

# BUREAU

## OF ARTS AND CULTURE MAGAZINE

SUMMER EDITION 2014

EDITED by JOSHUA TRILIEGI

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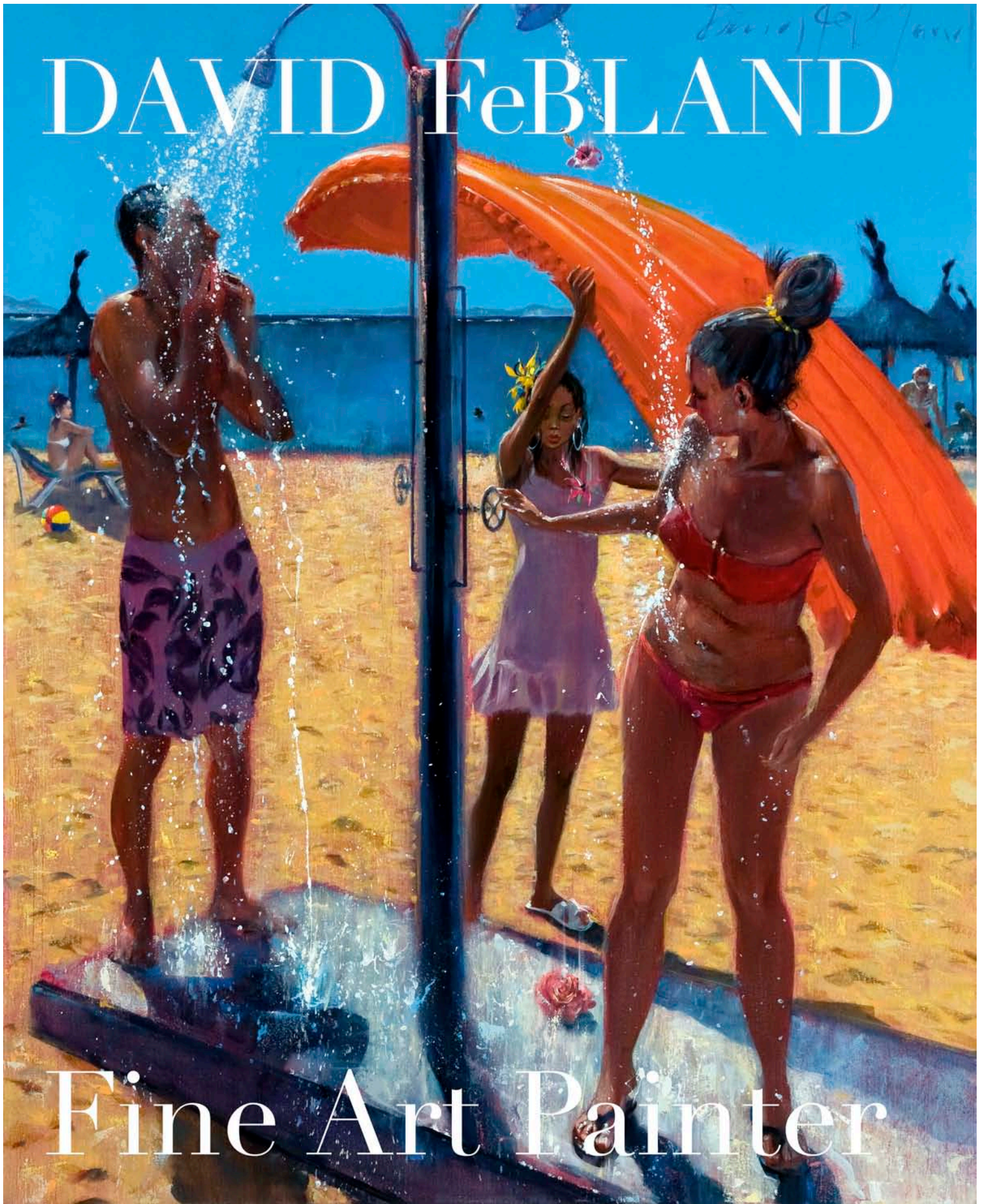
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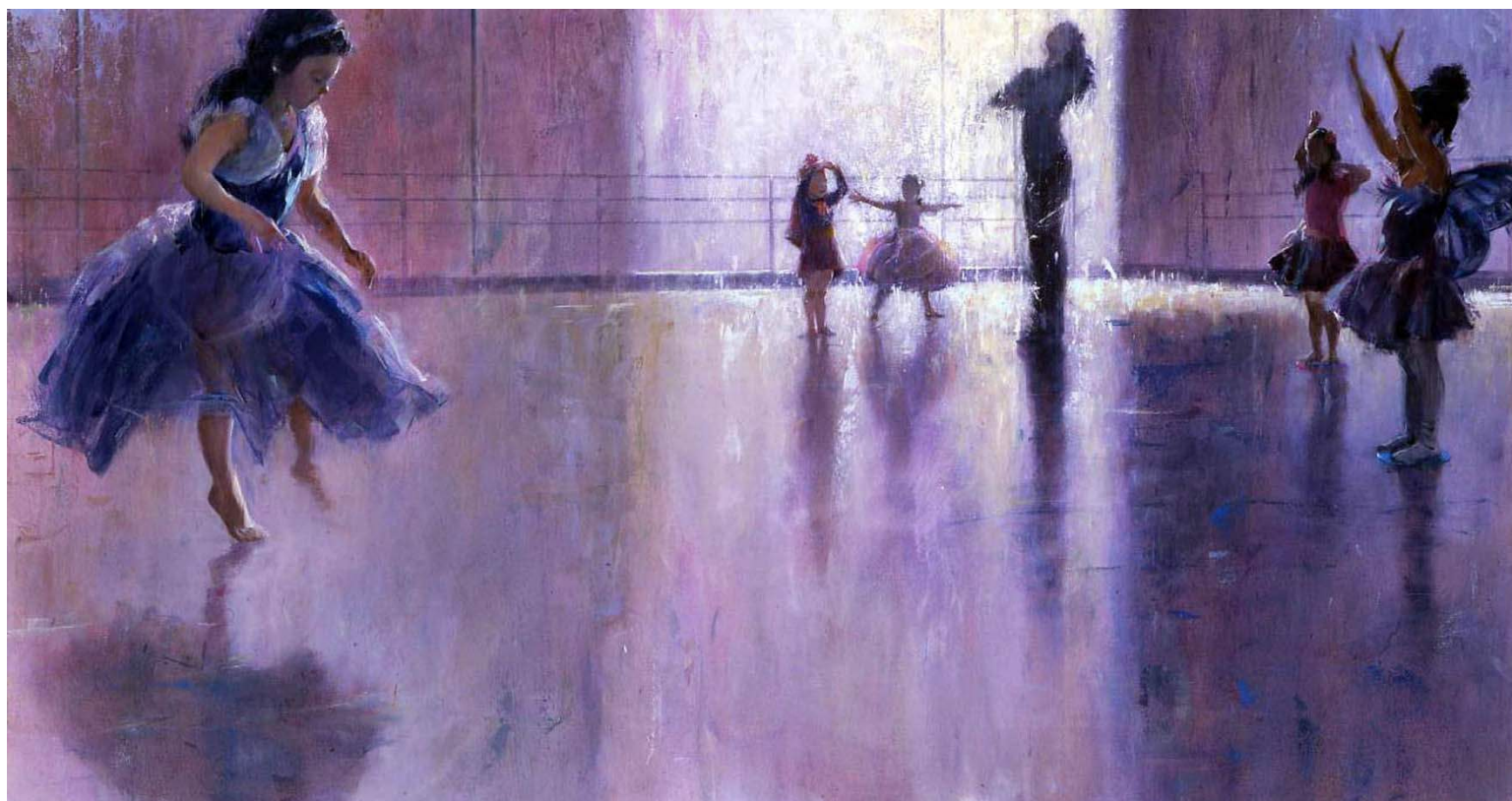
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DAVID FeBLAND

