



*Ars longa
Vita brevis*



Ward Swinham

1941-2024

Bamboo

Blackletter

Saskville Day, 2012
14.VII.2012

San Francisco Public Library
Ward Dunham & Linnea Nordquist
www.AtelierGargoyle.com

Basic Strokes

Stastard

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz.

This is being written very quickly
with a Brause 2 mm Nib...
because Miss Linnea is anxious
to get out of the house! She's
got places to go and people to
see... and I, as usual, am too
slow, holding this important
personage back from her ap-
pointments and tasks!

VI.2009

The Spirit of the Gothic Scribe

Who is it that says most? Which can say more
Than this rich praise: **that you alone are you?**
In whose confine immured is the store—

(SHAKESPEARE • SONNET 84)



Below:
Calligraphic
logo for Freude,
a Beauxhau Street
bar, New Orleans.
Opposite middle
left: A rare
example of
Ward's powerful
Newland, on a
printed piece used
as note pad.

And the third, well, not so successful. Yes, everyone talked about her work for a while. When it was my turn, I talked about the two pieces that were superb, but I didn't say anything about the third piece. And Georgia said, "Well, Ward, what should I do with this piece?" meaning the third one. And I remember that part well. I said: "Frame it, frame it, burn it." I don't remember if I pointed or nodded at the pieces, but it was very clear to everybody which one should be burned. No question. I wasn't mincing my words. Some people were absolutely horrified, others laughed. You should check Thomas's memory on this also, he will probably remember the details like time and place. I would also add that the quality of Georgia's work at that time was astonishing, even intimidating, to everyone in the room, even Thomas. Also, a reminder that this was early on—perhaps 35 years ago—and the only teaching I'd done at that point was San Quentin. The people who were around at that time forced all of us to "up our game"—Georgianna, Arne Wolf, Byron Macdonald, Thomas, Georgia, Alan Blackman, Susie Taylor—to mention but a few. That was a time I shall never forget. They're all still around—if not in body, then in spirit.

THOMAS INGMIRE April, 2014 • WARD'S recollection is pretty accurate, and I am not certain that I can add much to it. It was at an evening

class that I was teaching at Fort Mason. However I don't think the work was related to the SSI studies. For some reason I recall that she did that work during the time of the Calligraphy Center. I think the Fort Mason class was before the SSI work. I also believe she showed quite a number of works, and Ward pointed to two or three of the works and said, "Frame them." Georgia's "What about the rest of the works?" brought Ward's response, "Burn them!" I think that was the shocking part. He was referring to a number of pieces, not just one.



THOMAS April, 2015 • I CAN'T SAY that my memory since 2014 has improved. I still stand by what I have written, and, while some of it is different from Ward's recollection, the part that matters, "Burn them," is spot-on.

The other memories I have about that class—the part that everyone seemed to look forward to—took place on our journeys to Pizza Hut afterward, which was, maybe still is, just a block away from the Fort Mason classroom. Aside from the pizza, it was really Ward's story time, where he had the students riveted and horrified by his numerous "chug" stories. I had heard a number of them before, but they were new to the students. I loved hearing the stories again, and the most fun was seeing the reactions of the various students. I think no one ever missed a class and am sure this had mostly to do with "Story Time Ward."

In 1999 I taught a gilding class. Ward was one of the students. If I recall correctly, we met on Saturday mornings. I can't really believe I did this, as it was out of my character, but on many of the Friday nights before the class Ward and I would go out drinking. These were late-night affairs, and later than most people experienced because Ward knew

A pen with an
Italic Nib
is the Stradivarius
of Writing Instruments.

Cole Caesar
 & Unocal Sealf:
 Courtesy of the
 Harrison Collection.
 All other works:
 Andrew Gargyle
 archive.



A celebration FOR
KJAZZ
20 March 1978

the
uncialserif:

b f h i j k l n p r
by: 2009



THE MONK & THE DRUNK

THE MONK AND the drunk" was how Aimee Michaels described our teaching partnership. We had fun sharing our love of blackletter around the States and in the UK. But you had to be careful with Ward. In one workshop I foolishly said to the class that we all had instinctive reactions, and that I would demonstrate by punching Ward in the stomach. "Don't do that," he warned, but I did, and, within a fraction of a second, my view of the class rotated 90 degrees, and I found myself in a heap against the wall on the opposite side of the room.

He was, of course, terrific in a crisis. In the same class we heard a scream coming from the women's toilets. He was in there in seconds, pulling out a shocked student with her hand in the air, holding the top of her finger expertly in place after it had been guillotined by a faulty metal door... and then, off to the emergency room with her. Since I faint at the sight of blood, I was lucky he was there — and so was she.

When that same class came to an end, Ward offered to protect me as I went down under one of the bridges on the East River side of New York City to board a friend's yacht from a ruined pier. However, a strong tide was against us, and the landing would not work. Ward and I went off to dinner and then down to the dock below the Twin Towers. Docking there costs an enormous amount and has to be prebooked, so the plan was that the boat would come in close in the dark without stopping, and Ward would then physically throw me onto it, which he did. We sailed off and moored under the Statue of Liberty for the night. I think you can see that, as a friend, he was absolutely dependable, a man I literally trusted with my life.

I introduced Ward to my family. He had my 14-year-old nephew's eyes on stalks once, when at the Lethbridge (Alberta, Canada) conference, Ward came out to my sister's farm for the evening, and Josh asked him what he was going to do when the conference ended. With a wicked smile he instantly responded, "Find myself some downtown toilet and drink myself into the comfort zone." Next year my nephew sent him a calendar he had found: "Toilets of Alberta."

As a teacher Ward was also an action man. An amazing demonstrator rather than a theorizer, he would do it with infinite patience for every student. He loved to write, but his teaching methods weren't always orthodox. At one of the St. John's conferences, our classrooms were next door to each other. He had become irritated by the "weak and feeble" letters people were

producing. After lunch I saw him coming down the corridor wearing a full medieval jousting helmet with narrow eye slits and breathing holes. He walked into the classroom to gasps and then took it off and slammed it down on the desk, pointed at it, and said, "THAT'S GOTHIC!"

I treasure the postcards he sent, the fact that my *The Golden Thread* became one of his backpack books, the pens he made me, the many memories I have, and the huge smile that lights me up when I think of him. I am lucky to be reminded of him every day by his blue screaming eagle that hangs in my studio, a strident plea for the bird's protection [see the back cover of *Alphabet*, Vol. 46, No. 3, Spring 2021]. Most of all I am grateful for his friendship. One of the joys of being with him can be seen in his calligraphy. He had a decisive pen stroke — one of clear conviction seized in the moment, and relished. My gratitude and warmth extends also to Linnea who loved him, thrilled him, and, as much as anyone could, kept him firmly in hand. Y



