

VERA LIST

# UNIVERSITY ART COLLECTION WRITING AWARDS

WINNING ENTRIES FROM SCHOOL YEAR 2006-07

CALL FOR ENTRIES 2007-08 (SEE BACK PAGE)

[www.vlc.newschool.edu](http://www.vlc.newschool.edu)



Wayne Thiebaud, Large Sucker, 1971 color lithograph 24" x 22"

THE VERA LIST CENTER  
FOR ART AND POLITICS  
THE NEW SCHOOL

# FIRST PRIZE CREATIVE RESPONSE

## UNTITLED

By Samuel Holleran

David Wojnarowicz, *Tommy's Illness*, 1987

On tee-vee a marine flicks his Zippo to a thatched hut,  
pack o' candy cigarettes at the five-and-dime  
Mother didn't work,  
dinner was never of the television variety

New York was a crazy place  
13th st: a studio where junkies practiced yoga before it  
was hip by dusk the Roxannes were strutting, and the Johns  
slurred bright lights, a distant whirring sound

Bowery, L.E.S. S.R.O., CB-Restaurant Supply-GB . . .  
QT was down there too,  
before pneumonia . . .  
The Gipper, the new/old America "before we had a . . ."  
there're also problems on our island  
but the rent's cheap and there's a scene here

Mom didn't take me to communist meetings,  
And I never saw a protest  
But once, once, I sat in on a Tupperware party  
I was home sick with "the flu"  
the plastics made me feel ill  
and I knew that I had to relocate

Recently, a friend gave a commemorative lighter  
"Ho Chi Minh City" said the engraving  
"That's what they're calling it, now," he said.  
Later on, via the TV, I learned that "the pneumonia,"  
. . . is also going by a new name.



David Wojnarowicz, *Tommy's Illness*, 1987  
Acrylic and collage on masonite 36 x 35"

# SECOND PRIZE CREATIVE RESPONSE

## PROCESS PIECES AND SNACKS

By Kathleen Stupp

Wayne Thiebaud, *Large Sucker*, 1971

At the Start,  
Start. In the beginning,  
do a beginning.

Will it be a painting or a poem?  
Just make a line.

Open the window, it is a painting or  
Go to a party, it is a poem.

No. Just make things. Things people will have  
and use in their pockets on the subway or  
make a pocket for the things they keep.  
Measure what they are.

You look hungry while you work.  
Will it be a painting or a poem?  
Set it on the line.

At the Finish,  
Finish. In the ending,  
do an ending. If it is a poem there will be a  
question. Is it one?

# THIRD PRIZE CREATIVE RESPONSE

## NOTATION

By Amelia Granger

Wayne Thiebaud, *Large Sucker*, 1971

The first time she came over to the single room of Gregor's  
apartment, we were lying in his bed smoking cigarettes,  
so Mickey assumed we were a couple. It was so like her to  
wrongly assume, especially about sex.

I had come over, he was just waking up, and it was  
August.

We lay in the white sheets and made gray rising patterns of  
smoke. I'm sure it sounds like an easy mistake to make, but  
when you walk into a room you should be able to tell if sex  
just happened.

There are facts. There is a certain detectable truth.

I make a note of things that remind me of Mickey: the  
muscle-clenching smile, dogs that are just too small, chat-  
tering squirrels, pornography. The shoes on the feet of man-  
nequins at stores where no shoes are sold. I make a note of  
things that remind me of Gregor: quarantine, gin, ant farms,  
elemental. My own mind.

I think mostly about something other than those two,  
these days. I think about the lollipop.

The lollipop is a painting, and Gregor lives in Japan now.  
The lollipop is perfect. It hangs on the wall of my school and  
I stare at it while I wait for the elevator. It's a green lollipop,  
slanted on its side, so simple and elegant. It's clean and cool  
and removed. Somehow both glassy and matte. Not a trace of  
sweetness, as if it were made with grains of sand, not sugar.

"You really like her?" I ask Gregor, at the end of August.  
"Enough to steal her?" We walk down the street together, not  
going anywhere, just going walking. As we often do. I make a  
note: theft, desire, susceptibility, happenstance.

"I didn't steal her!" he declares. "She says she and Max  
were never in a relationship."

"Seriously? I think he thinks they were." I remember them  
walking in the door that first day, Mickey and Max, and  
thinking about the occasional rightness of boys and girls to-  
gether, the power of a united front, their youth and cuteness  
making them jump out of any hallway and into your life.

"You never like anyone I date." Gregor says. Gregor had  
told me he was in love with me once, in a different season. I  
had stood quiet in the snow, un-answering, until he walked  
away. I didn't believe it was true.

