

Scott Benington
Jr W orth, Texas
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Dear Jamie,

Recently I took out your Seven Deadly Sins Catalog and took my time with it fascinated by its veritable circus of metaphoric irony. I enjoy its difficulties, its tendencies to entropy, its empathy with the "Other" in Nature and by extension with that Comaedia which is existence itself, things I didn't really appreciate until I became an "Old Dog" myself. God, I sound like an Art writer here (heaven forbid).

Over the years, I would occasionally see works of yours in Art magazines etc and kind of kept up with what you were doing in a casual way but it was your exhibition at the Carter Museum here and especially the one at the Jansworth in 1993⁽⁵⁾ that brought home to me the importance, the critical necessity, in fact, of seeing your works in the original.

This is, of course, true for most painters, but particularly true for your art. Scale and impact.

There is a sensibility in your work which resists any kind of categorization - utterly, and something else, something ^{that} lies both within and beyond the usual dramas, a mystery, operating somewhat like Black Matter does in the Cosmos, as an unknowable unifier. I really like that. As I have grown older it seems that everything has become mysterious in new ways I never knew before. The big difference is that I am comfortable with it, prefer it even. And the absurd? Of course.

While I was at it (The Seven Deadly Sins) I brought out your catalog Dog Days. I know it pretty well now and get more out of it with every serious perusal. It has good staying power.

It also brought to mind something I've been wanting to do for a while. I'm sending you an etching I did at the Pennsylvania Academy back in 1964, titled Dogs a scene done in Mississippi and etched later in New Jersey. I did it at about the time I first met you in Cloddi Ford. I was there to show some of my work to your

father and this etching was part of that. In fact, he liked my etchings more than my other stuff. I remember also that you were working on a painting of Jester, the Amish boy, that you later called Record Player. It was on your easel in the big room at the school house - studio and where I did the unpardonable and walked around the easel and looked at it. Willard Snowden had poured me a tall glass of Dated Courage which had made me temporarily fearless, but at least I had the sense to keep my mouth shut. I apologize again.

I know it's late, but I didn't know until recently that your birthday was on the 6th of July. So, in the interests of economy here is a birthday present. And speaking of birthdays I saluted your father on his. He is missed.

I think your painting The Sea, Watcher is a wonder, perhaps my personal favorite since it strikes a powerful chord within me, as it should with any serious poet. I could write about it extensively - and maybe I will.

That great black honey hand they stand on animates the whole work — a great touch!! And the watcher?

the real watcher? Why, it is I, of course, and anyone else who is lucky enough to view this powerful work and become the watcher too.

I hope this finds you and Phyllis and your managerie well and happy. Write, if you find some time.

Sincerely, Your friend

Scott Gentling

P.S. I stumbled into an old shrunken head I've had for years and am thinking of incorporating it into a self portrait. A working title might be Self Portrait, Am the One on the Right,