Fine Art Painter



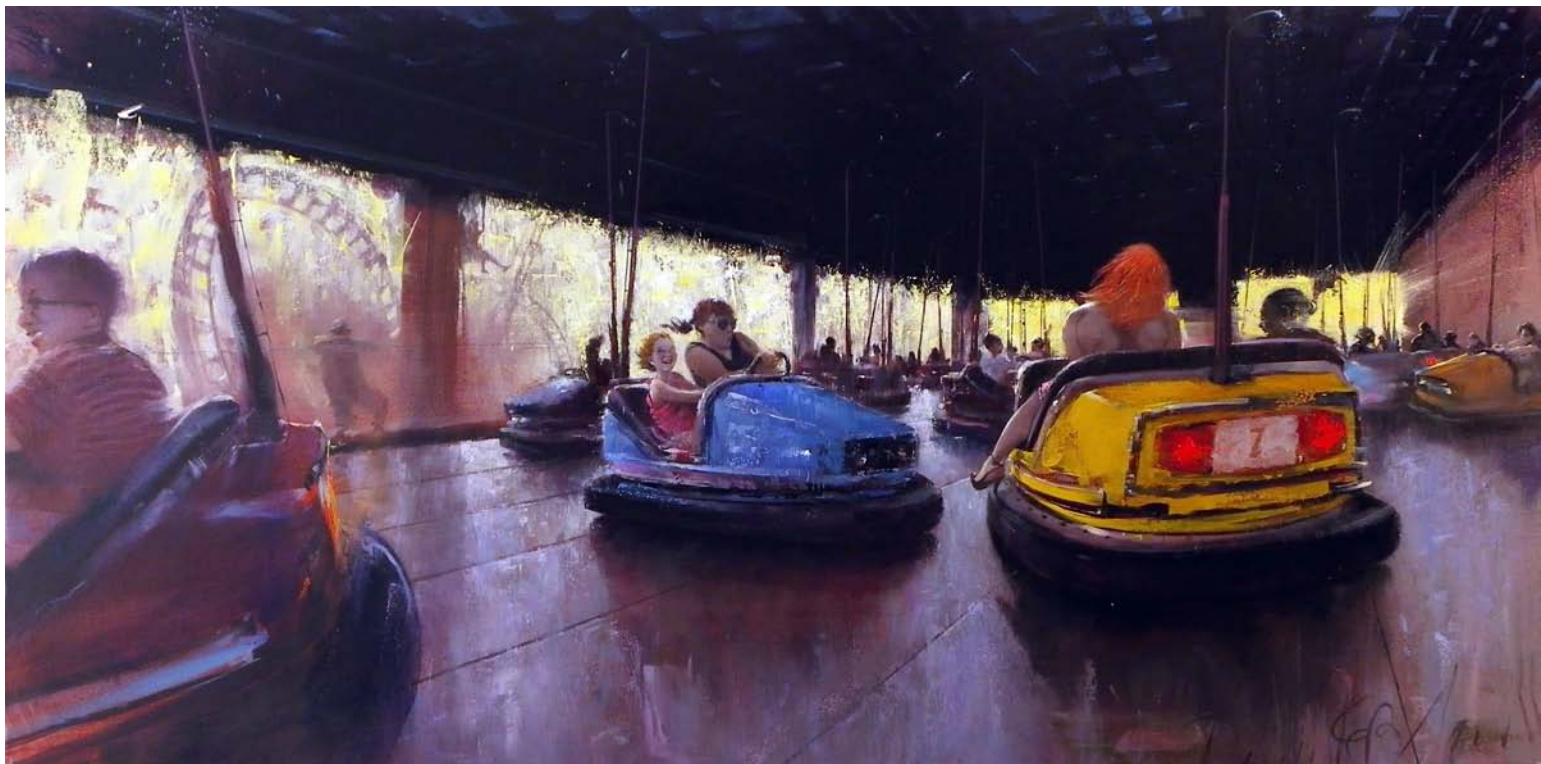




# DAVID FeBLAND : FINE ARTIST

*BUREAU: Tell us about your relationship with creating imagery: When & how did it start?*

