajectory of his life doesn't readily reveal that. Chronically lung challenged from birth, Ric was most at ease in the warmth of the sun. Had his love of self been stronger, he would probably have made a beeline for the desert without regard for security or attachments. But life gets complicated and we got swept up in sparkling enticements along the way which made the road to the desert circuitous and lengthy. Once attained, only the devotion to family and death could pry him away. He had found and made his heaven on earth.

For years I lived with this painting without questioning his choice of color to capture the sun. After all, the obvious choice to paint the sun is yellow. It took a while for it to register with me that he chose white for the sun in a yellow sky. He was not painting what we see; a yellow sun in a blue sky. What he was capturing was the life sustaining warmth that he craved and responded to.

He truly was a lizard-man; not really coming to life until it was about 85 degrees. When I was beginning to look for shelter and

coolness, he emerged ready to climb mountains. And when the temperature dropped, he found a warm haven in which to hunker down until the life-giving warmth returned. It was truly his manna from heaven.

Like all artists, the sun was a primary and essential tool in Ric's palette. His perception of its light and lack of light informed all of his work and was often a source of frustration. Pure sunlight is the Holy Grail for artists and Ric was in constant pursuit of matching its perfection. He experimented with every lighting arrangement imaginable. When lighting technology changed, he ran it through his strict battery of requirements. Lighting was a constant topic of conversation and adjustment for us and he left me with a mountain of light bulbs and lighting assembly pieces. Each time I go in his studio today with its four huge skylights and overhead track lighting, I am reminded that he had built his own lighting Mecca. During the



day he had the perfect light of the sun to work in and at night he had constructed a very close facsimile.

We lived for 8 years in Portland before he emerged from his basement studio one day to inform me that he was either going to kill himself or someone else. He needed the sun; its light and its warmth. So off we went to California as easily as we had left Annapolis for Portland because someone told him it never went below 50 degrees. That sounded good at the time but it wasn't long before we realized that this was only an incremental improvement. In retrospect we probably should have raised our climatic requirement bar. But then neither of us really understood the ramifications of climate on Ric's body at that time. We were young and on a grand love adventure filled with growing and building a life together. However, the time finally came when the color green made us sick, salmon revolted us, the sound of rain drove us mad, and rainbows became a horrifying signal of a perpetually wet world. Time to go towards the sun!

The South Bay California beaches were a revelation to two bumpkins from Oregon. We stood slack-jawed and Oregon-pale at the beach confronted by nearly naked bronzed bodies. We enthusiastically joined the sun worshipping party and thanked our lucky stars to have escaped the Northwest. Once we had lived with the South Bay's "marine layer" for a while, Ric turned his gaze east, forsook the call of the ocean, and sailed his land yacht to the desert where he built the studio of his dreams and ended his days in what he considered heaven. A devoted wife, a faithful dog, a room full of bikes, a studio of his dreams, and most important, the constant blast of the sun out of clear blue skies. He often said what a lucky boy he was and so it goes.

Title: PERILOUS POLITICS (Fireworks or Explosives?)

Created: JULY 2001

Size: 42 X 22

Medium: ENCAUSTIC, ACRYLIC, FOUND OBJECTS

How much more perilous can politics be than the possibility of giving Donald Trump the keys to our nuclear arsenal? Ric never could have dreamed of that possibility we are currently hanging in the balance but by July of 2001, when he painted Perilous Politics, world politics had caught his attention enough for him to be compelled to comment and document in the best way he knew how.



He had already started his social and political commentary in 1997 with a collection of mixed media pieces he called the Dangerous Series. It covered topics such as the Clinton/Lewinsky affair, Princess Diana's death by paparazzi, genetic engineering, the advent of Homeland Security, and mixed gender attractions. In 1998 he painted Winds of War perhaps in response to what is now called the Iraq Disarmament Crisis characterized by the teeter-totter debate over containment versus preemption in dealing with Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. He felt the sound of war-drums.

Our horror of living under the oppression of the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations was eased by Clinton's victory but the undercurrent of tension over Iraq remained and events seemed to inexorably pull us into conflict. The 2000 presidential election raised the bar on Ric's outrage at having the presidency stolen and our conversations dominated by a new term – hanging chads.

