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Norman



**CONFESSIONS  
OF AN  
ARTIST**



# CONFESSIONS OF AN ARTIST



55-1p "Self Portrait" Etching, 4 X 3"

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97-53 "Self Portrait;" Oil/panel, 20 X 16"

*I started art at the same time I entered adolescence, not consciously, but it became a way to help me get through this stage of my life.*

*I didn't know my mother. She spent much of her life hospitalized suffering from depression. My father was unable to care for me. My grandmothers did this.*

*I was never sure of my place in my family, or in the world.*

*Art helped me to find a place.*



54-4 "Self Portrait;" Oil/linen, 26 X 18"

*In Junior High School art class we were given a textbook: ART NOW. I liked it so much I neglected to return it at the end of the term.*

*I particularly remember a photograph of a shell by the great photographer Edward Weston.*

*I don't think I'd ever seen a book like this before.*





59-5 "Self Portrait; Oil/linen, 27 X 21"

*I was a poor student academically not awake  
to the world or my potential.*

*However, I was lucky. Progressing through the public schools, I went to Abraham Lincoln High, Brooklyn, NY, and was able to study with Leon Friend\* an outstanding art teacher.*

*I don't know how I got a "job" in the Biology Department Lab making charts. Sophie Wolfe\* was the Lab Director who was later noted for her influence on students such as Paul Berg, the Nobel award recipient. It was an important experience for me.*

*\*Leon Friend*

*<http://observatory.designobserver.com/entry.html?entry=5717>*

*\*Sophie Wolfe*

*<http://science.howstuffworks.com/dictionary/famous-scientist/biologist/paul-berg-info.htm>*



*60-9 Self Portrait;" Oil/linen, 24 X 18"*

*Mr. Friend had established a club which operated independently in the school: The Art Squad. We had our rules and regulations, elections and activities. We served the school in many ways: designing bulletin boards, making posters for school activities.*

*Even though I was not very socially developed, I was elected to serve my final term as the Art Squad Director. We had many talented students in the school. Friend's emphasis was on Graphic Design.*

*Graduates from Lincoln went on to fine schools like Cooper Union. They were academically as well as artistically gifted and had excellent careers as designers and illustrators. One of these was Seymour Chwast (co founder of The Push Pin Studio), my peer and friend, who earned deserved international fame. There were many others.*



86-86 "Self Portrait," Oil Stick/paper, 26 X 19"

*My art ability brought me positive attention. I started to find a place in the world. Otherwise I had no sense of myself or value. I graduated in January 1949 and encountered my first experience with depression. I had been raised by my grandmother and had little family direction or guidance.*



86-89 "Self Portrait;" Oil/panel, 20 X 18"

*In high school I had won gold medals in the yearly Scholastic Awards and second place in an independent poster contest. The latter helped me (after seeing a Psychiatrist once - a rarity in our family and time) get past my depression.*

*I was awarded a scholarship which I applied to attending the Art Students League of NY. I was not ready for college. The League only had studio classes.*

*While there I enrolled in Harry Sternberg's painting class. That year Sternberg selected one of my paintings to represent the class in the school catalog.*



49-1 "Escape"; Orlanias, Size unknown, Destroyed

*At the League I studied with George Grosz, Kenneth Hayes Miller (I was appointed his last Class Monitor.) and Reginald Marsh.*

*By now you must be wondering where the Confession is. Well, I can't promise you anything that would be worthy of a tabloid, but if you have any interest in art or an artist's life, even an obscure one, stay with me.*

*I rented a studio (really an office) at 1 Union Square in 1952, on a floor beneath Marsh's attic studio. Many artists had studios in and around the Square.*



88-106 "Self Portrait at Easel;" Pastel/paper, 30 X 22"



*I don't think I planned this rental but once I realized Marsh was above me I'd wait, around noon, to hear his door close and then I'd go out to the elevator, just outside my door, to join him for the ride down. Then I'd walk him towards his home on the other side of the park and had a chance to visit with him.*

*Years later when I worked as "curator" for Marsh's Estate, Felicia, his widow told me they thought I never accepted an invitation to join them for lunch because I was Kosher - I was not - I was too shy.*



