

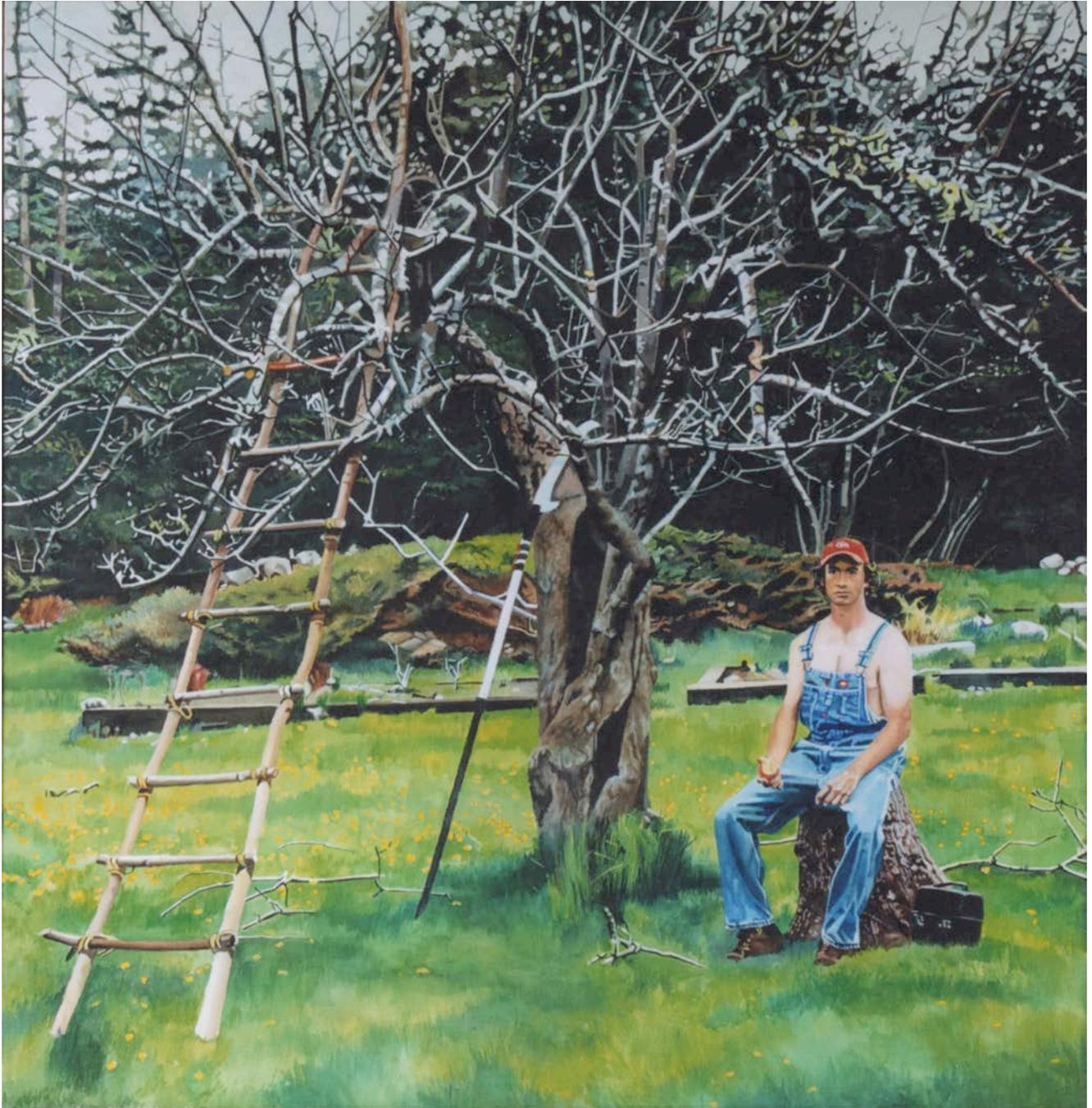
RED EYE OF LOVE – THE MUSICAL

In 2003, on the occasion of my 75th birthday, The William Beadleston Gallery in New York and The Farnsworth Museum in Rockland, Maine shared a retrospective exhibition of my paintings. Commonplace Publishing put out a book of most of my work up until that time. It also included a monograph about my life. It was called quite simply John Wulp. The book was designed by Sam Antupit, the owner of Commonplace Publishing. Unfortunately, Sam died about a month after it was published, so the book never had wide sales. I have stacks of unsold copies in my studio in Maine. I have cannibalized parts of the first book to make this one.

