

kiosk



Kiosk

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Ads

(or--A day in the life of a cosmetic counter  
clinger)

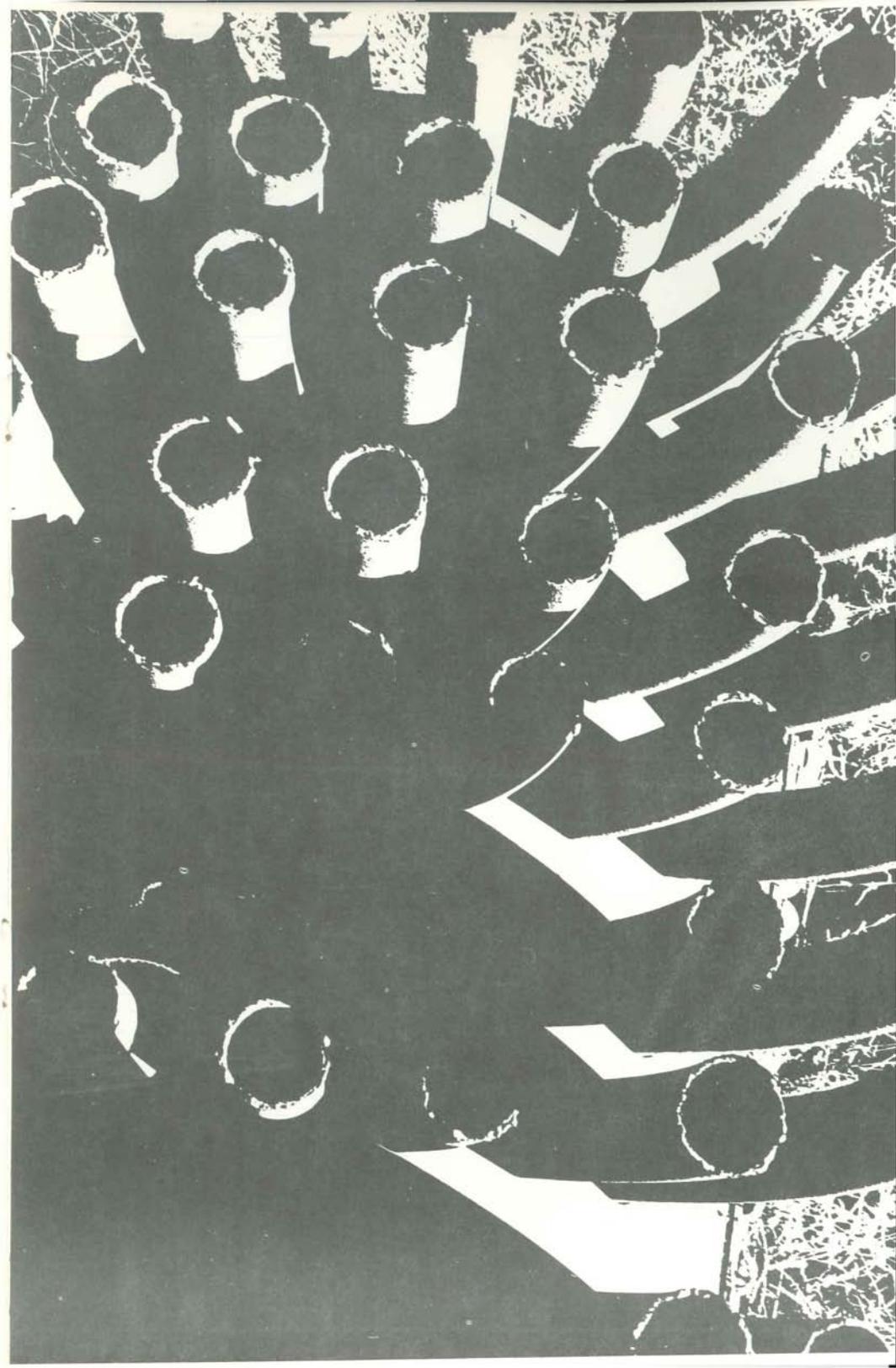
She peels down  
a rubbery, green  
mask--  
revealing the  
smooth-skinned,  
blemish free  
Cover Girl--whose  
"natural look" sells  
paste, powder,  
blushes and glows--  
and with careful,  
vain artistry,  
makes them into  
empty China dolls.