David FeBLAND: I began creating imagery in my head long before its physical embodiment on canvas. I didn't even think of myself as an artist until I reached my 20's, and I began to create wholly self-expressive work only as I reached the age of 40. I was a 6 year old child growing up in the bucolic countryside of Southern England when suddenly my family relocated to Coney Island, Brooklyn. It was 1955, during the ebbing but still raucous era of side shows and bawdy entertainments of a working class seaside town. The giant spatulas hadn't yet been affixed to the front of the Sanitation trucks, better to evenly tan the Unfortunates who fell by the wayside. That was coming but still in the future. My new neighborhood was a lively place where Freak shows were commonplace, and the people who worked them for a living went about their local errands after hours. My first explorations in my new country included quotidian encounters with The Hairy Lady (full mustache & beard), The Leopard Girl (skin half black, half white), The Fat Man (at 400 lbs, a real standout rather than today's next-in-line at McDonalds), Mr. Pinhead (don't ask) and a supporting cast of dwarves, simians & fire-breathers. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. This seminal experience gestated for a long time before finding its way into art as I engaged in a variety other life pursuits, but it formed my view of public life forever. I never really took my eyes off the street again, and I believe that at that early age my interest in human interaction with our physical surroundings was set. However unconsciously, my lifelong determination to cast the world around me as dramatic narrative was established. We carry a few essential ideas into and through our creative lives. We go back to them again and again in a process of refinement. Our craft improves, we discover new methodologies and media, but they always support a nucleus of what I would call essential truths that we form early in our experience.



*BUREAU: These days, the line between illustration and Fine Art is not entirely clear. As a former illustrator, how do you differentiate these two worlds?*

David FeBLAND: I will invoke a famous 11th Century rabbinical scholar, Hillel the Elder, by way of addressing this question. He was asked by a cynical student to explain the meaning of the bible while standing on one foot. To this dismissive question, he calmly replied, ‘Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. All the rest is commentary on that one essential idea’. If I pay my grandmother a visit and she asks me to make a drawing of her cat to hang on her wall, I am creating an illustration. If I pay my grandmother a visit and decide to surprise her with a drawing of her cat to hang on her wall, I am creating a piece of fine art. Intentionality determines the difference between the two. All discussion of style, context, and emotional power over the viewer is commentary on this one essential idea. A work of fine art, whether good or bad, successful or not, is internally generated by the artist no matter the extent to which it may reference the world around us. I have seen some spectacularly well crafted, insightful and emotionally moving visual works, produced by some truly gifted artists, that were created to illuminate written works... but because they exist to support an external idea, thought, command or campaign, reside in the world of illustration. I should add that this is not a judgment of value. I have seen abundant examples of horrific art, breathtaking failures by any measure, that nevertheless stand as fine art for having been created as independent works, intended to stand (or fall) entirely alone.









David FeBLAND: Today, it is that knowledge that has driven me to develop gallery relationships around the world as a sort of hedge against regional cultural indifference to my work. To understand, for example, why paintings representing American subjects are less likely to sell in the UK than, say, Germany by way of planning a successful international strategy, one has to understand something of the historical relationship between the cultures. It is my view that the UK has a far more uneasy relationship with contemporary America than do the Germans. With some level of bemusement, the British continue to see us as the renegade colony now imposing our culture upon them whereas the Germans still see us as having saved them from a national horror. They visit America in great numbers with genuine affection and a more benign attitude, coming from today's secure and stable national economy that was in no small way made possible by our intervention. They can afford to experience an expansionist American culture without a sense of existential threat. Whereas the paintings I send to the UK tend to reference their own culture, I sell paintings that make a great range of American references through a number of German galleries with some level of ease. While there are many reasons for this, I cant help thinking that historical relationships are an important factor.





*BUREAU: Styles of Art, popularity, trends, values, schools of thought come and go. How do you maintain your particular vision while maintaining relevance?*

David FeBLAND: I think it is a mistake to spend too much time or effort pondering ones relevance within the artistic world. Consideration of these matters soon leads us to reach for inclusion in a School or ally with a movement, moving us closer to derivation or appropriation and further from our own artistic truth. My own work eschews most references to popular culture and art world homages, and I believe that its relevance within the artworld may suffer for it. (Many of my collectors have a literary background, not coincidental, I think). My work isn't about itself, and that puts me at the margins of many contemporary conversations about art. But the alternative is worse: a craven attempt to adapt my work to fit more neatly into art world conversation is as intellectually dishonest as readjusting to meet a sales marketplace. Heat-seeking missiles are more the purview of warfare than art fairs. If my work does have significance, then this will be demonstrated over the life of my career (or beyond it) where each painting represents a building block in service to a greater purpose, a vastly larger idea that becomes apparent in the fullness of time. The good news is that we are in a more pluralistic art world than ever before. [cont-]





David FeBLAND: In a recent conversation with a well-placed Chicago art dealer, I heard him describe the evolution of the “scene” in that city over the last 25 years from one driven by abstraction into conceptualism, back into abstraction, then into figuration and now into a world where ‘anything goes’. I try to ignore the direction of trends, do what feels most artistically honest to me, and then shamelessly promote this work when and wherever I can.

