

## Independent Day

This poem was first published in *New York Hello!* (1990, Ommation Press), a book of photographs by Rudy Burckhardt and poems by Vincent Katz.

Walking through a field in the rain with a blue umbrella, death  
is a flash, sometimes you can relax, with ones you love  
or seeing friends after a long time, finally all the history  
and things you read about, art, become real, part of you,  
and it's nice to find them in others too: July 4th at the Brooks Fair  
in Brooks, Maine, makes me think of Jefferson, who was a great writer  
blond voluptua in red terry shorts:

shot  
Rudy pumps her from the hip, moves me out of the way of his  
like sex, he goes back for more, pressing  
the button and shooting in a steady rhythm, hands round  
his instrument,  
from the crotch: later he admits to being turned on  
(in a calm, old-worldly way)  
then six cops converge on us, ask Rudy  
"You haven't been bothering any of the young ladies, have you?"  
"I don't think so. No," Rudy says, truthfully

driving in the car  
through beautiful Thorndike and wide sunset fields, Montville, Searsmont  
Tammy Wynette on the radio: the kind of song that makes you cry  
or else it makes you horny --

he makes you think  
he could be a bum or a Herodotus

the way Rudy talks

long hill  
to where Rudy painted a painting once: two tall trees fencing  
a tar road going uphill and disappearing: the road  
becomes clear now, the trees dark and foreboding like cypresses,  
the road curving a little, stretching upwards, then disappearing

-- we come up a

7/5/84

These poems are from the “Maine Street” section of the book *Boulevard Transportation* by Rudy Burckhardt and Vincent Katz, published by Tibor de Nagy Editions (New York) in 1996.

The first section of *Boulevard Transportation* is also called “Boulevard Transportation” and features Burckhardt’s late 1930s photographs of fragments of people walking on New York’s streets. The poems in that section were written in direct response to specific images. The second section, “Europa Euphoria,” contains photographs of Europe, most taken after Burckhardt had been living for over a decade in the States. The poems again follow the photographs, slyly addressing their viewpoints. The book’s third section, “Goodbye, N.Y.,” makes reference to an earlier book by Burckhardt and Katz, *New York Hello!*, published in 1990 by Ommation Press (Chicago). Where the earlier book combined photographs and poems done around the same time (the 1970s and ‘80s), the later book combined work done when the artists were around the same age (their 20s and 30s). As Burckhardt was born in 1914 and Katz in 1960, these were quite different eras. The final section of the book *Boulevard Transportation* is entitled “Maine Street,” and it begins with a Burckhardt photograph of a dirt road. The poems and photographs began as meditations on nature and were later combined in the book to form a collaboration. *Boulevard Transportation* was designed by Vivien Bittencourt.

i.

I put bare  
feet to Terra  
swim in the lake  
all day long  
there is nothing  
to do  
listen to wind  
in the trees

ii.

ferns  
ancient purveyors  
of chlorophyll  
tasty curls  
on the  
energy market  
their pocked

faces demonstrate  
ageless  
understanding  
they simply  
extend fronds  
if you were  
to kill them  
they would  
understand

iii.

trees  
givers of life  
they arch  
over, protecting  
us, while  
in our idiocy,  
we plot  
inane destruction  
or if not,  
distraction  
so many  
different kinds  
of trees  
and individuals,  
like people,  
they each have  
a face  
in winter,  
some shed  
their coats  
a different  
picture  
blends in  
ice and cold  
sometimes  
I think  
ice is the

only beauty  
only in  
the ice  
am I  
truly alone,  
to think,  
to walk...  
but in summer  
you hear the  
leaves singing  
and you  
find dimension  
in every  
sight

iv.  
the cabin  
slat pine walls  
ribbed ceiling  
primary-  
colored  
windowshade  
walls painted  
blue  
loon  
calls at night  
with wind  
the porch  
hammock  
you are  
in hiding

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vi.  
you swim across  
the pond  
every day

where a hazy  
glaze covers  
the water  
and trees  
in July  
the day  
seems it  
will continue  
forever  
time slows  
you hear  
bird calls  
dog bark  
occasional  
squirrel  
scolding  
hammering

ix.  
I try to  
transcribe  
the summer,  
fix it in  
poems or  
postcards,  
but it flits  
past again,  
brook water  
through  
fingers,  
and I  
sense  
each year,  
to the old  
as to  
the young,  
is so  
important