

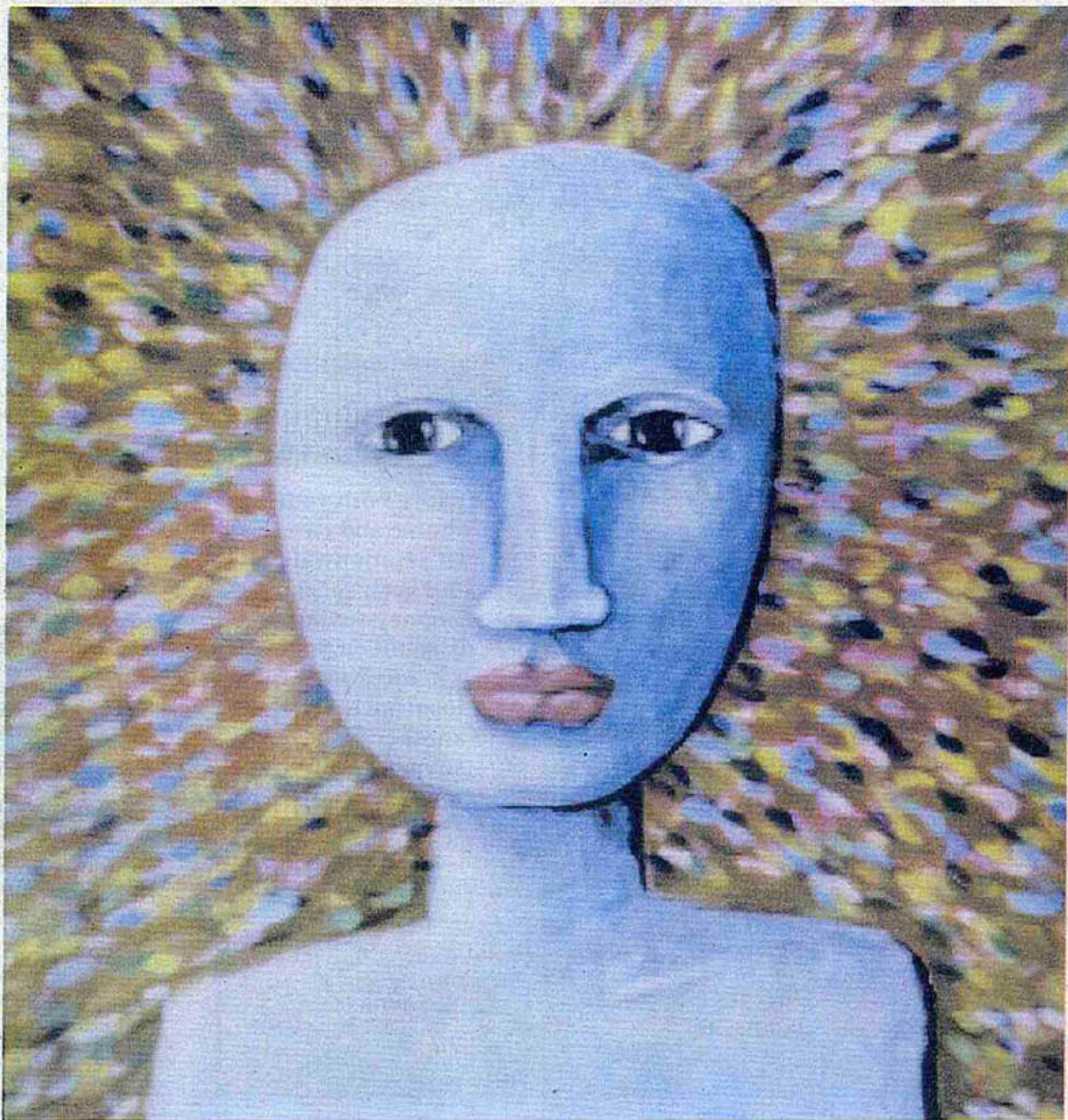
March 2001

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SHORT NORTH GAZETTE

News of the Short North, the Arena District, Victorian and Italian Villages, and the Columbus Art Community