89-205 : "Self Portrait," Oil/panel, 18 X 18"

*In the summer of 1954 Marsh suggested I visit his father, Fred Dana Marsh, while I was in Woodstock, NY for the weekend with friends. Marsh died that weekend, July 4th, while he was in Vermont. He was fifty-six.*

*It was not until I was on a train heading back to the city that a random encounter with a friend (Rudy Brams) from the ASL told me the news. It was a psychological shock and made me ill. Prior to learning of Marsh's death, I had told another friend that I felt a strange transmission of artistic sensibility, if such things can occur. See the two paintings I was working on at this time. Marsh had seen them and had added a few strokes to feel the materials I was using.*

*My "Girl Strolling" painting always seemed odd (prescient ?) in that it portrayed "Marsh's girl" walking away, he almost invariably painted his girls striding in the other direction.*



54-1 "The Queen;" Egg Tempera/panel, 27 X 17"

*The artist Mary Laning and I had become friends at the League. She was the wife of the painter Ed Laning and they were friends of the Marshs. When Marsh died and Mrs. Marsh's lawyer, Joseph Walker, was looking for someone to help care for Marsh's work, Mary recommended me.*

*Mr. Walker invited me to his office overlooking the New York harbor downtown. He also had a younger colleague there to size me up, to see if I might be suitable for the work they needed.*

*How they came to choose me still remains a mystery. I was not very well educated, having only attended the League - not much of a prospect. I was hired at a modest pay, the same I had received in my most recently terminated position in the commercial art world.*

*The costs for my services were to be shared by Mrs. Marsh and former Senator William Benton. Benton, in an attempt to help Marsh's widow care for his friend's paintings, had purchased a half interest in Marsh's Estate.*

*I continued this work for twenty five years under the guidance of another of Marsh's friends, Lloyd Goodrich, the Director of the Whitney Museum.*

*My assignment was to catalog all of his work left in his Estate, which was considerable.*

*After my first two years, I took a three month tour of Western Europe, my first and only such expedition.*



54-2 "Girl Strolling Away;" Egg Tempera/panel, 23 X 18"

*I found myself seeking an identity, recognition, trying to replace what was not given to me at birth due to circumstances beyond my control. I sought to make my talent my entry card into life among others.*

*A good deal later, I started realizing that I had been racing to catch a bus that had left the station a long time ago. I was seeking acceptance, love, approval, and, at the center of this, safety.*



96-12 "Self Portrait," Oil/panel, 15 X 11"

*The seductive Art World beckoned and since I had found some rewards\* early in my life I thought this was the way to go.*

*My art talent led me to teaching and I had success, status, income, and all the benefits that these bring as a result of my work and life as a young artist. I'm very grateful for that and still am. I taught junior and senior high school in New York City and then at the University of Delaware, all of this made possible by Marsh's friends, my hard work and talent.*

*I can easily fault myself for seeking fame and fortune in the Art World - it has its attractions and more artists now are able to reap these rewards, at least for a while.*



97-56 "Self;" Pastel/paper, 14 X 11"



97-60 "Self;" Pastel/paper 14 X 11"

\*Edward Hopper had selected one of my paintings for a national exhibit and Willem de Kooning had selected one for a New York City Center group exhibit.



97-38 Self;" Oil/paper, 14 X 11"

*SUCCESS is, however, for the very few, and, once gained, very ephemeral. But, for many striving artists, this is difficult to see, because it seems that part of an artist's makeup comes with feeling special and expecting the Reward.*

*The "lucky" ones develop a style or product that catches on and provides a way for the artist, and more often the salesman, the art dealer, a means to cash in, and in our time there is a great deal of money involved. Of course most of these monetary profits end up in the hands of others because the "hot" item immediately becomes a commodity, something to be traded and not necessarily appreciated or valued for the art work.*



*All of these can quickly fall away and the artist is left to sustain the market for their work by making the necessary adaptations or withdrawing from the game.*

