



OF CRICKETS—CROWS—AND RETROSPECTS

And a dissembling Breeze



Museum of the Worcester Whirlwind

Sometimes Worcester falls over itself to claim something. We invented the valentine.* Elizabeth Bishop lived here.* If you care about 19th century manufacturing, 20th century poets, or Worcester history—you care about the veracity of these claims. Do you care about early competitive cycling or groundbreaking African-American athletes? If so you might have heard of Marshall Walter “Major” Taylor. Worcester has a street, a race, and a statue commemorating him. We claim him as ours.

I would argue rightly so. Taylor moved here as a teenager and lived here for thirty-five years. He called Worcester home as he traveled the globe, winning championships and setting world records. I was hoping that the new Major Taylor museum would illuminate something about this man’s relationship to the city. Bishop disavowed us, but what of Taylor?

The Major Taylor Museum is part of the renovated “old courthouse.” The entrance is tucked back from the lower end of Main Street and you could mistake it for just another entrance to the lofts if you weren’t looking for it. There are a few artifacts like a bike and a copy of Taylor’s autobiography. But the majority of the museum is posterboards. They display basic biographical facts about Taylor’s life along with photographs from his races and newspaper headlines from the time.

The best museums commemorating individuals give you an idea of who a person is in the context of their time and place. I think Taylor deserves to be remembered by Worcester. But I don’t think going to this museum would have convinced me of that if I didn’t already care. (Jen Burt)

* Esther Howland was a Worcester businesswoman who produced uniquely designed Valentine’s Day cards. She is misrepresented as the first producer of commercial valentines or even the inventor of the valentine itself.

* Elizabeth Bishop was born in Worcester, lived here briefly as a child, and is buried here. When she had a choice, she lived anywhere else.

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BOOKS, YIDDISH+ENGLISH

Not In The Same Breath by Zackary Sholem Berger. 1/3 Yiddish, 1/3 English, 2/3 Pretty Pictures. bit.ly/NITSBAmazon

IT’S RIGHT HERE

1 ¼ C flour, 2 T sugar 2 t baking powder, ½ t salt, 2 T oil, 1 ¼ C water

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TELEVISION, CABLE ACCESS

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Desire growing info and recipes for the Worcester Mammoth Horticultural Bean, aka Carmine Podded, aka King Horticultural, aka Mugwump. Please contact worcesterbeanseed@gmail.com with any information

Wunderkammer of the Month:

Animal Year

Jacob Berendes’s “Animal Year” was a project from 2004–2005, when he made a stuffed animal every day for a year. The results were archived online each day, but the full collection was first exhibited publicly in 2019 at Sutton Street Gallery in Providence, RI. I interviewed Jacob about making and showing collections. —Ali Reid

What prompted the one-a-day schedule?

I wanted some kind of artistic rigor in my life. I didn’t go to art school or college but in talking with people I knew who did, it seemed the big thing they got out of it was learning to work through periods of low inspiration, or figuring out how to call upon creativity at will. If you’re a person of an artistic temperament you might only sit down to work when you feel inspired, and think that’s just how it works. But if you only take the desk when you’re inspired, then you become dependent on this nebulous mood over which you deny any control. I wanted to develop the ability to call upon inspiration through work, to summon it easily and reliably. Stuffed animals was a great choice for this sort of project because every one is loveable, even the bad ones. If it was a drawing a day then I think I would get discouraged over how many bad ones there were, and that would pose a motivational problem. As it was I was ferried along joyfully.

This project has had a life both on- and offline. When you make something like this—especially a set that’s not for sale, and that’s intended to stay together as a single collection—what’s your preferred way to share it?

Posting online worked great for me at the time (2005). I heard from a lot of people that they checked my website daily for the new ones, and being able to readily share it with a mere click allowed me to get discovered by a pretty vast crowd (leading ultimately to nice reviews in *Reader’s Digest* and *Paris Match*). (continued on next page)

FLOWER CROWN'S
SEASON-ENDER
GARDEN PARTY



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Income Statement
August 2022

Revenue	
Donations from editors	\$112.50
Other donations	\$80.00
Ad sales	\$0.00
Expenses	
500 copies	\$127.50
Test copies	\$5.00
Net Income	\$60.00