As G W Bush began his term, Ric increasingly sensed how precarious our political situation was domestically and internationally and began this painting. The American Flag is set upside down in the traditional signal of distress. He had collected the ballots, sans hanging chads that seem to



have been lost, earlier from the San Pedro polls knowing they were a powerful reminder of how wrong a turn we had taken. July 4 came with the normal outrageous display of illegal fireworks and gunfire that San Pedro is known for. In fact, it starts on Memorial Day and works up to a crescendo on July 4. That night Ric went out to collect the spent fireworks to finish the painting. When he showed the piece he always attached them to the painting hanging from the sticks and also spread a bunch on the ground below the painting.

In a little over two months from the time he finished the painting, we were confronted with the atrocity of September 11th 2001. The world changed in ways we couldn't foresee in our shock. There was so much wrong with what was happening it was too big to comment on.

Ric began a new series he called Hole in..... which he never explained to me. It's better that way. I see them as his challenge to see beyond appearances. They seem like pointers to portals in our perceived reality that can transport us through the veil into another dimension.

Title: AQUA 1
Created: 2007ish
Size: 24" x 24"
Medium: ENCAUSTIC ON BOARD

If you asked what Ric's color was I would say blue. He seemed to vibrate higher when he was wearing blue. He turned me on to the Prussian blue that appears in the twilight at the end of the sunset and the beginning of nightfall – a special oasis of calm in which he will always live for me. He never told me that Prussian blue is also used as a remedy to radioactive poisoning. This was something I learned from an episode of Madame Secretary. In a world moving closer to the probability of terrorist nuclear attacks, I find it ironic that a pigment stands ready to provide its healing power; especially this one that was tied to the military wear of the Prussians.

Water and its multitudinous shades of blue rivals the sky in its variety. A million shades and facets forever sparkling in the light of sun and moon and shifting under the push of wind and pull of gravity. Ric lived near water most of his life and as a sailor had a full awareness of its magnificent power and its deep calm. He knew the endless mesmerizing attraction of watching water reflect the world and its movements. And he knew our primal call to return to our mother ocean; the womb from which life emerged and to which we ultimately return. The saying ashes to ashes could just as easily be tears to tears.

Water's mercurial fluidity entreats us to seek a similar flexibility in withstanding the forces in our lives. Flow like water. The awesome power of the surf or even the threat of a flash flood remind us of our insignificance. Floating on or being submerged in water releases us from our bondage to gravity but only through a great surrender to water's supportive caress.