But there is still more to tell. I have done a great deal of painting since 2003. I confess that a lot of it was done for money, but I don't think I ever lowered my standards.

I left my job at the North Haven Community School in 2005. I thought at the time that my active life in the theatre was pretty much over. I planned to devote myself solely to my painting.

There is some doubt as to whether I left or was fired. Barney Hallowell told me that I could no longer hire people from out of Maine. I had spent years assembling a crew of people who could supply me with technical support when I needed them. Without them I didn't see how I could do the quality of work I had been doing.



Spring Pruning

Collection of John and Mary Moss Greenebaum



Russel Janzen

Collection of Sarah Gordon and Scott Janzen



Winter Tree

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hildreth

Painting of Foy Brown



Foy Brown

Collection of Foy Brown Jr.



Apples I

Collection of Jim Russek and Judy Garfinkel



Apples II

Collection of Jim Russek and Judy Garfinkel



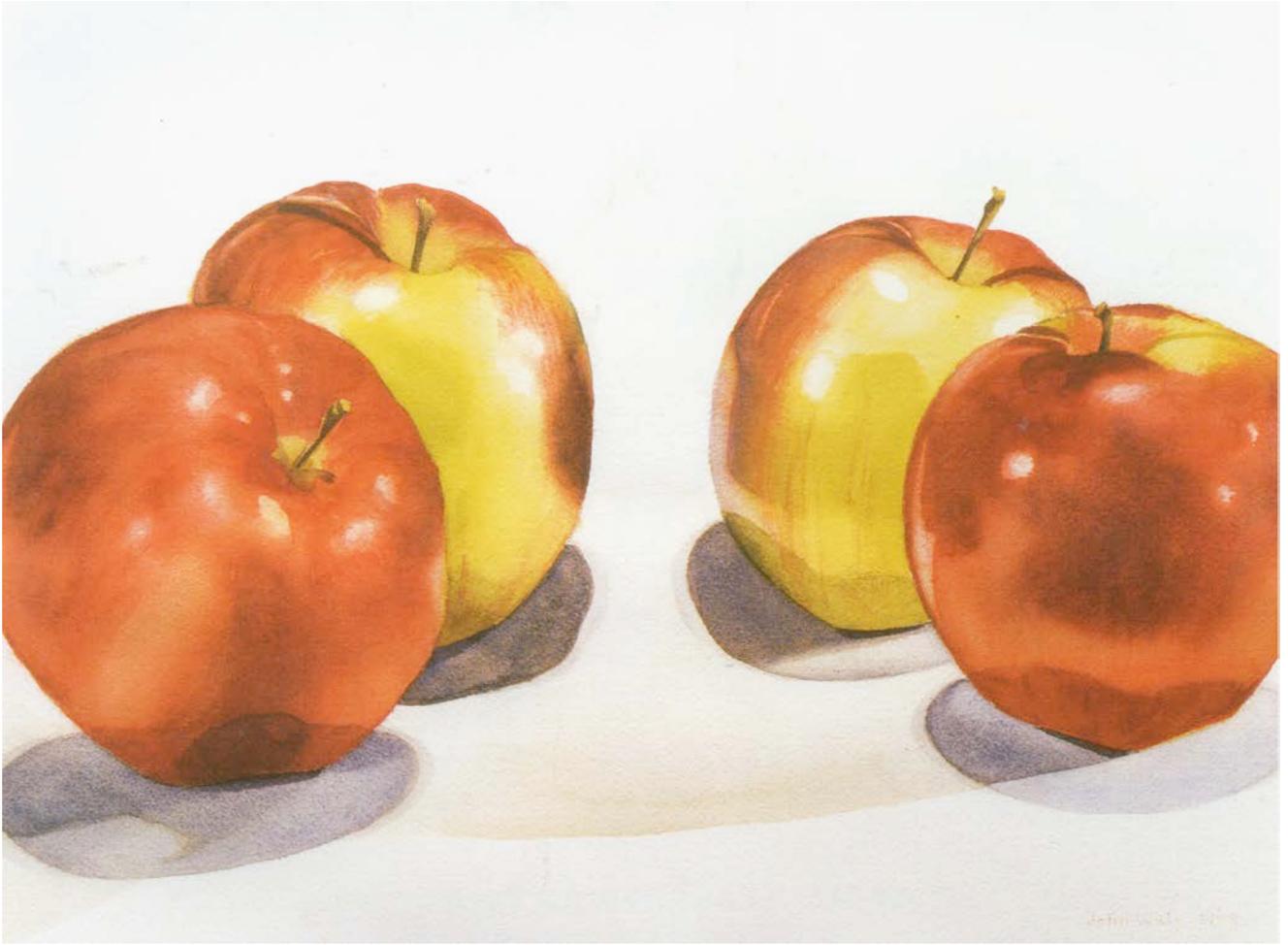
Apples III

Collection of Jim Russek and Judy Garfinkel



Apples IV

Collection of Jim Russek and Judy Garfinkel



Apples V

Collection of Jim Russek and Judy Garfinkel

I couldn't figure out how I was going to live without the steady income that teaching had given me. I decided to sell my house. Luckily the people who bought it were friends, Thomas and Amy Urquhart. We decided to build a studio onto the house where I might live rent-free. Between Social Security and my monthly mortgage check, I had enough money barely to survive.

Around this time, Arnold Weinstein died. Sam Cohn called me after the memorial celebration and told me he wanted to revive the straight play of Red Eye of Love that we had done at The Living Theatre in 1961.

Coincidentally, I had been rummaging about in my book shelves, and I happened to come upon a copy of the musical version of Red Eye of Love that Arnold and I worked on while he was still alive. When I read it I thought it was very good. I called Sam back to say I did not want to do a revival of the straight play, but I would be interested in doing the musical. We played the score for Sam, and he agreed to give me enough money to do a workshop of the show.

