

Personal Correspondence to friends
1 1/2 weeks into Artist in Residency (now 2)
(Imperial)
Imperial College - Physics Dept.
well, this was notes to computer, enter, spellcheck, etc - so...

Well, I can't just blame Linley Storm
(although only she could have)
for getting me on the plane to London... many
of my more muscular sculptor friends started
showing up in the last day and a half before I was
scheduled to leave. It seems my friends wanted
me to do this (get out of the country?). ^(go a Fremont-Hanford artist in residency?) My dear
friend Don Carver tricked me into picking
up my ticket. And so I got on the plane and
and came here. (Because of flight cancellations I
was 6 hours late to London.) It was a flight
from Hell — from when I entered SeaTac
airport until I deplaned at Gatwick airport
in London I was re-routed through Phoenix, AZ
to Houston, TX, missed the flight I was suppose
to be on... over 24 hours on planes and airports.

I was super burned out upon arrival but
was just in time for the very important meeting
with all the Arts Catalyst and Imperial College
and British Association for the Advancement of Science
people. I would say my brain activity was run-
ning at 5 to 10% normal. I really remember nothing

of the meeting except that I was dressed in Carhartts and everyone else in suits. In my brain-dead state I did make a lot of decisions about my residency which, in retrospect, I'm happy with. I decided not to live on campus at Imperial (even in the Queen's Tower ("angle tower" because of all the students who have jumped to their death from there)) or any of the flats lined up as possibilities in the cool "artsey" part of London. ^{near Artscat} If I'm going to make it through this residency, and do all that is expected of me, I just have to have some time out to myself, away from being 'on' all the time.

~ Lodging ~

So I have moved into Rob La Frenais' flat in Hackney, London, and it is the best of all possible outcomes. Rob has had this flat (apartment) for nearly 15 years. It is "rent controlled" (rather like New York City) housing and Rob wants to maintain it. Rob has moved in with his new girlfriend, Mo (sp?), ^{except that Rob keeps showing up late at night.} and the Arts Catalyst will ^{or should have soon.} pay the rent and utilities for my 3 month residency and I have the place to myself. It is just ~~was~~ ^{with the right} what I wanted... working-class housing away from the intense art scene. The neighborhood is more black ^{white} than ^{white} ~~white~~ and one of London's largest mosques

is across the street from me and where I catch my bus to Imperial College. The tower of the Mosque is my landmark when I ride the bus — I don't know what language all the fully veiled ^(its Turkish) women are speaking (and they have veils that cover everything but ~~that~~ their eyes) but they are always friendly. I feel very much at home here, as much as I ever feel at home anywhere ^(which isn't much). All in all this working-class neighborhood flat is the best of all possible outcomes. Of course it is on the Fourth floor and all the up and down stair cases are my main bair. It will, I suppose, keep me in shape. I can hardly believe I've climbed every peak of consequence in America and am having all this trouble with all the stairs in my residence, the tube, Imperial College... ~~even~~ even The Arts Catalyst is on the 4th floor. Such is the consequence of living to be old. I am very happy to be away from all the cool arts scene. I can't believe it but I have invitations to art openings and / or parties ^{↳ Raves} every evening of the week. Everyone seems to think I'm a way cool artist and invites me to everything. It's all the stairs that stop me.

Imperial (Imperial) College

On my second day in Great Britain, 3 sept, a Thursday, I dealt with getting my scean together at Imperial College. Still brain dead from the "flight from hell" I met with everyone and got my key to my office. The key is a picture 'swipe card' ^{and a metal key} and I have to say my picture on the swipe card makes Theodore Karginkey (the unabomber) look like a girl-scout leader. But I have 24 hours access to the College and Blackett Laboratory, the physics lab and shop. And my office. Now all I have to do is make some art using these facilities. I have photos of my friends children up on the walls of my office, along with thier art work and my own. I even have letters from Ginger the Ginney Pig (Phil & Judy and kids) of ~~Alaska~~ Alaska up on the walls. All this helps me pull off this artist-in-residency. When students and faculty visit me here in my office they are looking at Ginger G. Pig's letters that she ate part of, and wondering.

I'm in the building that houses the artists-in-residence ~~and~~ and the only other artists-in-residence is a music group "Sinfonia 21" also under the physics dept. They do "unexpected" music on non-traditional instruments. I haven't heard their music yet but ^{I have been given a CD by them but haven't a way to play it yet.} did stick my head in the door to introduce myself and say hello. They were very friendly ^{some of them had caught my lecture back in February} had heard of me and my residency and were all very young with rings and studs through eyebrows, lips, ears, tongues, nipples, etc. I'll get to hear them perform in October... my neighbors!