CRAIG CARLISLE "Going Back to New York City" * PAGE 18



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COVER STORY

Going Back to New York City

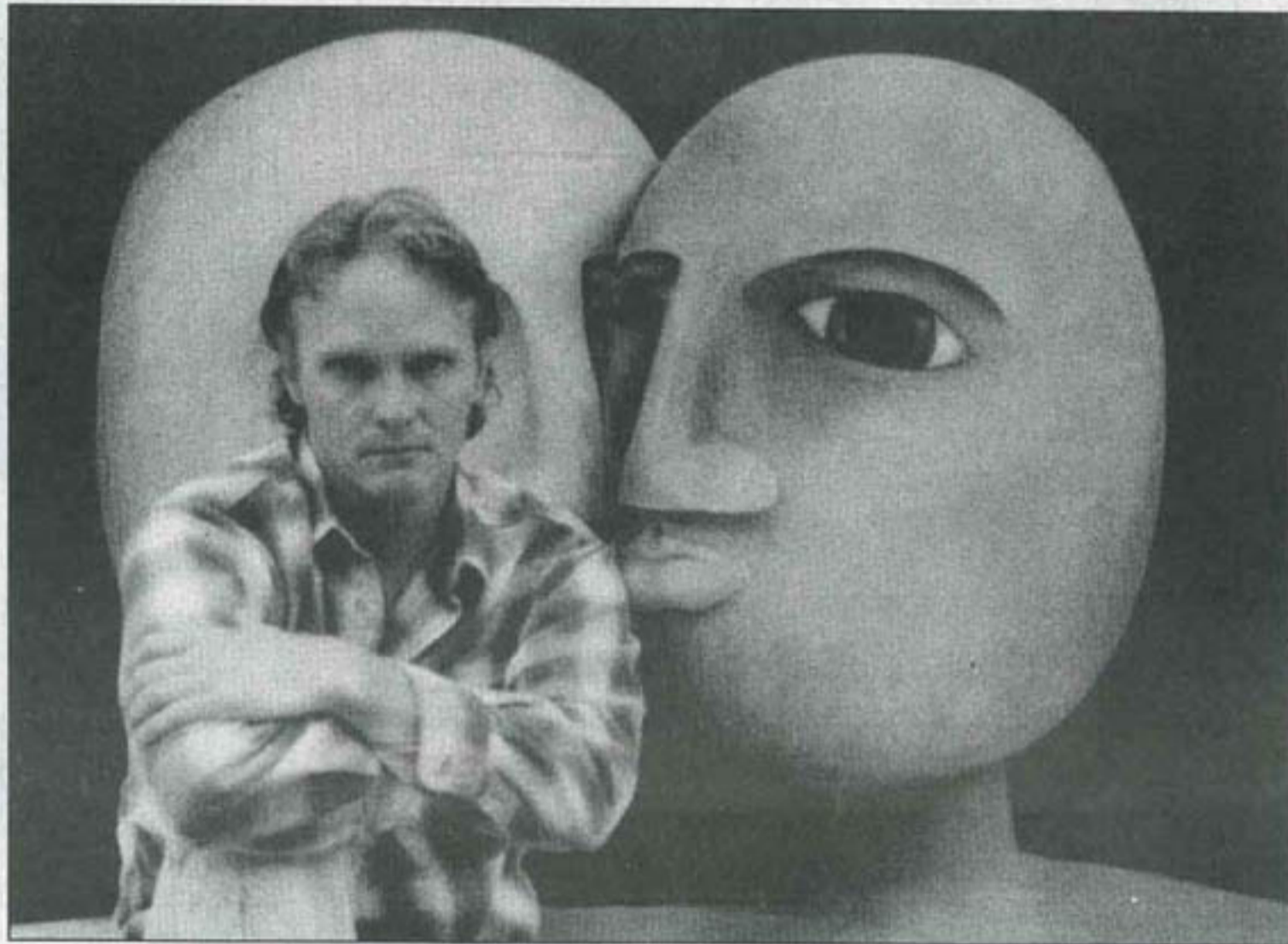
By Craig Carlisle

In the late summer of 1998, I attended an art opening for artist Brian Novatny, a contemporary of mine and former graduate of the Columbus College of Art & Design. Brian was showing his latest paintings at the George Billis Gallery in New York.

On the ninth floor of an old warehouse in Chelsea, George's Gallery has existed for the past five years and is now one of the oldest galleries in the District. I entered the room that evening with some hesitation, not knowing how I would connect with the New York City art scene. The room was packed and sales were brisk.

