

I grew up in the forties and fifties. It was an era of glossy surfaces and plastic smiles. Women feigned happiness with smooth lipstick and porcelain cheeks; men feigned success with clean shaven faces and starched white shirts. Mickey Mouse was in his heyday and family sit-coms were just arriving on the scene. I remember "Ozzie and Harriet," "Make Room for Daddy," and "I Love Lucy." Gene Autry and Wyatt Earp trotted gallantly into the sunset while Elvis Presley gyrated to the screams of teenage delight.

But beneath this tinsel was another world. There was the all too recent memory of Hiroshima and the Nazi Holocaust; the Great Depression still cast its long shadow on our ranch style homes and tail-finned cars; the McCarthy era was just beginning and the Cold War was gaining momentum. In school we said Christian prayers, pledged allegiance to our country right or wrong and hid from Communist attacks under our desks.

It was a time when many things were left unsaid. Though freedom was on peoples' lips, any deviation from the norm was almost unthinkable. One was expected to be stereotypically male or female, unquestioningly patriotic and religious in a conventional sense.

I spent my childhood trying to be what I was supposed to be but there were too many voices arguing in my head. For example, in the fifties everyone knew that girls played house and boys played ball. But I loved to play ball. In school I was a dainty, well-behaved girl; but as soon as the bell rang I'd round up the kids on my block for a game of stickball. I couldn't wait to whack the ball and score a run. On the outside I was feminine but on the inside I was a wiry athletic boy.

There were other conflicts as well. I was a Jew in a Catholic community and my parents were Communists at a time when lack of tolerance for radical political ideas was at its height.

The surface of everyday life baffled me. I became fascin-

ated with the undercurrents, the true interactions between people which lay hidden beneath the words. I was a constant day dreamer wondering what was really happening. After all, I knew about the dark side. My parents were obsessed with society's inequities and so the glossy surfaces, the feigned happiness, the country right or wrong attitude was hard to swallow. I became a searcher early on trying to reconcile my private world with the more public one I lived in every day.

My interest in the hidden order of things, in subconscious, interior experiences was a natural outcome of my childhood; and artistic images which reflect this interior realm were hypnotically attractive. I haunted the museums searching for I knew not what. Fifty-third Street and Fifth Avenue became my hangout and the Expressionist and Surrealistic painters became my gods: Edward Munch, Marc Chagall, Renee Magritte. Their images spoke to me in a language I understood; their light illuminated a world I longed to see. And I knew I was on to something.

I became an artist, an art teacher and a student of the psychology of art. I read Freud, Jung, Arheim, Bettelheim and a host of other theorists. I read fiction as voraciously as I soaked up images. The poetic underside became my territory. It encircled my own artistic development and extended its enchantment into my art room at school. The interplay between exterior events and interior experiences became an ongoing drama in my life -- the drama of creating art. And I was intrigued not only by my own symbolic creations but by my students' artistic processes as well.

The theatre of the classroom is wondrous because children are fascinating characters. They play out their roles with intensity, naivete and unabashed cruelty. They are people in rapid transition without the protection of adult veneer; and their expressive work reflects their inner worlds.

I have been teaching art to young children in a variety of settings since 1966. I have taught art for twelve years in