Happiness Pony is a free monthly newspaper published in Worcester, Massachusetts. This issue was edited by Ali Reid, Jen Burt, & Mike Benedetti. Masthead by Nicole Melone. editor@happine-pony.com

(continued from previous page) That said, it wasn't until recently when I had all the stuffed animals out at once and up on the wall that the emotional heft of the project hit me. I mean when you look at pics of them one at a time you go "I like this guy, this guy's OK, what is this, this guy's good..." But then viewing them all at once I felt like, damn, each one of these guys represents a day in my life, and some are good, some are interesting, some are even failures, but I love them all! Granted, I'm a bit of a depresso, but I think anyone out there can appreciate how special this feeling is, to look back at an arbitrary period of a life and respond to good and bad days alike with equal love, not just compassion but love. And I think that only really hits when you see them in real life, crowding the viewframe. When I showed this work for the first time I had a few people tell me "I didn't expect to be so moved by this." Also "it's so unfair how difficult this is to photograph." So that's a clear indicator to me that online and IRL are distinct. They're good at different things.

There aren't repeats in the collection, but some materials pop up throughout, and sometimes there's a little run that feels especially related. Did any favorite forms emerge, anything you've kept working with since?

Yes, absolutely. There are a few that I felt were particularly elegant that I started making copies of. One of them, the sphinx, is one I've made hundreds of at this point. There's a lot of room for variety in that one and still a great deal of mystery. I mean the mystery of the sphinx, that's a classic. Also it feels good to hold and hug, and sits serenely on a couch. I have some of these for sale on my website (Fujichia.com) and if they're sold out there by the time this goes to press I'll be making more for the holiday season.

You make multiples, too, which can range from "5000 copies of this issue of a newspaper" to "I'm making 20 of these guys by hand from the same pattern, and then that's it." It's a different scale than a collection that unfolds as one-object-each-day, but in some ways it's a similar discipline. Does one shape the other?

Yeah, definitely. I mean with the Animal Year stuff, I had people on me like "are you selling these? I want this one!!!" and I was like damn I don't feel like I can break up the set. But I saw that people loved them and I didn't want to deny that. So I started making copies of a few of the designs, just casually for friends, and then I narrowed the focus a little and went into full on production mode. And now that's just the way I tend to operate across disciplines, making multiples rather than individual art works. It's like a reproductive strategy—do you make a single ambitious artwork that might go relatively unseen, like a whale, or do you make a bunch of inexpensive multiples and let them loose on the landscape, like five dozen mice? The first choice is sort of more prestigious and could be huge, I mean an art show is limited like a whale (long gestation period, strong parental guidance), and I'm presently getting interviewed relative to an art show. But the second choice really pays off and it's pretty reliable—I used to get letters from people all the time saying "I found your newspaper in [a pizza place/my friend's bathroom/someone's trash] and I love it." It seems like my odds of affecting someone are greater with the cheap multiples strategy. Although to be honest I did see a whale once and it was pretty crazy. So I guess it's good to do both strategies at different times, if possible.

Jacob Berendes is a multi-media artist whose work examines institutional forms from an individual perspective. Former projects include a newspaper (Mothers News), a storefront (HBML), and an artists residency program (CTRI Innovations). Animal Year is the one that's a toy company. Animal Year opens October 6 at Heavy Manners Library in Los Angeles.

Wear a Mesh T-Shirt This Winter

I want to stay warm this winter, without spending a lot on heat. A key part of my strategy is a synthetic fishnet t-shirt from Brynje.

I bought it last winter, and it worked so well I often didn't take it off at bedtime, and was sorely tempted to leave it on when I woke up the next morning.

It's a little surprising that a garment that's mostly holes would be warm, but nothing is going to insulate your body better than a layer of dead air, and as long as you're wearing something on top of the tee to stop drafts, the t-shirt is mostly dead air. It's not clear if it's great at wicking moisture, but it doesn't have to be—that moisture is free to evaporate right off your skin, leaving the next clothing layer to deal with it. Because the shirt doesn't touch your body at very many points, it doesn't seem to get very dirty and smelly. I'm definitely going to try wearing it for 48 hours straight this winter, with frequent smell-checks from friends. Finally, it holds onto almost no moisture, so it dries fast, and is well on its way to being dry the moment you take it out of the washing machine. (Mike Benedetti)