*BUREAU: Tell us about the most recent work and how it relates to storytelling.*

David FeBLAND: My work explores a psychological space that modulates between aspiration & reality. It’s an essentially uncomfortable place – one where you have the sense of not quite being where or what you think you are. This is a contemporary state of mind that I represent in depictions of the transitional edge of combustible & colliding urban neighborhoods, its corporeal equivalent. After observing just such city spaces for many years, I realize that the concept of an Edge - or more precisely, the turmoil where urban neighborhoods collide - is as much a state of mind as a physical reality, and therefore eminently transportable. This isn’t a view I have come to quickly. For years, I embraced the boast that “it can only happen here”, as New Yorkers are fond of saying, and truly, it has always been convenient for me to mine for inspiration from the perch of a densely populated Island, my home in Manhattan, where everything happens at a stone’s throw. Living in New York, I appropriated the common phrase, “living on the edge”, making it a Cardinal Rule of Survival at home but applying a second, more literal, meaning. Surviving here meant staying as close to the water as possible, far from Midtown, thus avoiding the City’s crushing & overheated core.





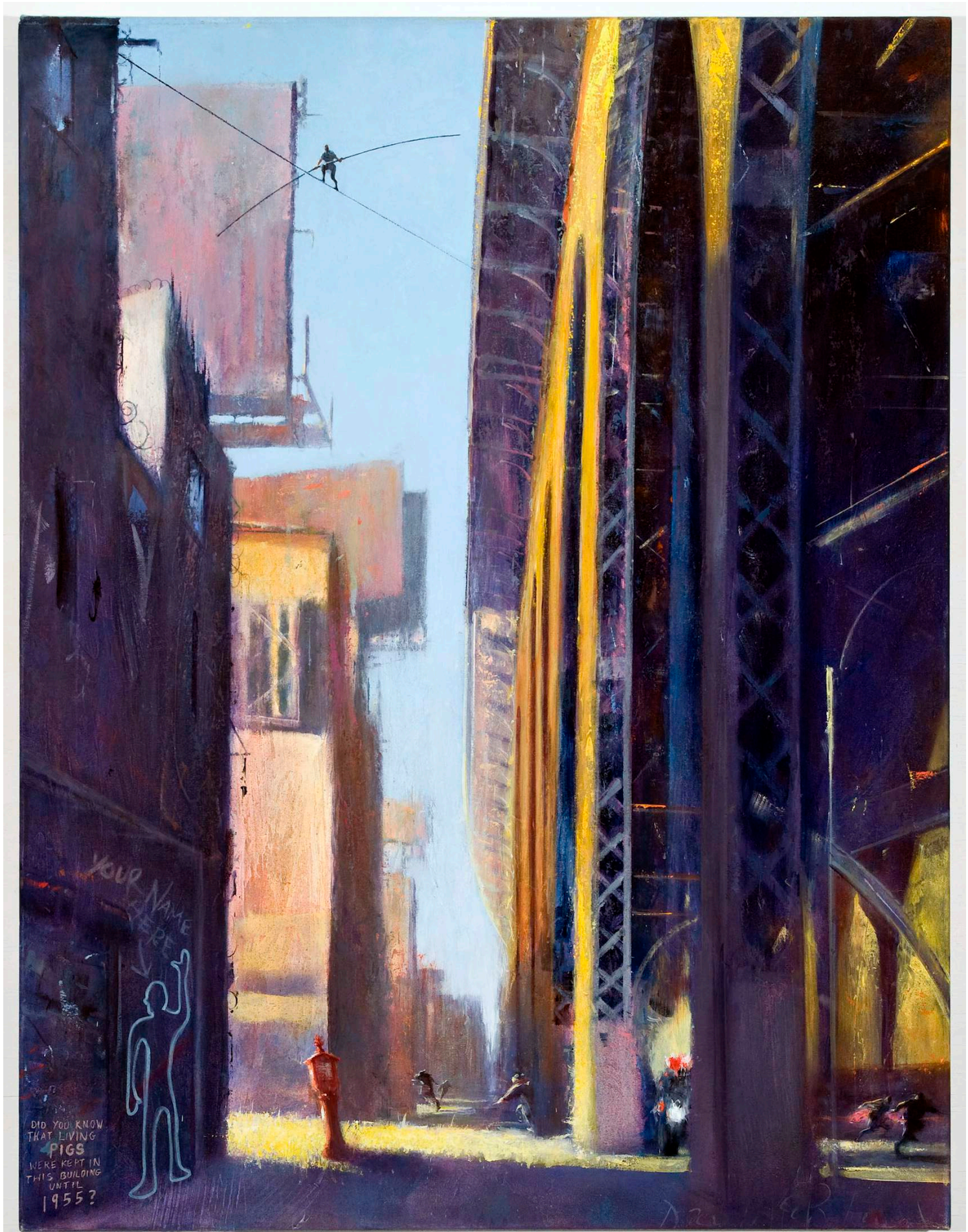
David FeBLAND: So when I recently had to move my studio into that core, under the threat of eviction from my previous space, my creative response was to figuratively cross the water, venturing away from the Island entirely, to observe new places and subjects. I learned that interpreting the life I lived and observed in New York was certainly expedient but by no means inclusive. My current work is a reconsideration of our relationship to our physical environment. When I was given the opportunity to exhibit in LA, I knew I would have a chance to witness patterns of human behavior in a very different kind of city. My research for this show took me to the West Coast, and I quickly immersed myself in forms of travel and daily give and take foreign to my life in New York. (I didn't even own a car there for 35 years!). I wanted to create pictorial reference points that would be familiar to Los Angeles audiences either directly or through inference, but I invented narrative tableaux driven by my belief that most human interaction is universal. I was lucky to be in LA during an extended period of clear weather, characterized by transparent, smog-free skies and brilliant, saturated color surfaces. I immediately determined to incorporate high-key tonality into my paintings. This became something of a subversive inducement to viewers; I would seduce them into a closer perusal of the works and allow the less comfortable elements of the stories to reveal themselves more subtly over the course of the viewing. This is a strategy I have no intention of abandoning any time soon.