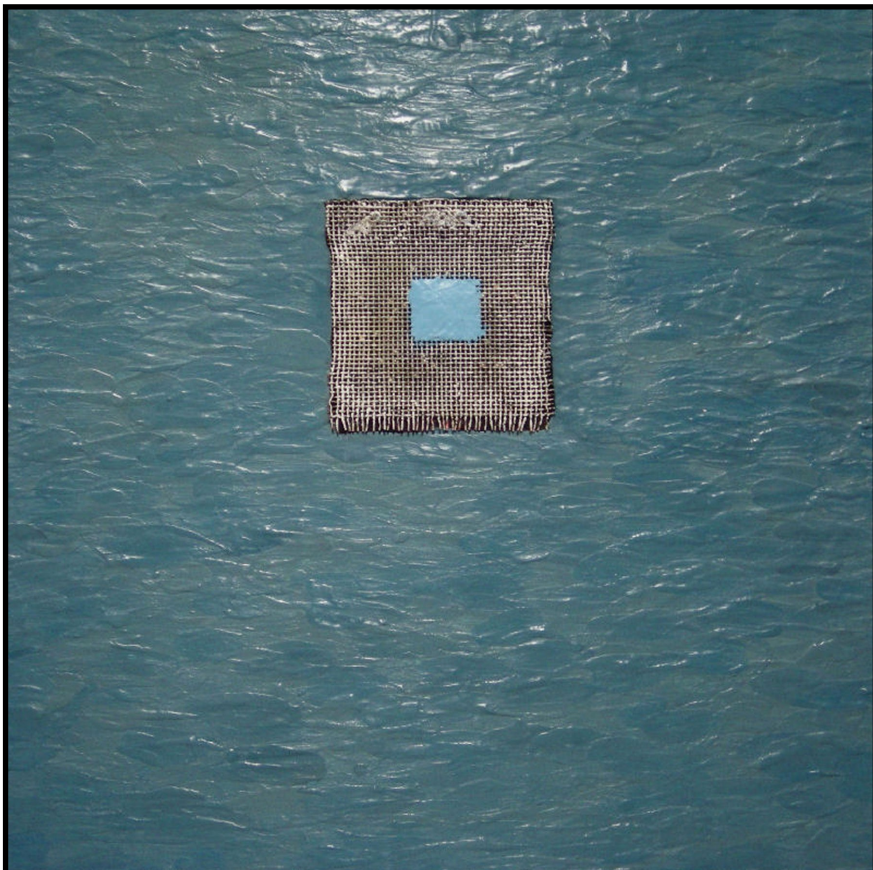


One day Ric came home from a fishing outing with one of his edgy comrades-in-arms, John Lebert, and told me a story that changed us all. Ric and John were fishing from a high rock overlooking the Clackamas River. Neither were really serious fishermen; it was an

excuse to goof off in nature. In the spirit of having taken on the persona of good ole boys out fishing, they dutifully ogled the girls in bikinis on the opposite shore. When they saw one get up to enter the river they tried to warn her of the whirlpool but of course they looked like good old boys catcalling American beauties. She stepped in and was instantly grabbed by the current and swept into the maw of the whirlpool never to be seen again. They were dumbfounded and ashamed. One minute they were leering at beauty and then next moment she was snatched to her death. None of the three of us ever forgot that girl. She became the symbol to us of life's preciousness, it's value, and its fragility. I'm not sure either of them escaped their shame for having demoted her to an object of desire and she remained in all our hearts as a pointer to our higher selves.

The same river nearly claimed us. In portions it is rated a Class 5, in other sections it's a pussycat. This is how every year it claims the lives of summer beer drinking floaters. But we thought we were too water savvy to be fooled into complacency. Their plan was to go in the pussycat part in a couple of woefully flimsy rafts that triggered my water safety alarms. Though I went along, I took the precaution of tying all my stuff into the raft and resisted being a naysayer. It wasn't long before our pussycat unexpectedly turned into a tiger, sweeping us wide enough around a curve to bash us into shoreline and dump us all into the middle of the river. It was cold and the current was strong. I didn't wonder if my fear had manifested this or if I had been foolish in following these guys but I have not forgotten the power of the water nor how quickly our seductively lazy stream turned into an overpowering bucking horse. We survived and I had shoes, but they did not. Yet another lesson Ric and I learned together that informed all our future water adventures.

“Why are the stars moving so fast?” I asked. Ric jumped up so fast he hit his head on the top berth and jetted to the deck, grabbing Joel on the way. Our sailboat had slipped its mooring in the middle of the night and we were on a trajectory of taking a couple of other yachts with us on our way to wrecking on the shore. There were a lot of magical words spoken and heave-hoeing to get us moored again. I knew better than to leave our forward berth so I continued to lay in our berth and watch the stars through the hatch. When they settled into place in the sky, I knew we were safely moored again and waited for Ric to come back. He was never the same. He had come on board recovering from shoulder surgery and in fending off one of the yachts he had torn the surgical site. He never had it repaired and he spent the rest of his life accommodating to and suffering from its compromised nature.



Floating face down in the shallows of Little Dix Bay watching the unending light reflections on the rippled sand through masks was one of our great pleasures. We never tired of being flotsam in the warm blue green of the Caribbean and thank our dear Edward for showing us the wisdom of it. Our daily snorkel adventures in the safety of the bay released all care we might have brought with us. The squid and the octopus never failed to delight us and a turtle sighting was always a thrill. They could glide slowly about and then flipper themselves into high gear and vanish. Each year we felt like they were our old friends greeting us. Our days in the Caribbean have long ended but floating in my pool transports me there imagining squid and turtles. Now I swim with desert willow blossoms, bats, and bees – but that's another story.

