

## Pistachios

A father gave the young son 13 pennies to get him out of his hair while he was busy one Saturday at the dry cleaners. The son didn't hide the pennies under a bushel but went next door to the pharmacy where there were two vending machines - pistachios in one, gum balls in the other. Pistachios were the wiser alternative.

He noticed that if he put in a penny and turned the crank, he got 2 or 3 pistachios, but if he shook the glass globe as he turned the crank, 5 to 7 would come out of the slot below. That meant he could fill his pockets, till bulging, with up to a half pound of pistachios, for 13 cents.

Short enough to be invisible, he then walked to the back of the drug store, slipped into the wooden phone booth, and swung the bi-fold door closed. A light went on, signaling it was occupied. Close to an hour sailed by, while, as if in a womb, he quietly ate the pistachios in peace, lost in the white noise of the fan, until the floor of the booth was littered with shells and his fingers turned bright red from the dye.

What he didn't realize was that his mother had the whole neighborhood out looking for him...

## Alternate Bio

I only have a few regrets. That decision I made in the sixth grade for instance, when Sister Michael Catherine gave up, with tears in her eyes, trying to teach me how to diagram sentences.

I mean, she was one of the only teachers in my Brooklyn, working class grammar school that recognized some of my other abilities, having me draw the Heart with all it's valves, and the map of France on the blackboard in front of the whole class...

But abstract thought escaped me, and rote memorization was unbearable. Although I liked putting words on the branches of the trees I had drawn, I realized the futility, imposed on me, that diagraming a sentence entailed. I decided then and there, that I had enough with all this forced, abstract knowledge and that, to opt out, and become invisible was the way to go; come what may.

No one seemed to notice at first - and as I got better at it, no one seemed to care.

I mean, it could have helped if I was able to put some value on what education was good for. But I could hardly hear, and didn't understand what they were talking about anyway.

Remembering the names of persons, places and things just seemed like a worthless pursuit, divorced from any emotional significance.

The thing about Catholic Schools, in Brooklyn in the 50's and 60's: there was no arts and crafts, no school plays, no trips to museums. Art, with its attending sensuality was a sin, I gathered. Sitting in the back, of a room with 63 kids, didn't help either but it was a good place to hide. I thought my curiosity was better served by whatever lay *outside* the window of the classroom.

So that was the bet that I made, and I'm what turned out. Unfortunately, this decision had evolved into a bad habit. I didn't get into any of the accredited art schools I applied to in 1969 and had to settle for the School of Visual Arts, a then certificate program that admitted anyone. I wasn't able to read and understand most of the New York Times until about 20 years ago (I just turned 72), because I was too busy prioritizing my art while making a living and having a family.

That being said, After 3 years at SVA, I was awarded a scholarship to Skowhegan, a summer school in Maine which in turn awarded me what turned out to be a 2 year scholarship to the NY Studio School. During that time, around 1972, I drove a cab after my father asked me to leave the house ..

Besides residencies that included Skowhegan, Vermont Studio School and Yaddo, I studied painting for a year in Italy on a Fulbright Fellowship ('82-83). In the mid- 70's, I was the sole studio assistant to Salvatore Scarpitta. From 1984 to around 1990, I worked as an in-studio assistant to muralist Richard Haas, building maquettes and executing in-scale painted elevations and sometimes assisting in the designs that were to become his architectural Trompe l'oeil murals., I had a son during this time. In the 90's, I became a union scenic artist (local 829), involved in numerous feature film and theatre productions, and for two years, ran the Scenic Art Department for the NBC soap, "Another World". I continued to paint and sculpt during my time as a union scenic, while having weekly phone conversations with sculptor Louise Bourgeois that lasted over 12 years. Later, I often frequented and participated in her weekly salons.

After my wife narrowly escaped harm in the 9/11 attack on the WTC, I decided to focus exclusively on my art making; come what may.

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