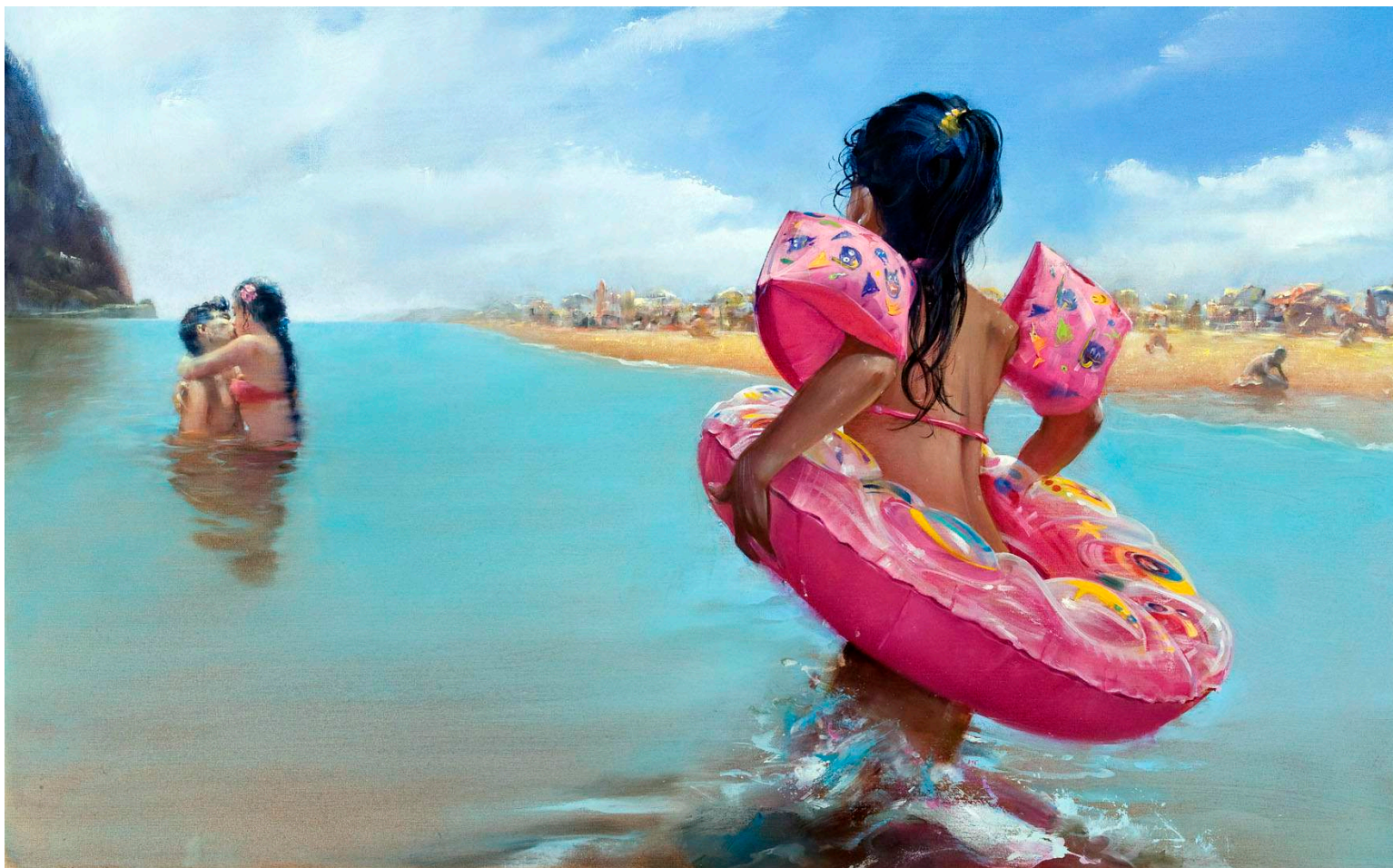
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David FeBLAND Website is Extensive and very Interesting : [DAVID FeBLAND SITE LINK](#)  
David FeBLAND Fine Art Paintings continue on the following pages at The New Fiction Project





## THE NEW FICTION PROJECT: Part One





## They Call It The City of Angels Chapter 18 : Hole

Fred hadn't been home in days. He had no reason to be. Running the store on his own now was his only purpose. When he did go home, it was just a reminder of what once was, a daughter and a wife that he had survived. Fred had set up an old army cot in the back of the store. It was easier to just stay there, especially since he had begun to smoke and drink. He hadn't been golfing for over a month and his pals began to get concerned. He was a great golfer, the best in his circle of friends. They all owned shops along the central portion of Los Angeles. Serving the community by supplying liquor, furniture, toys, glass, sporting goods, all kinds of small businesses. Fred's ex-partners in-laws had been pressuring him to buy them out. But he had no way of keeping the store together and buying them out at the same time. He would either have to sell his house or sell the store to do so. Fred and his wife had never been particularly close to his ex-partners family. Through the years and especially since her death, his relations with them had gotten worse. He had no idea how desperate they had become for money. They had a bunch of grown children who knew that if Fred would buy them out, that they could put down payments on their own homes. One of the young men was especially distraught about his own dilemma, he had recently gotten engaged and was expecting a child in the next few months. Every one in their house seemed to blame Fred for their problems.





