

Chucking it all for art's sake

ENOUGH of this sitting in front of a blank computer screen, this damned little white square blinking at me. They call it, ironically, the cursor. Many's the time I've cursed the greedy little thing. I'm chucking it all.

I'm going to become a performance artist. I think I have enormous potential as an artist. It's just been stepped on all my life by people who don't see it, you know? At the point when it should have been nurtured, in elementary school art classes, my teachers just didn't open their eyes to my talent and encourage it.

The first time I worked in oil, around the third grade, was during my Ship Period. I drew ships, warships, thorny with big guns. My first oil — my last oil, too — was such a ship, possibly inspired by a visit to the Battleship Texas or by a war movie. I painted the ship first. I then started at the bottom of the canvas to paint the sea. I discovered I did not have enough blue paint to float the ship.

There was Rene Magritte's answer — simply float the ship in midair like one of his bowler hats. But I rejected derivationism. I knew it was the time to change my period and my school, from representational to expressionist. *I simply extended the keel of the ship to meet the water.*

Quantum leaps such as that should have brought me recognition at the cutting edge of post-expressionism. Instead, all I got from my teachers was "Jeff, what is that?"

Neither could Jackson Pollock, I understand, draw in the sense of rendering a bowl of fruit to look like a bowl of fruit. It drove him to his pioneering non-representational work and the price of his canvases into multiples of millions of dollars.

Pollock's huge canvases, however, bespeak of thousands of decisions and many hours of work, both of which I find tedious. So I formed my own school, called labelism.

I intended to forge replicas of the labels that The Museum of Fine Arts places beside or below pieces of art. I would enter the museum in the guise of a normal museum member. I would strip the tape off the back of one of the forged labels and, depending upon which way the guard was looking, stick it to the wall. Subsequent visitors to that gallery



**Jeff
Millar**

would find me credited with the artist of:

FIRE EXTINGUISHER
Steel and chrome, red paint
Jeff Millar (194? -)
Acquired 1988

Gift of the Monolith Industries Foundation
or: **DRINKING WATER FOUNTAIN**
or: **MEN'S ROOM DOOR**

I didn't have the guts to go through with it. Now understand that this prank now would have full legitimacy were I simply to call it performance art. Performance art is a match to my artistic ability. Performance art I know I can do, because I've read the reviews given the performance artists who call themselves Aaart Guys.

The Aaart Guys are this week in the middle of a row in the art colony because a work of art they had proposed for the Houston International Festival was rejected by the Parks and Recreation Department.

The Aaart Guys want to take three condemned shotgun houses from the Fourth Ward, turn them upside down and put them on a ridge beside Buffalo Bayou. This was to evoke the conundrum of homelessness: people without houses, houses without people.

The Aaart Guys' proposal was given the imprimatur of a panel of art experts. But Parks & Rec apparently was worried that the houses would fall apart or ignite during a fireworks display.

Well. This means that there's a site on Buffalo Bayou open for a work of art during the Houston Festival. Darn right I'm going to try to come up with something. And darn right I want input. What would you like to see turned upside down and put along a ridge on Buffalo Bayou? Write your Unca Jeff at P.O. Box 4260, Houston 77210.