*You can imagine how good it can feel to have ones' work recognized, honored, collected. One is easily addicted. Unfortunately, success can have serious consequences for artists who cannot manage it. Yet many of us continue to seek that Success.*



01-34 "Self Portrait;" Oil/paper, 14 X 11"

*Luckily, I was a teacher. I had a wife, children, and ultimately grandchildren, and, more than that, I was able to sustain my life in art. I did not succumb to my early success by choosing to repeat myself when this did not seem right, nor did I try to adapt to the current fashion, lingua franca, but I chose, or was led to follow, where my art led me.*



10-21 "Self Portrait;" Oil/paper 7 X 5"

*It was difficult for me to fathom why others, especially those with the power in the Art World, could not see what I had accomplished. They had other visions that, literally, could not encompass mine. The Art World had moved on in other directions*

*We all have different needs when it comes to our lives, at least the way we perceive them.*

*So it should be no surprise for an artist to discover that the images she or he may create can be read, experienced in a great variety of ways, even just on a perceptual level if that can ever be divorced from other factors.*

*This leaves the artist ultimately on their own and it is a pleasant surprise when it seems another person can relate to your work close to what you experience, intended, although images are not necessarily the result of controlled information.*



08-20 "Self-Mirror;" Oil/panel, 11 X 14"

*I comforted myself by realizing that my experience was not unusual because many of the artists I revere had similar experiences, and, I found a small local audience that eventually came to share and appreciate my vision, my paintings. This has been enough to sustain me.*



09-13 "Self;" Oil/panel, 6-1/2 X 5-1/4"

*I am considered an authority on the American artist Reginald Marsh's art. More than fifty years of involvement with his work has earned me that recognition.*

*In my dealings with authorities in the Art World I am often astounded that what I may have taken for granted is not so. I've concluded that for many in the Art World it is not about artistic quality but about many other things that are in play, often concerning art as a commodity, just another product, a collectible.*



09-14 "Self 2;" Oil/panel, 6-1/2 X 5-1/4"

*There are few absolutes in art, there is a certain level of subjectivity, and relativity. What can remain, at least in my understanding, is high human achievement, energy, intelligence, creativity, skill, insight, profound at the core. I do not expect all art to aspire or achieve this, but it can be life enhancing when this is achieved.*

*I try to be truthful to myself, grateful to be able to improve as an artist, recognize my own gifts, and feel very good about leaving in the world the best of what I could create. These are really important to me.*

*I've done the work, created the images, offered them to others, and realized that they have and will have a life of their own when my life is completed.*

*We artists often don't realize the great gift we have, - we are too busy chasing rewards, affirmation, - and missing the absolute joy of creation, of giving birth to art and seeing it in our world.*

*So, there you have it, my Confession: desperation for love, acceptance, recognition (the power trip to avoid our natural vulnerability), chasing the wrong goal, missing my ability to reap the reward for living, experiencing the enriched life that art can afford and finally achieving it.*

*I must also admit my presumptuousness in creating this publication. Usually, this is reserved for people who have had great public recognition and there is the assumption that others would be interested in their artistic lives. My only justification is that the many others, the less recognized talents, might gain something useful from my perspective.*

*The risk here is self aggrandizement, but time will mediate and reveal.*



*10-5 "Self;" Oil/linen, 40 X 30"*



Additional professional information can be obtained by going to the following site.

<http://normansasowsky.com>

The site includes many more paintings, portraits, artist's books, and a curriculum vitae - exhibitions, publications, collections.

A CD containing similar material plus an 11 minute video is available by contacting the artist at: P. O. Box 656, Newark, DE 19715-0656, 302 368 2287

Twelve youtube.com videos are available by searching: lnorsky

1954



84-3, "Not Striding Aisle", Egg Tempera/Pencil, 23 x 19"

1961



81-3, Oil on Canvas, 25 x 30" "Thelma", Collection S. Simon

1976



76-2, "Peter and Isaac", Oil on Canvas, 18 x 18"

1982



82-3, Oil on Paper, 30 x 22"

1994



94-3, "Buster", Oil on Canvas, 40 x 30"

2008



08-17, "Admission", Oil on Canvas, 40 x 30"