## INTERVIEWS WITH THE WINNERS



### Samuel Holleran

BA/BFA dual degree: Social and Historical Inquiry, Eugene Lang  
College The New School for Liberal Arts; Illustration, Parsons The  
New School for Design

Hometown: Boulder, Colorado

**Q:** Do you notice the cultural and political stereotypes and ethnic tensions that are represented in many pieces in The New School's art collection? Does this make for a more stimulating academic environment? **A:** Yes. While it is nice to be surrounded by art, it is even better to be surrounded by art that is meaningful and provocative . . . some [of the works] are unsettling, and . . . because these works are visually striking, they have the power to snap us out of our routines and make us take a moment to consider or discuss issues that otherwise might not penetrate our consciousness.

**Q:** How does art enter into your everyday life, particularly in New York City? **A:** New York is an extremely visual city and an extremely dynamic one. While other cities . . . might be romantic, charming, or even whimsical, no city is as thoroughly steeped in modernity as New York. [It] represents the state of the nation and the world. In this sense, it is an interesting

amalgam of styles, a place where screaming commercialism can co-exist with sober religiosity . . . where chic boutiques share retail space with muffler shops and slaughterhouses.

**Q:** Which are the galleries or museums that you visit or recommend other students to check out? **A:** I go to MoMA all the time because it's free for New School students and it's an incredible institution.

**Q:** How do you feel about art becoming increasingly commercialized? **A:** Art is always going to have its patrons, but . . . it is also possible to negotiate and maintain a relationship in which the artist has . . . autonomy. Equity is a huge issue for me: I would rather do commercial illustration for a tobacco company (provided they treat their employees fairly) than for a multinational corporation that uses sweatshop labor or does business with authoritarian regimes . . . I think it is important that artists maintain a position from which they can critique society.

**Q:** Any underground artists, scenes, or venues that you frequent or are interested in? **A:** I often go to gallery openings, performances, and installations; especially ones that seem particularly unique to New York (these are, often times, site-specific installations like the DUMBO Arts Festival or the Prouve House under the Queensboro Bridge).

Wayne Thiebaud, phone message July 9, 2007, 11:26 a.m.

“It’s Monday, this is Wayne Thiebaud returning your call. And I did receive your letter. We’ve been around the place, I’m sorry to be slow in responding.

We applaud your efforts very much and celebrate this work of young people. As a teacher myself, it’s very heartening to hear someone write about some work that one has done some time ago. Certainly, we need more of this in the school system; we’ll work towards that end.

Congratulations to Kathleen and Amelia, and I appreciate very much a chance to read their thoughts. Please give them my heartiest congratulations.”

“You date horrible people.” The streets we crossed were so hot they stuck to our soles. “Is that what you and Mickey are doing? Dating?”

“Well . . .”

“Cause I never see you . . . go out.” Now she was always in the white sheets. Now I knew about her, her constant taking of prescription pills to try to fix herself, for which she did not have a prescription. Her loud voice and what it doesn’t say.

Gregor laughed. “I didn’t say we were going out.”

We walk by Gray’s Papaya on the corner of 14th and Seventh. It stinks to high heaven (I make a note: high heaven), and is a riot of grease and shimmer and meat. “Why are you going to Japan?”

“I want to go up on a mountain.” A man shoves by babbling to himself. “And look down at all the people.”

“But I need you here.”

“No, you don’t,” Gregor says, and then he takes my hand. We thread through the people together.

Mickey has been talking about me behind my back. It’s September and rainy. Whenever I think of her talking about me, her gummy pink lips forming my name, Annabelle, such an easy name to say with scorn, I block it out, and think of the lollipop. The picture at my school that I study out of obscure necessity. I count its cool jade green pinwheel segments. I picture a world with white paper stick, white paper background.

When she sees me at a bar she can barely face me. But it’s in her nature to be shameless, so finally she says: “A.B.,” (my nickname, Gregor-given) “how much do you like attention?”

I say nothing. I slowly pull a Parliament out of my pack. I think of how the smooth plastic of the recessed filter will feel good on my chapped lips. “That depends. On the kind of attention.”

“Do you like people feeling sorry for you? Because I know you were never raped.”

This I meet in silence. The last thing I picture is what happened. I am made of glass, or maybe nothing.

“Oh, you think you’re such a badass!” Mickey snorts, then flounces away.

Gregor comes up behind me and puts one of his arms around me. He has full sleeves of tattoos on both, sea creatures on the left, birds and bees (I make a note: air creatures) on the right. Both with blue backgrounds.

“What did she say to you?” The arm around me has octopi, clown fish, hermit crabs.

“Nothing I didn’t already know. That I’m a badass.”

“Let’s go outside and smoke.”

“I’m going home. I can’t be around her.”