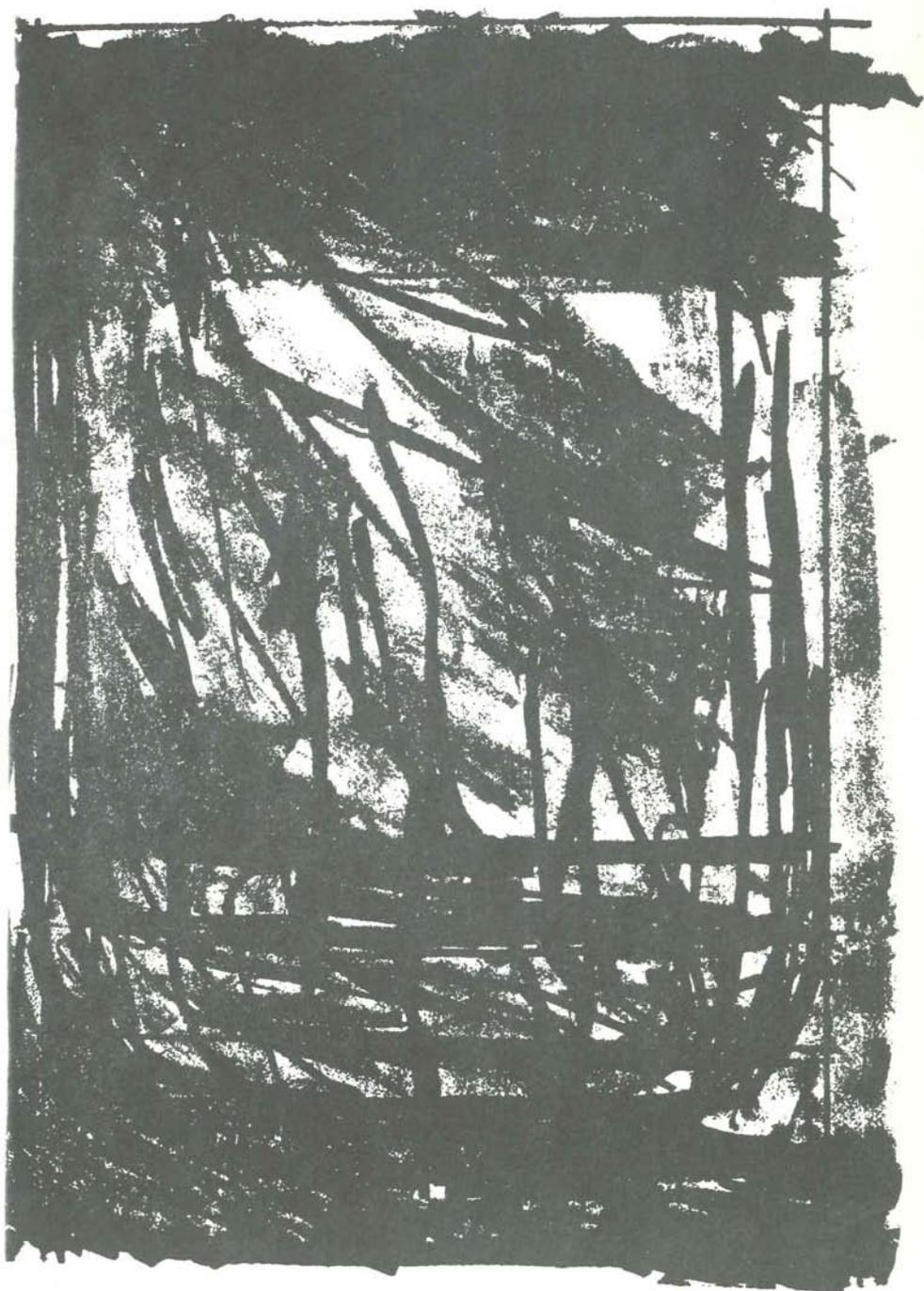
--Shannon Whitcomb

The Naked Eye

To see the truth in the naked eye  
Without the sham of  
Mascara and shadows  
To hear the unvarnished truth  
from pale, unglossed lips--  
To shed, salty, natural tears  
on rougeless cheeks.  
To give from the unencumbered heart  
the undemanding love.

--Shannon Whitcomb





On the Absence of Inspiration

Because my reluctant magician  
Has taken himself away  
I must stage my own exhibition,  
Since true magic won't obey  
I build intricate ribbon cages  
For birds, stagy tricks for display,  
While my magician strikes for higher wages  
Than I can afford to pay.

--Meredith Cook

## Progress

Brown distance stretches out on either hand  
Further than sight will reach. Stripped of their  
yields,  
Looking like tacky carpets used too long  
And wearing through in places to show  
The dirty floor beneath, the stubbled fields  
Undulate sluggishly past, waterspotted from snow  
Barely gone. Branches on the intermittent trees  
expand,  
Deprived of their cover, twisting like men caught in  
lies.  
A small stream runs up to the road, but shies  
And ducks down a culvert. Somehow it seems wrong  
That no spectacular diversion occupies  
A space whose vastness makes us small, and so  
We nervously turn away, and using our autos as  
shields  
Haul on the asphalt lifeline, talk our way along  
To the concrete aquariums whose proportions we can  
stand.

