



CURBSIDE

Jena Thomas, Jeff Robinson, Ben Quesnel, and Vincent Serbin

Opening Feb. 20th at 6:00 PM



CURBSIDE

Our Gallery Artists were given the challenge to come-up with a work inspired by the “curbside” paper bag practice currently adapted in our daily lives due to Covid-19.

Exclusive Zoom Talk moderated by:

ANTHONY HADEN-GUEST



(Born 2 February 1937) is a British-American writer, reporter, cartoonist, art critic, poet, and socialite who lives in New York City and London. He is a frequent contributor to major magazines and has had several books published.

Haden-Guest formerly penned a weekend column on art collecting for the Financial Times and was the original male voice on Cristina's single "Disco Clone". His drawings have appeared in The New York Observer and he has contributed articles and stories to the Sunday Telegraph, Vanity Fair, The New Yorker, Paris Review, Sunday Times, Esquire, GQ (UK), The Observer, Radar and other major publications. In 1979 he was awarded a New York Emmy for writing and narrating the PBS documentary The Affluent Immigrants*.

* Anthony Haden-Guest (2020). On Wikipedia.

JENA THOMAS



“NEW NORMAL”

The “New Normal” is anything but normal. For me, this phrase ignites a sense of anger, sadness, and sentimentality for the past. During this time of quiet isolation, I felt the need to engage with history. For much of my work, I retreated into old photographs of family summer vacations. Images of people that I know I come from, but may have never met, comparing their normal to my “new normal”. To further create a sense of nostalgia for the past I also worked with a collection of old encyclopedias. I love the way encyclopedias-unlike the internet- suggest a permanence, and yet the world is ever changing.

When given the challenge of working with the theme of “curbside takeout” there certainly wasn’t any shortage of substrates. At the time, takeout was the highlight of my day and something that I could do to help local businesses stay open. However, with each bag I have to admit I wondered how much longer this pandemic would continue.

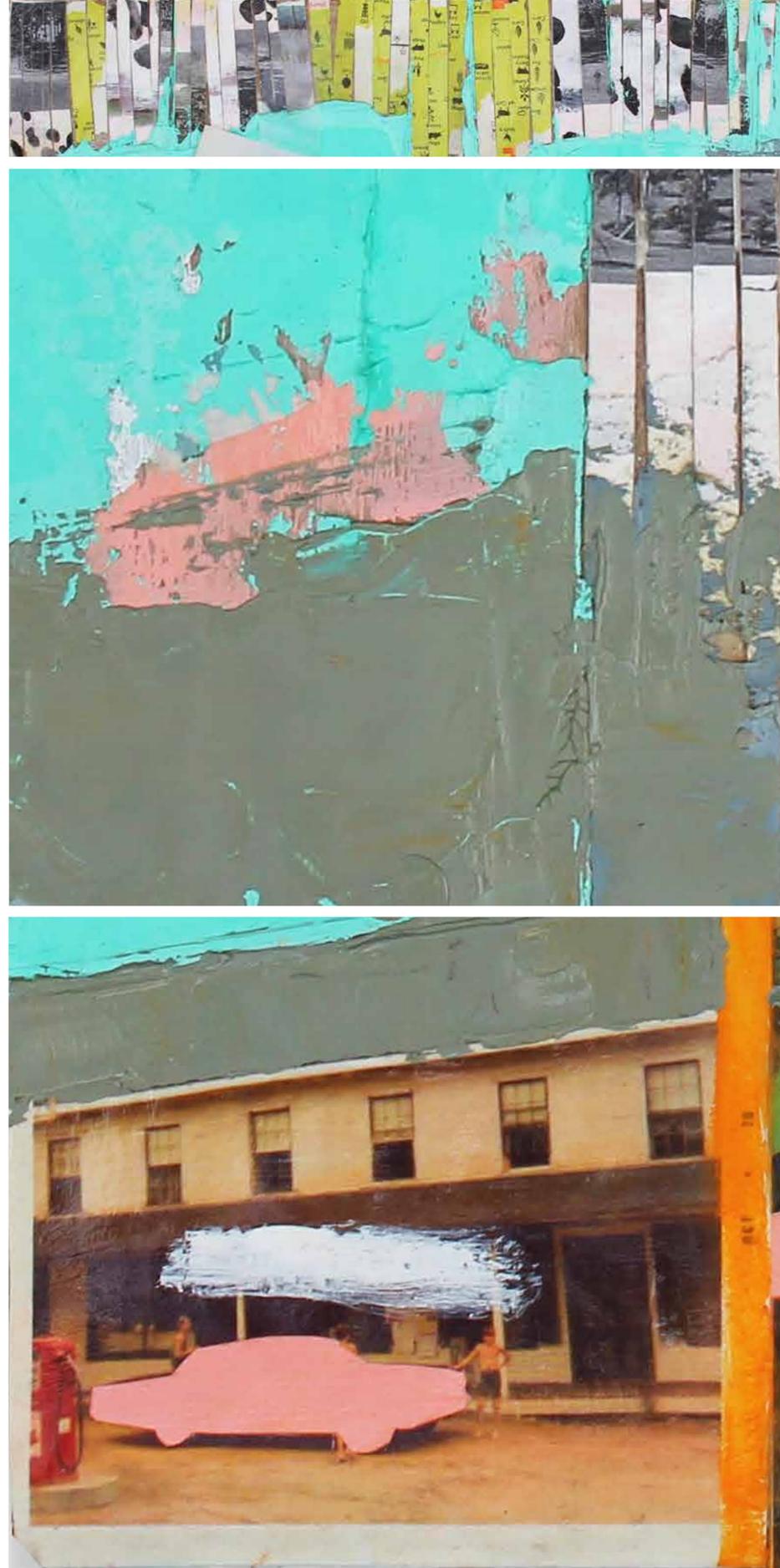
In this series the fragmented images present a moment of assumed accuracy, and yet they are indicative of the fragmented pieces of our world as viewed from my “pandemic bubble”. The heavily applied paint comforts me with its visible physicality and offers a sense of control, as if time is being forcibly stuck in place. Although these bags present themselves as a portal to the past, I chose to leave the receipt on the outside of the bag to serve as a visceral reminder of the present and our potential “new normal”.