At that moment, I realized that I was witnessing what I wanted for myself, a gallery opening in New York City. Yet, walking amongst the people there, I felt the tension mounting in me and negative thoughts beginning to surface. I found myself feeling like a simple artist with nothing to offer. Visions of my future life in the city were becoming more and more crippled each moment, and I feared the worst. My fear became my reality, and I exited the gallery without saying good-bye to Brian or George. I left with the thought that my New York City experience was now over.

Two blocks from the gallery was my storage locker where I kept the majority of my possessions. After leaving the gallery, I walked directly over to the building and entered my locker. Facing me were boxes stacked to the ceiling. I tore open the first box in front of me and found photographs of a love I had just lost. The expression on her face was a smile, reminding me of how we were when we first arrived in the city. Honesty and the pursuit of our dreams were the fuel that brought us to the Big Apple. I broke down and cried.

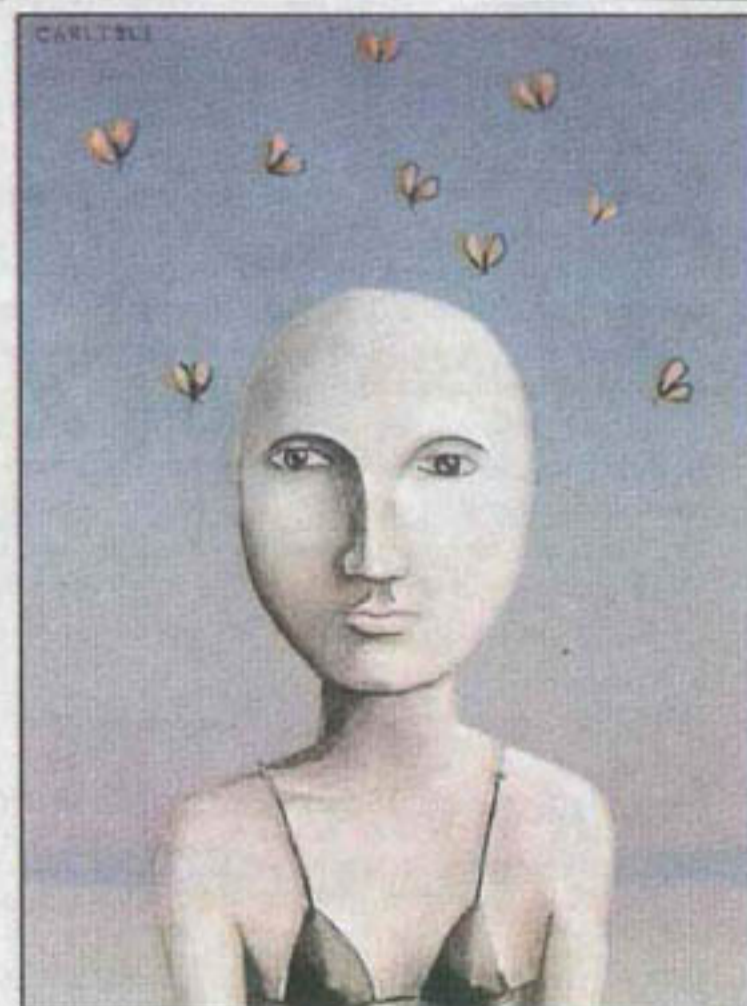
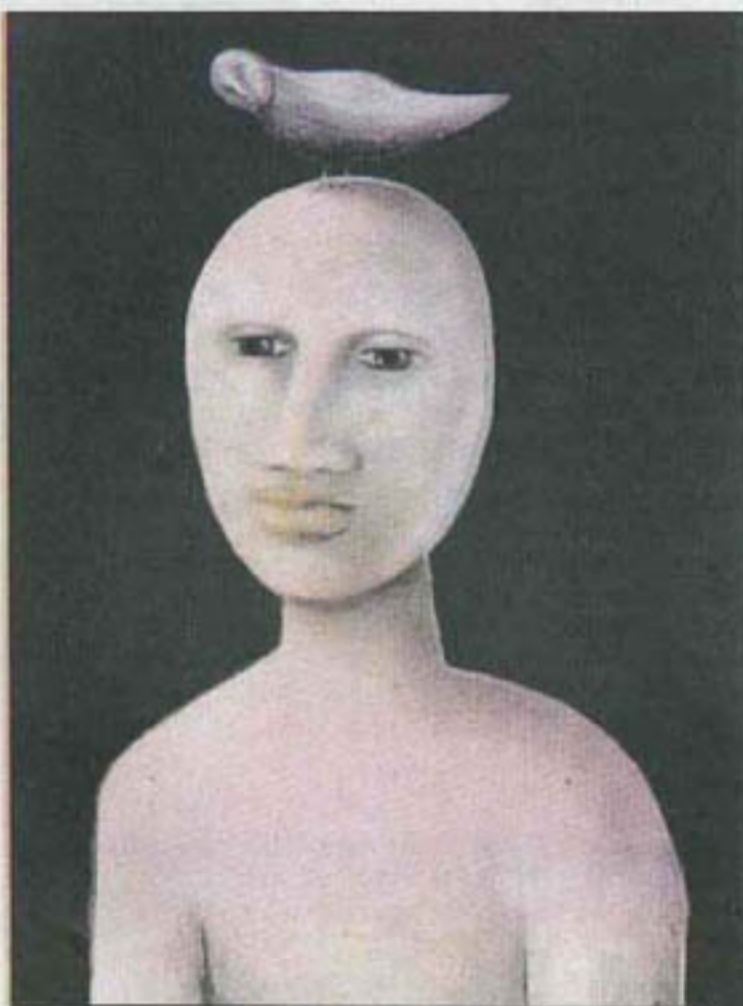