“Okay,” he says. “Okay. I understand.”

The next day I wake up hung-over, the glass-bead necklace I was wearing torn to pieces on my nightstand. I forget about the lollipop.

I go to the park and try to sit still on a bench with the lonely old refuse but I can’t. I try to make a note of things that remind me of this feeling but I can’t. All I can come up with is: anti-lollipop. I put my hands in my pockets and scratch my palms bloody with my fingernails.

I go to Gregor’s apartment and sit crying on the couch, staring at the bed. “Oh, A.B. I think you’ll be okay.”

“How can you be with someone who can do that to me?” I ask. I make a note: painful index of contingent possibilities. “I feel like there’s a wet wad of paper towel in my chest.”

“What . . .”

“And I can’t breathe!”

“A.B., I can’t imagine going through what you went through. You poor girl. You poor little doll.”

“And she doesn’t even believe me! Attention! I don’t want attention! I hate feeling like this! I hate – I hate – talking like this!”

“I know.”

“She’s going around telling people! Trying to convince them that I made that shit up! Gregor, you know I didn’t make it up.”

“I know.” He holds me, wrapping me with the sea and sky, which is not the whole world. We’re missing land. “Baby girl.”

“I can’t even talk about it.”

Even as I say this I can picture the cutting edge of the concrete step pushing one way against me, the man with the baseball cap’s dick cutting the other way. His sweating angry face, pleasureless, screwed up like a boiled tomato.

The pains scissoring me. My body so small in between. Imagine these edges cut all the way through me. Because how could I contain so much?

I try to stop it, put it in a round green space, with a straight white line emanating out.

But it floods me: scrabbling at first, hitting and pushing back, then whatever line I crossed, whatever black line, that just made me lay still.

“Mickey’s just . . .”

“How can you be with her? If you believe me?” I moan.

He doesn’t answer.

“Are you going to break up with her? Because I can’t be your – whatever – your friend if you don’t.”

He doesn’t answer.

I leave. I try to call him, once, twice, later fourteen times, and he still doesn’t answer. Months pass and I see them together, kissing, in the snow.

I wonder what Gregor’s day is like in Kyoto. Tattoos are shameful there, I’ve heard, so I imagine his long-sleeved shirts, his need to shrink his stride, be clad in something more than his own skin.

I make a note of Japanese monsters (Mothra, Godzilla), and generously leave him off it.

I see Mickey sometimes, to buy her pills off her. She’s told me she’s sorry. She’s made me laugh. A smooth, cool, glass-candy laugh. She’s just so funny, so loud. She’s back with Max, and I admire their power again.

I get a postcard in the mail. It says: “I’m in one piece. I believe you, A.B.C., one-two-three, do-re-mi. I miss you. I’m lonely and all I can hear is my own little brain talk. I love you.”

Not good enough, but still. It unfinished the way I feel about him.

I don’t want to blend him into my empty white background, and I need as much as I can that refuses to.



### Kathleen Stupp

BA/BFA dual degree: Writing, Eugene Lang College The New School for Liberal Arts; Fashion Design, Parsons The New School for Design

Hometown: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

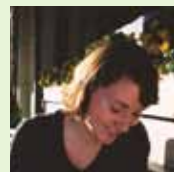
**Q:** What caught your eye/why did you choose to write about the piece that you did? **A:** The way a flat surface under the lollipop is made by one horizontal line reminds me of simple writing.

**Q:** What does the university’s art collection mean to you? **A:** As a BA/BFA student, The New School art collection ties me to Parsons even when I’m taking classes at Lang. I like it that techniques I’m learning in drawing class appear outside my writing class door.

**Q:** What advice would you offer to other students about taking advantage of the collection and entering the writing competition? **A:** Always enter writing contests because they could result in useful monetary compensation.

**Q:** Which galleries or museums do you visit and recommend? **A:** The Whitney Museum is a cave but gets exhibitions of specific artists who are not represented as completely in other museums.

**Q:** How do you feel about art becoming increasingly commercialized? **A:** If art becoming more commercialized means that art can be understood and appreciated by a less elite group of people, I am not concerned.



### Amelia Granger

BA, Writing, Eugene Lang College The New School for Liberal Arts  
Hometown: Ann Arbor, Michigan

**Q:** Why did you choose to write about the Thiebaud print? **A:** The piece has always stuck in my mind in a mysteriously strong way. It’s small and plain, but those are the qualities that make it beautiful. The kind of art that doesn’t announce itself as such is the kind I’m interested in . . . This piece is a little scavenged bit of the world, an insignificant fragment . . . allowed to stand on its own. So I wanted to write a story like that.