Jena Thomas

—
New Normal I, 2020

Oil and mixed media on-to-go bag.
15.5 x 10 inches
39.4 x 25.4 cm





Jena Thomas

—
New Normal II, 2020

Oil and mixed media on-to-go bag.

15.5 x 10 inches

39.4 x 25.4 cm



Jena Thomas

—
New Normal III, 2020

Oil and mixed media on-to-go bag.

15.5 x 10 inches

39.4 x 25.4 cm

JEFF ROBINSON



My love for the Strand Bookstore (828 Broadway NYNY) knows no bounds. I've spent countless hours enjoying every nook and cranny, every stack and cart in the place and countless dollars on its offerings.

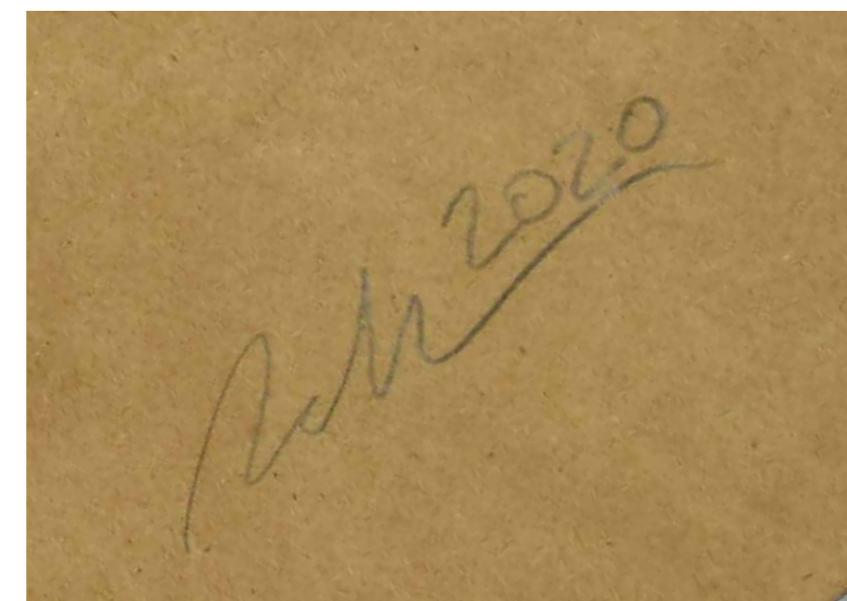
I chose to honor this hallowed place by commemorating a specific experience.

I've fabricated my own version of a Strand bag and included in it a prized first edition of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* which I purchased there in 1992.

The bag itself bears a modified Strand logo on a simple paper bag just large enough for one book.

The novel explores a deep theme for me personally as it struggles to comprehend the dichotomy between the rational and the romantic within each of us which has been a source of my own inner monologue.

For me the combination of the bag and book embodies the Strand experience.