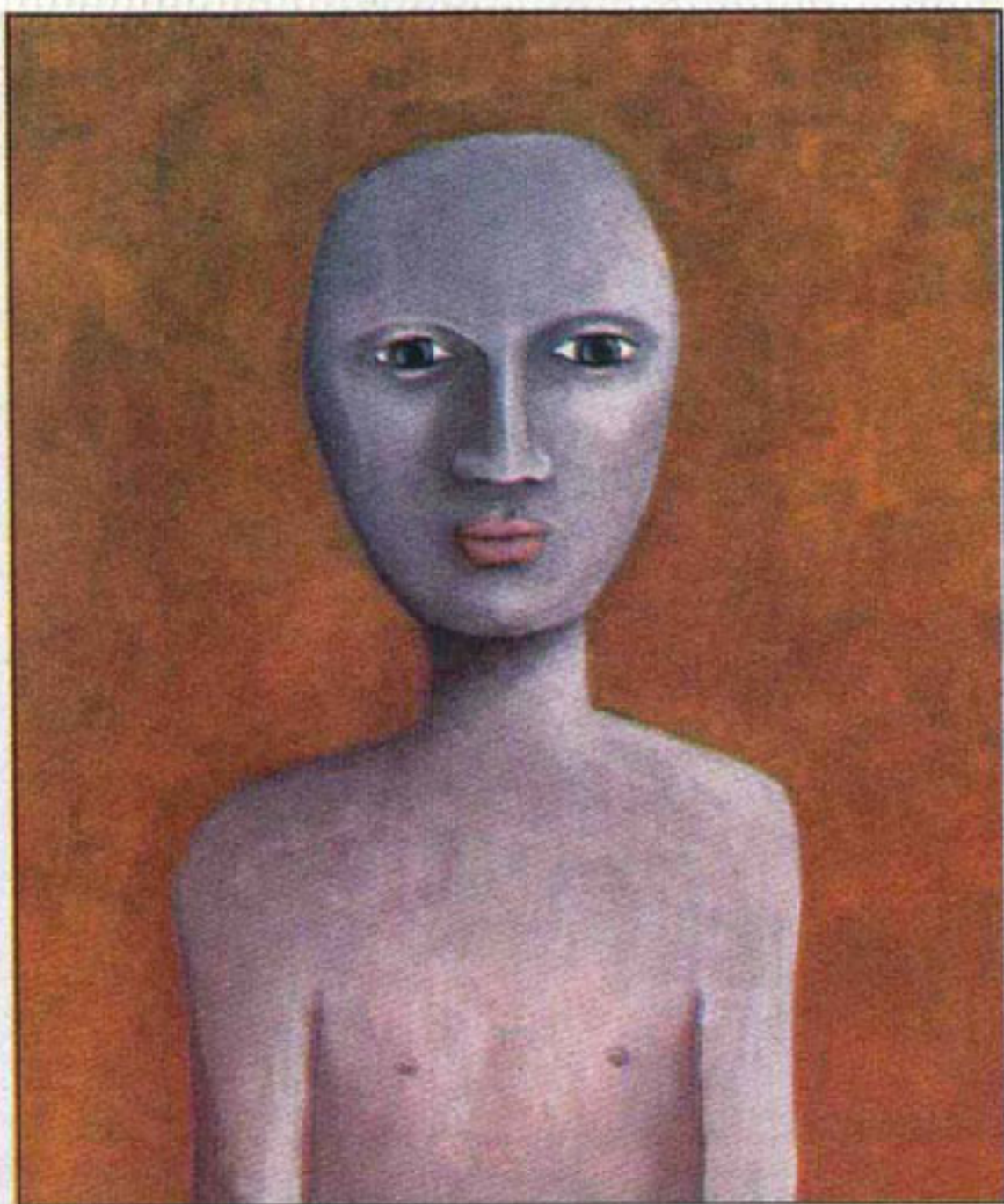
Craig Carlisle seated in front of his painting *Double Head* in his San Francisco studio. **Below Left:** *Little Head with Blue Aura*, 2000. **Below Right:** *Nine Butterflies*, 2000. Craig will show his latest series of Head paintings and re-introduce his Flower series in April at **Antique and Art on Poplar**, 20 E. Lincoln St.