We did the workshop under the musical direction of Jamie Schmidt who was much impressed with the score. I was disappointed with the workshop, and Jamie was too. He said that the only person in New York who could handle the complexity of the music was Ted Sperling. Ted had won Tony Award for his musical direction of The Light in the Piazza. He was also the musical director of South Pacific. He wanted to become a director in his own right, and, after we had played the score for him a number of times, he agreed to take on the show. And so we set upon ten years of auditions, and workshops, and a production at the O'Neill Center in Waterford, Connecticut, and recording sessions. All of which produced absolutely nothing. I had supported all these activities with my painting. Although Ted Sperling always stuck with the project, I was willing to give it up.



Ted Sperling

Collection of Ted Sperling

Just then I received a telephone call from John Shea. He is an actor who had been in the original production of Dracula on Nantucket. He was now the Artistic Director of the Theatre Workshop of Nantucket. He told me that 2013 was going to be the fiftieth anniversary of the show and he wanted to do a revival. I was all for the idea, but I suggested that he also do Islands and Red Eye of Love and make it a John Wulp Festival. John read the plays and listened to the music and agreed to go ahead with my idea.

John had an executive director named Gabrielle Gould who did not share his enthusiasm. She was OK with the idea of Islands but she was adamantly opposed to Red Eye of Love.

Assuming that John Shea's wishes would prevail, I immediately went out and raised \$40,000 from friends. This money was to be used to assist the Theatre Workshop of Nantucket in the production of Red Eye of Love. I assured them that I felt confident I could raise even more money. Gabrielle Gould had other ideas. Once she had the money in her hands, she was determined to use it for her own wishes. We began a whole year of going back and forth on the production of Red Eye of Love. Finally, in a desperate attempt to salvage the show, John Shea agreed to pay out of his own pocket to have a workshop done on Nantucket with local talent.

The workshop was a disaster. The score was so poorly annotated that John Shea's pianist could not even play it. John called me to tell me that the production on Nantucket was off. By this time I had already forbidden the production of Islands.

Up to this point the music for Red Eye of Love had been written by Jan Warner. I had been introduced to Jan by his father, a Wall Street financier who worked obsessively on promoting his son's career. So far as the father was concerned, his son was a musical genius, and I'm afraid I fell for this idea. When Ted Sperling agreed to take the show on, his belief in the quality of the music gave me some validation.

Through the ten years of workshops, it was always the music that was the focus of the production. Jan assumed that the book was not up to his talents, but he tolerated it.