I was assigned a very cool office with an openable window overlooking Hyde park (this allows me to smoke in my office). But it has a carpet on the floor and is small so this week ^{Next week, as it turns out.} I will move to a larger, windowless studio-office that will be more appropriate for drawing and pattern-making. Then I should get a telephone and, I hope, a computer that will allow me E-mail. I could have had an office more centrally located on campus in the Blackett Labs (physics dept.) or near the gallery or Angle tower but I felt the amount of drop-in traffic would be a distraction. So I'm going to get through this residency I'm going to need time to myself.

my commute from my Hackney flat to Imperial College takes about an hour ^{more, when I'm right in rush hour.} ~~1/2~~ Bus from in front of the Mosque to Liverpool St. Station, then two underground trains (subways; ^{called} tubes here) to South Kensington station. Sometimes I take another bus (if it is raining) but usually I walk to the College from ^{there} ~~there~~. Public transport is full and I "strap hang" almost ^(it is a real crowded mess nightmare) always commuting and going. London traffic is unbelievable, even worse than New York. When BBC Television has sent cars to transport me to and from interviews sometimes we just sit in the middle of the street, in downtown London, for, like, ten or fifteen minutes without moving. I still can't believe that Peter Bavis, when he came over for an oil-spill ^{kill} response in Wales a couple of years ago, just rented a car and drove half of the sculpture talent of Fremont there and back. What a risk of killing a bunch of talented sculptors!! I know I will never risk trying to drive here... I'm taking my life in my hands just crossing the street.

There is an underground walk-way from Imperial College to the South Kensington tube station, about 5 blocks long, and lined with ^{ceramic} ~~concrete~~ tile. There is a young man, a music student ~~at~~ at Imperial College, who plays chello in this walk-way. He is very good, right up there with Yo Yo Ma and Pablo Casals and he plays Bach's suits for unaccompanied chello for me. This adds about 1/2 hour to my commute, and I always give him

a couple of pounds (and I am running out of money) but it is the most pleasant part of my day and I look forward to it. Doing "home" is an important part of every day. The flat I'm in (Rob's) is always what I imagine a London flat to be like. The toilet room is smaller than a telephone booth and you have to decide which way you want to face before you ~~gone~~ go ~~it~~ in. No shower but a bath tub about the size of my work-space sink at the Hanford studio. You have to light the gas stove (including toaster) with a match.

(Now 17 November - Thursday)
back from Cardiff University - in Wales -
and the annual meeting of
the British Association for the advancement
of Science) where I gave a lecture.

So I got my new office, that has a bit more room and a telephone but not a window or view. I expect to spend most of my time in Blackett Labs, Physics lab and not here but I guess this is the time to run down address, telephone numbers.

① trying to establish some personal space, I would prefer personal letters and telephone calls to come to my flat in Hackney:

James L. Acord

8 Arrow House

Phillipp St.

London N1

5 NX

England

G.B. ^{actually, I think} they use U.K. for United Kingdom

(I'm here evenings and weekends except for laund and grocery store runs)

(international access code from the States ~~plus~~)

Telephone: ~~+44 171 729 3075~~
+ 44 171 729 3007

(2)

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I can also be reached at my Imperial College office:

James L. Acord

Room #2

→ 14 Prince's Gardens
Imperial College
London

SW7 - INA

England

G.B. (or U.K.)

594-9851

(international access code): +44 - 171 - ~~427-3007~~

→ Later addenda - I do have voice mail on this telephone number (hope to have an answering thing going soon).

I'm really hoping to spend as little time here as possible as this is where all the drop-in traffic comes. I do like one of my neighbors, the avant-garde music groupe "Sinfonia 21" across the hall from me and they go out of their way to visit with me, ^{they are currently the only other artist-in-residence} invite me to their music events and teaching sessions, ^(and parties) help me get on the right bus or tube... ^(subway) very nice, heavily periced and studded young people with green and orange hair. How could I be so lucky.

(3) Also, although I'm rarely ^{ere} there, you can reach me at The Arts Catalyst, my primary sponsor for this artist-in-residency at Imperial College at:

The Arts Catalyst

Toynbee Studios

28 Commercial Street

London E1 6LS

U.K.

tell. = international access code + 44 - 171 - 375 - 3690

E-Mail = info@artscat.demon.co.uk

of course this isn't private correspondence, other than the Barrow house and I have been promised E-mail ^{mail} account at Imperial soon.

Cardiff University in Wales

So, I was a featured lecturer at the Annual British Association for the Advancement of Science in Cardiff, Wales. I only gave one lecture ~~but~~ but was "on" for press interviews most of the three ^{or 4} days I was ~~there~~ there. I know I am the "Poster Boy" for "the Arts Catalyst - the science and art agency" but spending 6 hours out in the driving rain with BBC television giving interviews along with all the rest of the interviews is a bitch much. In the end I didn't get to any but one of the lectures I wanted to (one on anti-matter by a R.A.L. scientist ^{→ a lab I will be working at}). My lecture was well received and the press mostly good. I avoided going out with Rob and other young artists and scientists at night because my press interviews often started early. So it was a real work-out, just like all the rest of my time in London - I did really well but felt uncomfortable and ~~was~~ used. Now when I get on the bus to Imperial the driver looks at my pass photo and says "Saw you on the tube, mate" or "Saw you in the paper, mate".