By the time the fire department showed up, all the power lines had been downed and half the block, including the street lights, had gone dark. Fred explained what had happened in all its detail, except for the last part. There was a police report. Several detectives were assigned to the case. Because it was a part of the famous, "Palm Tree Burnings", he also had, not only the Feds, but a local reporter for The Weekly, which had been following the case since its original inception. She had solved a series of cases through the past ten years and got the sense that something was different about this particular burning. Fred didn't get to sleep that entire next day and the store had to remain closed for the next few days. Of course, all the news teams came out and it became another item for conversation. When the insurance investigators came out, they asked to view the video. Fred had installed three video cameras, one inside, at the register, one out front and one out back. The cameras took stills every ten seconds or so. Fred could only hope that the power lines had been severed before he had opened the gate and let the boy run to safety. When he finally got back inside the store, he looked up, there on the wall, was a picture, it was a snap shot which had been enlarged and framed, a smiling image of both Fred and Sam, with cigars in their mouths, wearing sports shirts out on the golf course.





## They Call It The City of Angels Chapter 19 : Roots

Gimme some skin, his Dad's friends would say as they walked in the door. Jordan would put out his palm flat and the dudes would slide their hands across his as they walked past and into the living room to hang with Pops. Jordan had lost touch with all of that in the past decade and was now making up for it. He had ' Gone Native '. That is what the fella' s in the park called it. Shook off all that urban vibe and was searching deep for his roots. He'd been dipping into his new found savings in the past few weeks. Every time he opened the black case where the money was hidden, he would unwrap the brown paper that it was encased in and, like his dad often did, he would lick his thumb and count out a few bills, than he wrapped the money back up, in that funny paper design and stashed it away where it couldn't be found by Wanda.





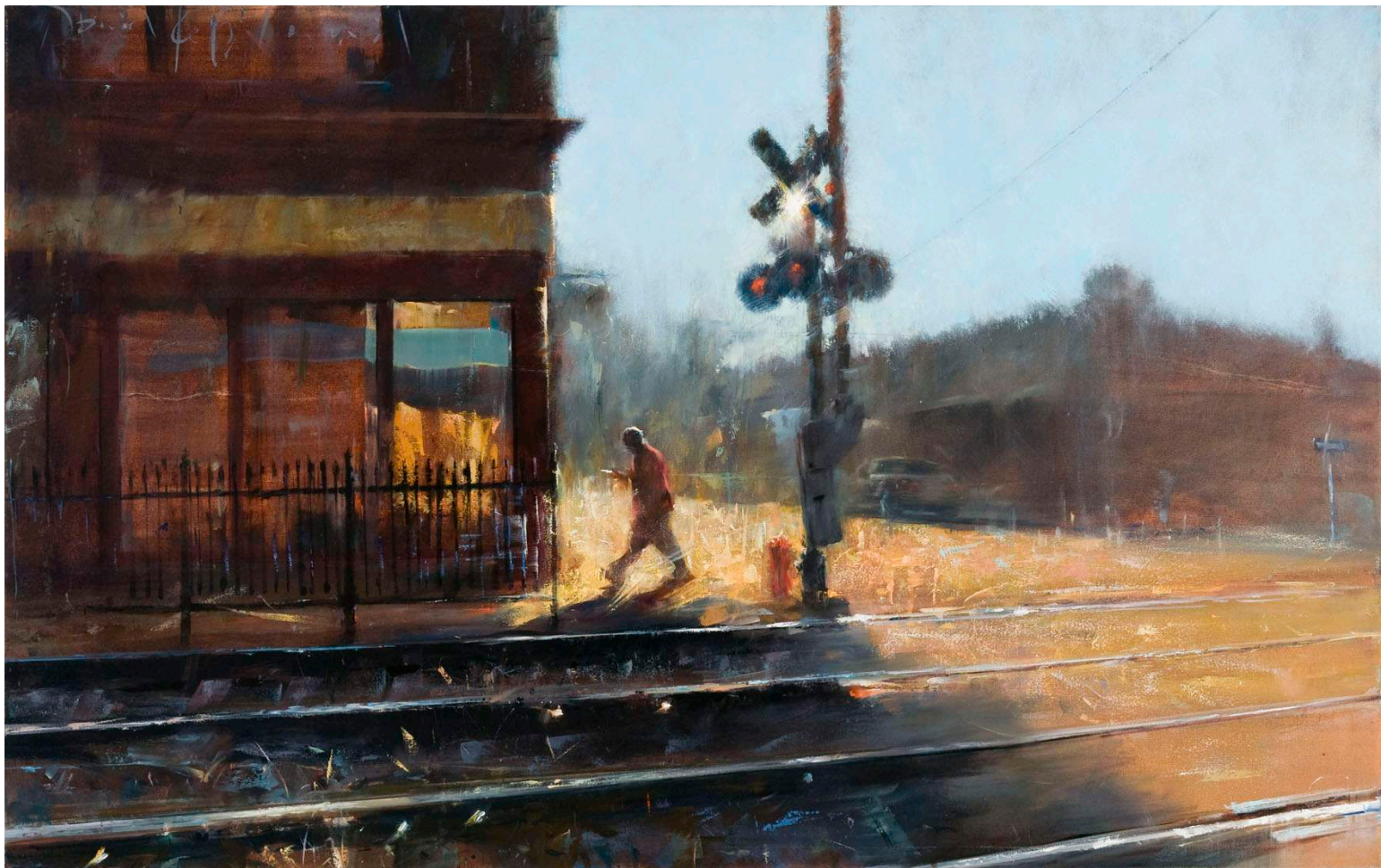
Jordan had no idea that the bundle of cash was actually wrapped in a very precious substance that had not been on the market for decades. It was a sheet of the purest L.S.D. that had ever been produced, the very best. The money had originally sat in a post office box before the beachcomber picked it up and had been carrying it for the past few years. So, although Jordan didn't exactly know why he was having strange new ideas about life, he was actually, 'Tripping - the - light - fantastic' as it was commonly known in the old days. Every time he even touched the paper it absorbed into his skin. He had never partaken in anything like that voluntarily before, so he had no reference point for what was going on. It wasn't like he was ingesting it fully, but this stuff was so strong that he was definitely 'Out There'. So much so that, when he went to the pawn shop to pick up his bass guitar, he saw a ring, bought it for Wanda and totally forgot about the instrument. Another time, he had gone down to the park to pick up that incense she liked and ended up buying a drum that had been made in Mali and stretched with a real goat skin by an ancient shaman, or so he was told. He bought a bunch of fabric and some rugs, original bamboo tiki lamps and started digging up a fire pit in the back yard. Wanda had seen this kind of thing before, but she was still concerned for him.