Two weeks later, my bags were packed, I was seated on an airplane and headed to my new home in San Francisco. I had decided to swallow my dreams of becoming a New York artist and use my honesty to take me away from a city that no longer seemed to be able to work for me.

Fortuitously, two years after my departure for the west coast, George Billis made an appearance in San Francisco where we met for lunch and experienced a wonderful reconnection. The following week, George telephoned and asked if I could gather together enough work for a show at his gallery in four months. Without even thinking of the work I had before me, I said yes.

Four months later in January of 2001, I was seated on an airplane headed back to New York City, reflecting on the turn of events and writing in my journal. On January 11 at 7 pm, I found myself standing in the George Billis Gallery in Chelsea surrounded by a roomful of people. There were friends from both New York and Columbus, Ohio, including Brian Novatny. Best of all, several family members were in attendance. My paintings were selling briskly and my spirits peaked.





Craig Carlisle's *California Boy*, 2000, Acrylic on board, 8" x 10".

I believe that when an artist has a reception for his or her work, it is an opportunity to experience love. When I show my work, I feel that I am able to give others a part of my intimate and honest self. At a reception, the people in the room are there because they love art or because they have some connection to the artist. The experience provides them the opportunity to express love in many ways. Whether by their presence or by direct communication, they are there and they exemplify love in action.

For a year-and-a-half, I lived in New York City selling my work as an independent. I worked countless hours struggling to make my own way, constantly feeling the pressure of survival. Today, having George Billis Gallery as my new agent, I am able to remove the long-worn hat of the businessman and to commit myself to my work as an artist. Maybe someday I will wear that hat again, but for now I am more than happy to relinquish the responsibility of selling my work. Having reputable representation such as that offered by George Billis allows for more creative freedom and the ability to just paint and draw.

Painting is a commitment to self-integrity. I do it alone and I do it for myself. I believe that channeling my spiritual self onto a canvas creates an image of truth and that there is a great responsibility to being an artist. Artists are brought forth into this world in order to express themselves creatively and to teach.

The message one communicates may have a significant impact on the viewer, as is evident from the effect of movies and music. Yet, there is even more of an impact from the fine arts.

A painting one creates has the potential to pass from one generation to another and makes a statement not only about the artist but about the caretakers of the art. One may simply toss out an old CD or a video, but one rarely does that to a one-of-a-kind painting. There is a unique voice in the dried paint on a canvas. The marks represent hours of love, labor, and soul-searching.

Whether one chooses to sell his or her artwork or to give it away is of no consequence. *Creating* is the journey. When I paint, I feel a sense of completion. The process of painting helps me discover myself, and I am continually searching for new direction. I find in the depths of my soul an outlet for expression.