--Meredith Cook

Untitled

How must I find you?  
save the time  
I know you spend  
in a sauna bath  
'for your health'  
and just possibly because  
your wife  
can't satisfy you  
anymore

I cannot see you beautiful  
if all I wanted was beauty  
I'd watch television

no  
I find you  
Quasimodo  
guilty as charged  
you are hereby sentenced  
to be hung by the nose  
till dead"

Untitled #8

...if anyone asks  
I am lonely  
I lie half asleep  
on these cool musty sheets  
dreaming of a life  
that has passed  
(wishing I'd realized then)  
wondering  
where are you  
someone  
my someone  
who can tell me  
your secrets...

--Jeffrey Lee Davis

I felt lonely tonight  
so I went wandering  
looking  
for anyone  
who would smile at me  
but the butterflies were asleep  
and fluttered away  
when I woke them

even the tin can  
that I kicked  
out of loneliness  
ran away  
clattered down a manhole

...so I ran to a hill  
and stood on  
the grassy soapbox  
shouting down

"Look at me  
am I Quasimodo?  
Does my mutant face  
repulse you?  
Make your supper gurgle in your  
bellies?  
Make you run  
to your  
lower fourth street whores,  
begging them  
to comfort you in their diseases?

stand still for a moment  
stop acting  
like Louis  
the sixteenth beheadedchicken  
playing headless horseman  
in the execution yard  
until he falls into a death-heap  
emptying himself  
like a wineskin

--Jeffrey Lee Davis

Observations Through the Fog

A Mobil sign peeks through the fog  
And watches cat eyes opening  
To view spectres' arms reaching out  
Touching nothing.

--Noel Goulette

The Cabin, Besides in Summer

i'm  
leaving  
for Minnesota  
again in January.  
i've  
planned  
for a few days off  
right around my birthday  
and i hope to be there by then  
to celebrate it with ny old friend  
who can't make it home for Christmas.  
he  
needs  
to be cheered up,  
to be told to stick w/ it  
'cause everybody  
starts off in small towns  
in the middle of nowhere  
w/ no new friends for days.  
he and i  
are planning  
to be in his folks' cabin  
at the falls and to be  
just plain drunk off our asses  
when i turn twenty.  
and you  
and the baby on the way  
he'll learn of later;  
'cause i can't hurt him  
by bragging in the slightest way.  
he would jump to conclusions  
and think that he has lost even me,  
and  
the thought  
of leaving him  
best-friendless  
stirs me--  
like when  
at night, sleeping against you,  
the baby will kick inside you  
and wake me  
to the reality of love  
so far away from my best friend

who sleeps alone  
at night in the cold  
in Minnesota.

--Bob Lee

Days

like those dark times  
at night  
when i look harder  
for friends  
because i think  
no one sees  
me and my eyes  
that can't cry

--Bob Lee

## Nonsense

A fly crawls        innocently up an arm.  
It's dead, one.    quick.    easy.    swat.  
It is lucky we are so sure that they  
are the creatures  
      and we  
the beings.

--Rachel Lieder

## Seminar

Words are swimming heedlessly  
      in  
      perfectly  
      symmetrical  
      circles.

The Mouth moves--anxious (non-stop)  
      phrases collide aimlessly  
      striking occasional ears.

Boredom sits, crouched in the  
confusion,  
      mulling stupidly the  
      blank wall.

--Rachel Lieder

## A Special Kind of Grief

The lumbering school bus eased to a stop. A young boy, aged ten, jumped off, crossed in front of it, and cautiously looked both ways before crossing the road. A mangy form huddled grotesquely at the road side. The boy approached it, slowly, then peered in disbelief. The bus rumbled on its way. He was vaguely aware of a dull distant thud in his head as he stared at his puppy, lying dead on the dusty gravel shoulder--its paws twisted underneath the plump body. The boy gently pushed it into the seclusion of the tall weeds alongside the road, then walked up the lane. His feet nudged a pebble, kicking it hard every so often, tousled hair lifting slightly in the warm breeze.

"Dave!" dazed eyes lifted to see his mother waving at him. He stuffed his hands into his pockets.

"Hi, dear, how was your day?"

He rammed his hands more firmly into his pockets.

"Don't forget you're to meet Linda when she gets off the bus. I'm so afraid that she'll get hit, she's so small, and doesn't look where she's going." Her brows puckered in worry.

"Let's see . . . Oh yes, I haven't seen Jack around, so if you see him, feed him--his puppy food's in the barn."

Dave started slightly, his glazed eyes stared. The buzz of the oven alarm.

"Oops! My cake's done. Don't forget about Linda." His mother bustled into the house, leaving Dave standing stiffly by the steps.

Walking to the barn, he picked up some old papers, a shovel, and made his way down the path toward the road.