Jordan was the youngest driver and so he was most likely the least jaded. Some of his fellow drivers had been doing it for thirty years, they had been either burnt out or had become excellent. He knew both types. He wanted the certification after sticking it out for a year, so he played along with the process. He was told that the goat skin would eventually speak to him. Drums were the original way that people would communicate with, back in the day. "Get in touch with yourself." , the dude had told him, play that skin." Skin. Skin. Gimme some skin. Give-Me-Some-Skin. He kept thinking about his Mom and Pop and all that sh\*t they had gone through. All that history. He had some deep history, part Indian and part French, they had all kinda names for it, be it didn't matter to him anymore. He started to get in touch with his roots, not just H-I-S roots but the real roots, the roots of primal energy. Sound, light, color, taste, the sky, the wind, the earth, fire, back to the elements in a big m\* %\$+\*@&!ing-way. His lovemaking had become absolute. Wanda had always appreciated his attentiveness, his sensitivity and all of that.





He had once shared a story with her, the first time they had ever stayed the night with one another. Jordan had been just a boy, his mother was in the kitchen making breakfast, she looked down at him & said matter of fact, " Jordan, when you become a man, don't you ever pass out on the woman you love." He looked up at her and although he had no idea what she actually meant, he looked her straight in the eyes and said, "I won't." It was one of the few pieces of advice he had ever received from the woman. Now that he was rediscovering this whole new way of being, he would look at Wanda like she was the first woman who had ever walked the earth. The women at work noticed how she began to carry herself. "What's up with you?", they'd ask, "Oh Nothing", she lied. Jordan was 'up with her', sometimes late into the night. Now that he wasn't working, he would make breakfast, a salad for her lunch and when she got home, he already had dinner on the stove. Not always. There were some nights where he was off on some adventure. He'd gone to some sweat lodge with a bunch of guys or went walking clear across the city. He'd gotten in the habit of using a walking stick and wore a pair of old sandals. One day, he drifted downtown, walked into a bank, got change for a hundred dollar bill, "Gimme-a-bunch-a-ones." The teller gave him the change and walked the hundred dollar bill over to her manager. She explained that she was having second thoughts about the recent exchange. He took down the serial number and made a call. The bill had been put on a circulation list twelve years ago. Who knows what had possessed him to do such a thing? Maybe the goat skin had spoke to him.





By now, Jordan was down on Main street handing out dollar bills to every person on the street. People were downtrodden all up and down that area: homeless, run-a-ways, hungry, strung out, drop outs, stragglers, drug addicts, the forgotten. The man at the bank called the authorities and they down loaded a picture of Jordan walking out of the bank. It wasn't a very detailed rendition. You couldn't see his face. With his ancient outfit and walking stick, he looked like Moses parting the Red Sea, one of the disciples or even Jesus himself. The image was reprinted & sent out. It became another item for the strange and regular events that seemed to happen only in Los Angeles. A week later, the photograph was reprinted in The National Inquirer, right between an article on a Recent UFO Sighting and a Baby that Saved a Dogs Life in the family swimming pool. The headline read in bold letters, "Jesus Passes Counterfeit Bills to Feed Homeless". They had never actually found 'Jesus' and Jordan never even knew what had happened. He got home late that night. The Moon was full. A few clouds had splayed across the sky. He had been reading the clouds and the landscape like a student might read a textbook, it all had a new meaning. One of the clouds was shaped like a giant turtle, he smiled. After all, he had recently found himself. Jordan had finally found his roots.





## They Call It The City of Angels" Chapter 20 : Heart

Cliff was up all night. He'd been working on the largest painting he had ever created. The entire wall had been covered with large sections that he would attach with stickpins. It was Sunday morning and Dora had several appointments at the office. Many of her clients were nine to fivers who were unable to visit during the week, so she had begun to take hours during the weekend. Plenty of days, Cliff would accompany Dora, he would draw, listen to music on his headphones, he had a little area in the back with toys, a table, a stereo system with a lot of Stan's old records: live recordings of the L.A. Philharmonic, The Who, Oldies but Goodies, Early Jazz, all kinds of odd recordings from The Poetry of Robert Frost to Stan Friebergs satirical stuff. There was even a recording of Richard Pryor Live at the Forum. Once, while Dora made pancakes and Stan grabbed a cup of coffee, Cliff looked up and said, "The God Damn M\*\$%#@^&F+!@# just sat there staring at the B\*&^%!, Now what you gonna do with a White C\*^&%\$#@!%\* like that, F\*&^!" It took them by surprise to say the least. They eventually had to remove that particular album. Cliff was funny like that.