To have been given the opportunity to show my work recently in New York City was an honor that I will always treasure. It gave me a chance to make amends to myself for a time when I was less than kind to my soul and assumed the worst. Exiting the building that night after the reception, I had a flashback of two years before. I recalled leaving the exact same building assuming the posture of a failure. The difference now was that I was with my family and experiencing a moment of bliss.



Young America

Treasures from the Smithsonian American Art Museum
Through April 15

Alchemy of Entrancement

Illuminated Photographs by Connie Sullivan
Through April 29

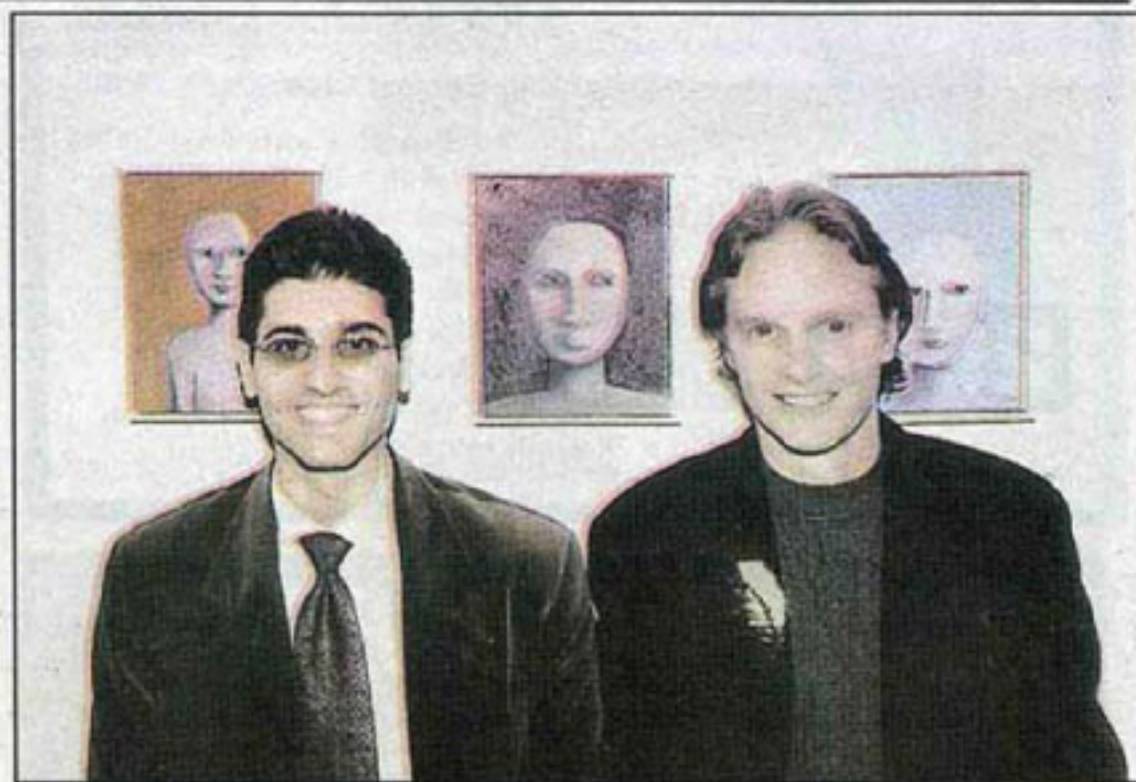
Twenty Ways to get an Apple

Listening to the Music of Mozart
An Installation by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov
Through June 10

Columbus Museum of Art

480 East Broad Street Columbus, Ohio 43215
614.221.6801 or 614.221.4848 (24-hour info.)
www.columbusmuseum.org

Frank Blackwell Mayer *Independence* [Squire Jack Porter] 1858. © Smithsonian American Art Museum.



George Billis, owner of George Billis Gallery, with artist Craig Carlisle. An exhibit of Craig's work was recently held at the gallery in New York City. Craig will be in attendance for a reception Friday, April 6, 2001, at 6 pm at **Antiques and Art on Poplar**, located at 20 E. Lincoln Street in the Short North, where his work will remain on view throughout April. Call (614) 291-5683 for more info. Visit Craig's website at www.craigcarlisle.com or the George Billis Gallery site at www.georgebillis.com