On the day before John Shea's workshop, I was talking to Jan Warner on the telephone. I had always known that he was stupidly anti-Semitic, anti-homosexual, and probably anti-black as well, but I chose to blind my eyes to this fact. But on this afternoon, Jan was particularly vehement.

He told me at great length how the "Jews" in the theatre had held him back, how they had ruined his career. One of my best friends was a woman named Elly Bissinger who was Jewish. All the while I listened to Jan, I felt as though I were betraying her.

The next day when John Shea told me that they could not do Red Eye of Love because of the condition of the score, I lost my temper. I had spent ten years of time and countless thousands of hard-earned dollars to get this show on, and I didn't even have a score that anyone could play.

"How did they like it?" said Jan when he called to inquire about the workshop.

"They hated it," I replied. There was a moment of stunned silence.

“Ah, well, they just can’t play my music,’ said Jan. This was always his excuse.

“Yes, you always say that,” I said. “Jan, I’m sorry, but I don’t think I can work with you anymore. It isn’t only about the music. I listened to your anti-Semitic rant yesterday afternoon, and I’m afraid I can’t stand it anymore.”

“You’ve been trying to get rid of me for thirty years,” said Jan. And he hung up the phone.

So I had a show with no production in view and no score. Luckily, North Haven Arts and Enrichment had expressed some interest in co-producing the show with The Theatre Workshop of Nantucket. I quickly called them to tell them what had happened. I wanted to see if I could salvage anything from the wreckage.

The members of the Board of Directors of North Haven Arts and Enrichment were not upset about losing Jan Warner. Those of them who had heard the score did not particularly like it. “Too many notes,” one of them said. But the members of the board were upset about losing a co-producer.

It was estimated that we would need to raise \$125,000 for North Haven Arts and Enrichment to be the sole producer of the show. This figure eventually rose to \$140,000. I told them we already had \$40,000 sitting in Nantucket, and would they please give me a little time to raise the rest.

Of greater concern to me was the fact that we had no score. I called William Bolcom, a frequent collaborator of Arnold Weinstein, and asked him if he would take on the assignment. I called him back a few days later and he declined. Joan Morris, Bill’s wife was listening in the background. “Tell him about Sam Davis,” I heard her say. Sam Davis was a former student of

William Bolcom who was beginning to make a name for himself in New York musical-theatre circles.

I called Sam immediately. He knew the straight play of Red Eye of Love and liked it. I got the script to him right away. He liked that too, and he agreed to have a score ready so that we could go into production in July for an August opening on North Haven. It was now March. True to his word, Sam Davis immediately began turning out a brilliant score. Ted Sperling, when he heard the music, was just as impressed as I was.

I began a mad scramble for money. John Shea told me that, of course, he would turn over the \$40,000 that I had raised to North Haven Arts and Enrichment. But Gabrielle Gould was having none of that. She immediately called the original donors to get permission to use their money as she saw fit. They did not feel it was ethical to involve themselves in the day-to-day operations of The Theatre Workshop of Nantucket. With their permission, Gabrielle Gould, against the strong opposition of John Shea, persuaded her board to give me only \$15,000 of the \$40,000 I had raised.

North Haven Arts and Enrichment agreed to add \$10,000 to this amount of their own funds. After days and nights and weeks of feverish activity, I managed to raise the rest.

We finally had a production of Red Eye of Love. It opened at the end of July at Waterman's Community Center for five sold-out performances. Ted Sperling was the director. Alex Sanchez and his wife Lainie Sakakura were the choreographers. And the sets were done by a Vinalhaven neighbor, the artist Robert Indiana. Red Eye of Love was finally a huge success.

After that, things moved quickly. A year before Ted Sperling had directed a show for AMAS Musical Theatre in New York. They were anxious to do another show with him, and he took Red Eye of Love to them. They immediately agreed to do it.

Luckily, one of the people who had seen the show in North Haven was a wealthy Swiss gentleman named Hans-jörg Wyss. When I asked him if he would financially support the New York production, he sent a check for \$150,000. He eventually raised this amount to \$200,000. The total cost of the show was \$350,000. AMAS put in \$50,000. I raised the rest.

I must be like a cat with nine lives. The production of the musical version Red Eye of Love on North Haven was the second. Much as it wearies me to think of it, I still have seven more lives to go. I thought Red Eye of Love would give me financial security and renewed energy to see them through.