**Q:** What advice would you offer to other students entering the Vera List writing competition? **A:** The concept of this writing competition was a big inspiration to me; it got me to write about my life and the stuff around me in a new way. I would encourage other writers at The New School to try it. The piece gave me a visual symbol to keep in mind as I put together a plot. I didn’t even intend to literally refer to it in the story, but then it just worked its way in there.

**Q:** Do you seek meaning in art, political or social, or do you prefer art as a visual and aesthetic oasis beyond the everyday? **A:** I do usually seek meaning in art, to the extent of putting meanings into works that aren’t even there, but not political or social ones. More emotional and autobiographical.

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS 2007-2008

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS 2007-2008

The Vera List University Art Collection Writing Awards are awarded annually to honor the best critical and creative essays by New School students inspired by the works in the university's art collection.

The award was established in 1996 by the late Vera List, a life trustee of The New School, and is directed by the Vera List Center for Art and Politics.

Any student enrolled in any division of the university is eligible to submit work. Once a year, a rotating panel of judges selects two first-place awards of \$400 (one for the best critical response and one for the best creative response), and two second-place awards of \$200. Award winners are announced early in the spring semester online in the New School Observer.

What is meant by "critical" and "creative" responses?

A critical essay on a work in the collection treats the art as a site of knowledge and research (as opposed to a source of inspiration for thoughts distinct from the artwork). It relies on close examination of the artwork as a vehicle to articulate an argument, which could elucidate a formal, iconographic, or contextual analysis of the work itself or the position of the work in the context of the artist's oeuvre or the New School collection.

In a creative response, the judges will be looking for a lively and compelling poem or short story that engages, explicitly or obliquely, a specific work of art in the New School collection. Authors should think of the tradition of the New York School poets like Frank O'Hara, Kenneth Koch, Barbara Guest, and Edwin Denby, whose work was inspired by art movements.

Look closely and write. Be as smart, cunning, and formally inventive as you can.

The winning entries are selected by professional art critics and published in this annual newsletter. All students who submit entries are invited to join a thoughtful discussion about visual art and writing with a notable artist and a curator or a critic, arranged by the Vera List Center.

## GUIDELINES FOR ENTRIES

Entries cannot exceed 10 double-spaced, typed pages, submitted as an attachment via email. The cover page must include the writer's name, address, email, and phone number, university program in which he or she is currently enrolled and his or her New School Student ID number.

**The work of art that inspired the text must clearly be identified on the entry's first page by the name of the artist, the work's title and date, as well as its location.**

Submissions for the 2007-2008 Awards should be sent via email to [kuonic@newschool.edu](mailto:kuonic@newschool.edu), and must be **received no later than Friday, March 15, 2008.**

For more information, contact  
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## 2006-2007 JURORS

**Carin Kuoni**, director, the Vera List Center for Art and Politics

**Deborah Landau**, assistant director, MFA Creative Writing Program, The New School [through 2006]

**Rosemary O'Neill**, associate chair, Critical Studies Department, Parsons The New School for Design

**Robert Polito**, director, MFA Creative Writing Program, The New School

**Cay Sophie Rabinowitz**, senior lecturer, Parsons The New School for Design/senior U.S. editor, Parkett Publishers, New York

**Silvia Rocciolo**, co-curator, The New School Art Collection

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The Vera List Center thanks the following for their contributions to this year's Writing Awards: All the student authors who submitted entries; the jurors (see above); artist Wayne Thiebaud; co-curator Silvia Rocciolo and assistant Ana Daley of The New School Art Collection; and Isabella Hughes, intern at the Vera List Center.

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## THE VERA LIST CENTER FOR ART AND POLITICS AT THE NEW SCHOOL

Founded in 1992, and named in honor of the late philanthropist, the Vera List Center for Art and Politics embodies The New School's historic commitment to the arts. The center organizes public events and forums, online programs, and occasional publications that respond to the pressing social and political issues of our time as they are articulated by the academic community and visual and performing artists. It focuses on cultural production that emerges within and outside the traditional art world and seeks to intervene in contemporary political debates. Positioned where scholarship develops into resource, policy, and civic engagement, the center calls on the university community, the people of New York, and national and international audiences. For a list of programs and further information. Visit [www.vlc.newschool.edu](http://www.vlc.newschool.edu)

## THE NEW SCHOOL ART COLLECTION

The New School has long defined itself as a center for civic dialogue and aesthetic and intellectual experimentation. Sharing these characteristics of its founding institution, the New School Art Collection is an arena where issues and ideas relevant to our times are explored and confronted in a creative and engaged fashion. To date, the collection numbers approximately 2,000 works in different media by emerging and established international, contemporary artists. Installed in the public spaces and offices throughout The New School's campus, many of the works evidence a social commitment to issues of our time.