Another rickety bus rambled up the highway. He quickly lay the shovel and papers next to the hidden dog. The bus stopped, a chubby, bubbly seven-year-old skipped across the road, and yelped a "hi" to her brother. Dave mumbled something and started up the path, with her two steps behind, jabbering all the way.

"I got a hummert on my 'rithmetic!! Miss Gleason says she's gonna put it on the bulletin board. . ."

For once Dave was grateful for his sister's non-stop chatter, for it allowed him no room to speak. She continued constantly until reaching the porch, where she smelled the freshly-baked cake, and charged into the house.

For the second time that afternoon, Dave shuffled down the dusty path towards the highway.

He gently lay the soft body on the papers, gathered it in his arms, placed the shovel over his shoulder, and walked along the road until he came to a rough wooden gate. He arranged his bundle, freed one of his hands and opened the gate. An endless sea of grass loomed before him. Thick. Green. He walked carefully, eyes downcast, looking for something. He stopped. The field stretched all around him. He set his burden down, picked up the shovel and dug a small deep grave. The puppy was laid in it. After having piled the dirt on top, he clutched the shovel and left, not glancing back. Carefully closing the gate behind him, he went up the highway and on to the house.

"My, you're quiet tonight, Dave," his mother remarked. Linda's spoon clanked noisily against the soup bowl.

"Yeah." His spoon swished aimlessly, eyes fixed on the blue-grey bowl.

"Did you see Jack?"

"Yeah." A peculiar flush crept up his face, eyes glistened.

"Did you feed him, like I asked?"

"Nope."

"Dave! I told you twice! I bet that poor puppy. . ."

"Jack's dead." His voice was flat. He pushed his chair back and ran up the stairs, two at a time to the solitude of his room.

--Rachel Lieder

## Eyes

fragile blue buckets  
now nearly full  
today i have held them  
without spilling

--Muriel Tomlinson

## At a Recital

we were sitting there  
you in dirty white tennis shoes  
me, no makeup,  
you said:  
i've forgotten what movement this is  
and my leg's asleep  
and I:  
yes, such wonderful music  
but sometimes i just wish  
you wouldn't take your shoes off at half  
time

--Muriel Tomlinson

If, In Transition

- If the continent were divided  
between brown and white,  
despite the pleas of mothers  
and the whining of babes,  
and all the ancient contests  
were revived again,  
because I am brown  
and you are white.
- If walls were erected  
between old friendships  
and distrust began to grow  
like a wild fungus  
on every heart, and faces  
again slammed shut on outsiders,  
because I am brown  
and you are white.
- If we both should again  
take up arms against the other  
with full intent of gaining  
back our rightful due,  
and even if I knew  
you would win again,  
because I am brown  
and you are white.
- If these happenings were eminent  
and in my heart I knew  
my people were ill-prepared  
and destined for defeat,  
even if I knew they were wrong,  
I would go to them,  
because I am brown  
and you are white.
- If all this should be,  
I would answer the call  
of the round resounding drum,  
and paint my face  
and prepare others and myself  
for an honorable death,  
because I am brown  
and you are white.

If this came to us

I cannot say that the man  
who stands by me  
will be as brown as I,  
and those in your ranks  
will not all be white-faced as you;  
for who can tell a brown-heart  
from a white-heart?

If the test were given to me

I could only answer in this fashion:  
"Send me to those who know how to love.  
Send me to those who are aware  
of the Earth's heartbeat.  
Tell me where the brown-hearts go.  
Because I am brown  
and you are white."

If I were able to give you

what I consider the greatest gift,  
I would give to you  
the power to go  
where your heart says to go  
because it is all we have,  
and I am brown,  
you are white.

--Donna Whitewing Vandall



## Sand

Once, like high slowly beaten cliffs  
glints of happy moments  
occasional darts  
in  
a warm white sun--  
but mostly the dulled cubes  
of whitely-brown nothingness.  
Walked through  
Kicked  
Sifted.

Sand castles--  
of damp warm grains  
built carelessly within  
the tide's grasp,  
Washed from the shifting shore  
to the certainty of liquid infinity.

--Shannon Whitcomb

## Twisting Time

Poets, who can grow blooms of rhyme  
To stay the hummingbird of time  
And fairy-like build ivory towers  
To last the very language out, why do the hours  
Dart silently past hidden under the shrieks  
Of the too many things to fill them, and the weeks  
Leave fossil footprints and frantically lumber on  
Before it's known that they have come and gone?  
The long hand whips around the clock, the minutes  
run,  
Things crowd 'till was/is/shall-be are as one.  
I would that even briefly I might borrow  
The skill to seize and crystallize a day  
And keep the struggling "to" attached to "morrow"  
And bar the mocking "yes" from "yesterday."

--Meredith Cook

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