Jeff Robinson

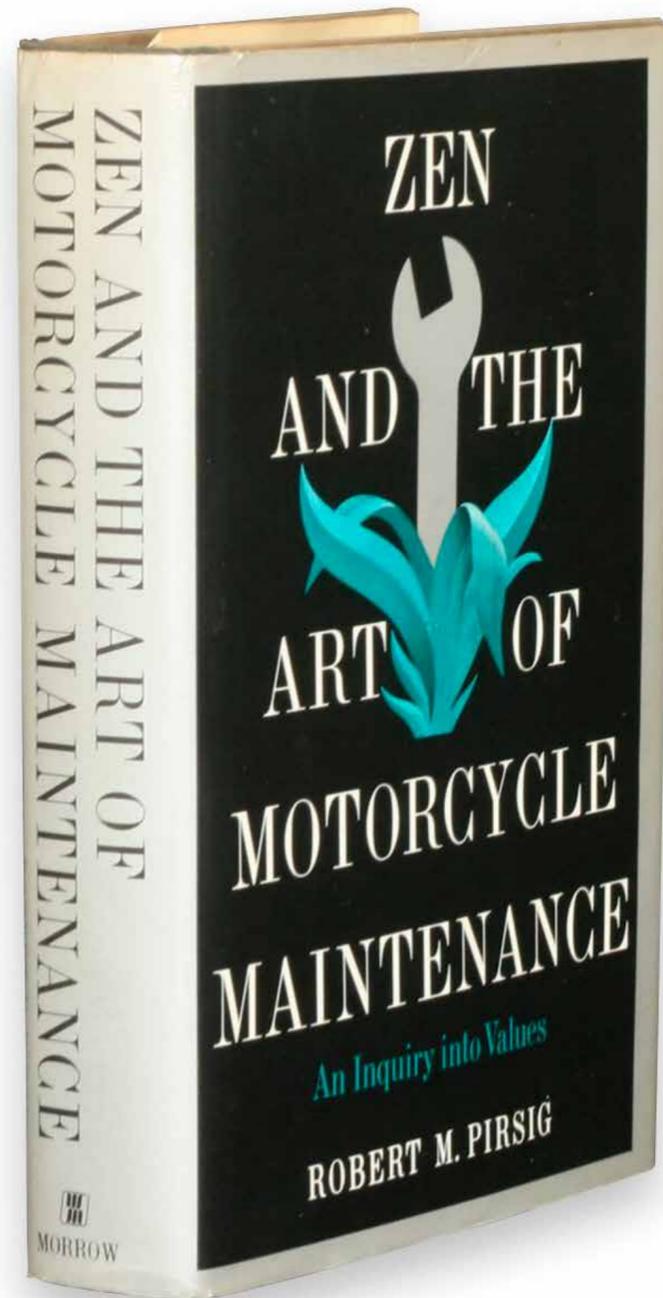
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Untitled, 2020

Paper bag, modified Strand Bookstore logo
of ink, transfer, and paint.

Inside the bag: 1st Edition of the novel Zen
and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.

10 x 8 inches approx.
25.4 x 20.3 cm aprox.



This novel, which was published in the 70s, is a fictionalized account of a motorbike trip across America that the writer, Robert Pirsig took with his young son and their long conversations. It was first published in 1974 and became a cultural phenomenon*.

*Anthony Haden-Guest about *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert M. Pirsig

BEN QUESNEL



I had the privilege of working in the Connecticut restaurant industry for ten years. I worked for restaurant owners that were passionate about the environment they created, the service they provided, and the cuisine that they served. Every customer that walked through their doors was treated like family. Fond memories were made and long lasting relationships were established. My co-workers became my best friends. Our nights were often long and sometimes difficult, but drinking a cold beer together at the end of our shifts while counting the tip jar always made it worthwhile. Working in a restaurant is not easy, and it should never be taken for granted; I always said that everyone should have to try it at least once. Recently, many of these service jobs are being taken away, and it will be a long recovery ahead for those who have lost them.

The Connecticut Restaurant Association estimates that there are about 8,500 active restaurants in Connecticut. Recent studies predict that 1 out of 4 restaurants will close indefinitely due to the pandemic and the economic hardships that these establishments are facing, which equates to 2,125 restaurants in the state of Connecticut. It is hard to imagine that all of those restaurants could soon be gone; jobs will be lost, dreams taken away, and families will go hungry.

My piece, To Go, consists of a bag that I received after ordering food from one of my favorite local restaurants. A receipt was stapled to the front of the bag, which gave me the idea for this piece. I added an additional 2,124 staples to the bag making it merely impossible to open. The staples are a visual representation of all the restaurants that could potentially close by the end of the year if we are unable to find a way to support these spaces and the people working there.

A portion of the funds from my piece will be donated to the CONNECTICUT HOSPITALITY EMPLOYEE RELIEF FUND.



Front Bag



Back Bag

Ben Quesnel

—

To go, 2020

2,125 staples, paper bag, receipt.

16½ x 10 inches

41.9 x 25.4 cm



VINCENT SERBIN



Despite the dreadful conditions we have endured, the pandemic has given us the opportunity a to pause and reevaluate the essence of life; to consider its fragile nature and appreciate the world and our fellow beings as never before.

The profound function of art, that James Joyce called "aesthetic arrest", can serve that moment of pause; when our present state of mind is suspended and unforeseen perspectives come into view. In general the aesthetic experience can be transformative; it can jolt the senses and realign our outlook on life.

My piece is an arrangement of two tethered shopping bags on a panel that is six feet across. It is essentially an abstracted version of the graphic with two people, a line representing 6 feet, and the phrase- "Please Practice Social Distancing". I have intentionally abstracted the given elements to create a work of aesthetic quality. While "curbside" is a depiction of our social crisis, I hope it will also elicit a state of "aesthetic arrest".



Vincent Serbin

—
Curbside 1, 2020

Enamel on canvas over wood panel, with
paper bags and coconut husk rope.

6 x 1 ft

182.88 x 30.48 cm.



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Gallery[®]

Think Upside Down