Stan ran down the hallway which was normally an entry way for star quarterbacks and entered the field. He asked the guard if he had seen a young man with long hair, wearing a pair of blue jeans, white converse tennis shoes & a black turtleneck sweater. The guard, who was giant, looked like the classic model of what people all over the earth had thought of when they pictured what a Native American Chief might look like: dark skin, deep, thoughtful eyes, a nose like an eagle, long hair, in this case, in a pony tail, strong hands, with just a touch of sorrow on his forehead's brow. The man laughed at Stan and pointed to the center of the teepees. Stan slowly walked towards the middle, the drumming became faster and louder as he approached the circle. He could smell burning sage, meat and the sounds of instruments here and there: flutes, rattles, sticks. A group of women were clapping and chanting. Furs, dream-catchers and antlers hung along strings that surrounded each teepee. He got closer and there in the middle of the circle, dancing among the best fancy dancers in the entire country, was his son Cliff. No one seemed to mind. The young man was dancing next to a very famous dancer who had been in movies and on television. The men were wearing giant eagle, hawk and turkey feathers. Their costumes were extremely colorful. They danced in elliptical semi circles. Cliff was holding his own and then the drumming ceased. The dancers began to walk back to their respected tribes teepee's, Cliff looked around and walked over to Stan.





Stan didn't know what to do, he reached over, grabbed the young boy and lifted him high. A Woman walked by and handed Cliff a piece of fry bread on a paper plate. "This is for your son, he's got a lot of heart." With her accent, Stan had thought she said, He's got a lot of Art. "Yes, he does, thank you." Stan and Cliff got back into the car and drove down the coast. There had been a Lighthouse down at the edge of the harbor. It sat high on a cliff at the southern most point of the city. He and Dora had spent a lot of time there and had thought that maybe they had conceived Cliff the weekend they had been invited to stay with Stan's brother, who had been working there. There was a beautiful guest house attached to the main house and then the actual lighthouse tower with a powerful beacon light that once had guided ships through storms along the rocky coast. They had named him CLIFF because of this particular place. A beautiful and picturesque location that somehow defined their welcoming life together as a family. They were jumping into the ocean of life and had promised to weather the storm together. Stan pointed to the lighthouse and said to Cliff, "We made you here." Cliff looked back at him, cocked his head, looked back at the giant white house and smiled. They walked down toward the cliff and Stan pointed at the rocky mountainous edge, this is your cliff. This is where we came up with your name. The boy smiled again and said nothing, but he knew exactly what Stan was saying. They had lunch at a local cafe, it was the longest running Cafe in the Harbor. Truckers, cops, locals & tourists frequented this spot.





When they got ready to sit down. Louis, who had been a busboy there since way back when, cleared their table and smiled at Cliff, He remembered when his own son had been that age, before all the troubles had started and he lost Junior to the system. The two men looked at one another , neither men had any idea how their lives had originally intersected. By the time Stan and Cliff had made it back home, the boy was sound asleep. Stan lifted him out of the car and carried him to his room. He put the boy on the bed, turned around and noticed the giant work of art on the wall. It was an entire mural of Los Angeles. Stan's heart began to beat when he saw that the boy had painted everything they had just experienced. The entire day had been crudely documented, the freeway drive along the beach, the lighthouse to the South and in the middle: a circle of teepees. Stan didn't know what to think. When he looked closer, parts of the city were on fire, a multitude of buildings were topped with orange and red tipped flames and whirls of black and grey wafted high above like smoke signals. He looked closely at the image in the middle of the teepees. There, in the center was a small drawing, a self portrait of Cliff. He appeared to be dancing right in the middle of a giant heart. Stan looked over at his son, sleeping in the corner and said to himself out loud, " He sure does."





## They Call It The City of Angels Chapter 21 : Job

Junior had been invited into a world that he had only heard about through, sometimes, unreliable sources. Fifteen years locked into the system and who knew what to believe anymore. He had no idea what to expect by entering into it. On day one, he was briefed on what was happening in his father and sister's house, of course, he had already figured most of that out for himself, that's how he ended up making the decision to make a left instead of going straight. Who could blame him ? If you saw a disaster up ahead in your path, would you keep going, stop or make a quick swerve ? Junior flipped a U turn, straight out, burned rubber, foot to the peddle, peeled out quick. He still had to keep things cool at the family house, so that know one became suspicious. He was directed to keep a somewhat regular schedule and stay close to his new brother-in-law, whom had recently made a big mistake. If Chuck had only waited for his wiretap request to come through from the boys at the division and the judges downtown and throughout the circuit, everything would have fallen into place, but because he jumped the gun, installed his own version of a wiretap, Junior got hip to what was happening and Chuck ended up squashing his own better interests and the interests of the State. He wasn't the first person to 'push the river' as it was commonly called and probably wouldn't be the last, but one thing was sure, he would never make it to Detective, if this was how he planned to get there. One might do this sort of thing 'after' you made detective, but to overstep on your way in was disastrous. Chuck learned the hard way.





Now Junior really lost it. He had been directed to simply empty the contents, suggest a reversal decision and hand the envelope to party number two. Instead, he began to beat the man about the face, Junior was disgusted by the photographs, he began to pound the man with every ounce of anger that had built up over the years. Junior realized that he had swayed from the assignment, he had lost control and had to get out of there quickly. He convinced the girl to open the door, she saw the man on the bed, his face was swollen, bloody, he was passed out. Junior, washed his hands, noticed the little girl and whispered to her, "Don't you dare cry for him." He had to put on the janitor gloves to hide the broken skin on his knuckles. "If anyone asks, your my niece, I'm taking you to the bus station to send you home, understand ?" She nodded yes. He had no idea where her ticket had been bought for, nor did he know for sure where she was headed. He had to put his trust in the assignment now and found the resolve to do so. When she got on the bus, his work was completed. Junior did as he was directed and returned to work, he completed his duties as a janitor and clocked out at the end of the day.