Birds

I've only identified four birds since I've been in G.B. Robins, Crows and the ubiquitous pigeon (rock doves, who are in every subway tube, far below the surface of the earth and how they get there and live there is beyond me) - and Magpies, who have a lot more black than the U.S.A. version. Their hood comes down farther and they have more black on their backs. I miss my Hayford Magpies and a lot more.



Washington-Alaska
black line

Competition by friends

Well, firstly, I feel like "the Finley Storm visiting artist-in-residency at Imperial College". I'm wearing the suite she purchased for me last year ^{with the Carhartt. Bibs.} to come to "Eye of the Storm" conference. Plus she gave me a duffel bag and loaned me a suitcase (that I have about worn out). Finley, of all my friends, has done the most to make my artist-in-residency at Imperial College through the artCatalyst happen.

A lot of other people (really a lot, counting encouragement) of other people have helped. Phil & Judy purchased me the Carhartts (dress) that have set off a wave of Carhartt purchasing in the Imperial College-London art scene. (see below: "People & clothes")

10 year old Vanessa Carver gave me an unusual haircut (which will now ~~prop~~ probably be the coolest hair-cut in London). Jacqueline Carver and her Dad Don dragged me to a shoe-store and purchased me a pair of dress shoes a couple of days before I left for London. Leave it to a 13 year-old to pick the the coolest shoes (I'm just glad that ~~that~~ ^{they're} comfortable).

And Jamie Jensen gave me a couple of shirts that no one can make heads nor tails of in London but I'm sure will be the craze later this year.

I wear them with a tie and dress Carhartts. (Mostly I wear my standard dress white shirts with tie).

— People and Clothing —

On my first day in London I had a big meeting with a lot of the people I will be working with, although

brain dead from the long "Flight from Hell" & met one Marisa Lea on her first day as The Arts Catalyst Education Director. She will work with me on the education programs that Artscat wants tied into my residency and exhibit. Marisa is a ^{very} beautiful black woman, about 30 years old, who is a certified teacher for what would be called middle school level kids in the states (and younger as well). The next time I met with Marisa she was wearing black carhartts.

Also on my first brain-dead day in London, at this same meeting, I met the art student who will be my assistant, one Ellie Kidson. Ellie was at my talk back in February, is in her last year of art school (St. Martin's?) I'm not sure, but it is suppose to be the best art school in London. Ellie's senior ~~theses~~ project is in Art-Science collaboration (she wants to do genetics and creat new life) and she will get school credit for working with me. So on my first Weekend here (Friday night) Ellie bused out to my flat so we could visit and get to know each other a bit. She showed me how to make tea and then ^{we} went to a couple of near-by pubs for a couple of pints. I have to say these two nearest pubs are pretty rough, working-class, drugie establishments rather like "The Midget" Tavern in Fremont was before the police shut it down. Ellie, a very beautiful young woman of 24 or 25 was unfazed by all the course attention ... after all she was wearing Carhartts!! So the

joke around Artsrat is that by the end of my residency all of London will be dressed in Carhearts.

c The Physics Shops ~

Mr. Jim Gibb, a huge bear of a Scotsman, and I do mean big. Picture Denny Jensen at 50 years old with an additional 100 pound of bear-belly on him. Jim is Tec. service manager for the Blackett Physics Lab. and, once he started to understand that I did know how to read a tape measure and light the oxy-acetylene torch, sort of decided I might be alright. In all his years ~~there~~ he has never had an artist-in-residence with the run of his shop, (and he was ~~there~~ when the P.M. dedicated Blackett Labs in 1958).

He has introduced me to all his "Lads" who do the actual work, the security guards ("Now whatever you do, Jim Accord, don't loan Mike any money" ^(Mike is head of security at Blackett) and really made me feel right at home. In fact the Blackett Lab Shops are ~~about~~ the only place I feel comfortable.

Today, Friday 18 September, I stopped in Jim Gibb's office to talk about ordering some mild steel and sheet lead for me and (I wish I could add the broad scots accent) he greeted me warmly saying "Lots of blokes have been calling me

about you, mate. Seems your talk at
the B.A. conference^(Cardiff University) roused lots of interest.
Blokes been calling me up asking if
your going to blow up my laboratory with
your atomic artwork. Seen you in all the
papers this week, 'got 'um pinned up on my
wall, I do". Jim Gibb gestures toward his bulletin
board, and he does. "Bloke called me up from
Physics Today, a big magazine around the Lab
here. Asked me what I thought of you. I
said 'he was wearing red^(braces are suspenders) braces on his trousers
when I met him and I wear red braces my-
self. Seen him since around the College - always
wearing workmans cloths"

Well, I don't know what Physics Today will write
about me but I believe I have the support I need in big
Jim Gibb. As I left his office he called out "I'm having
a party in a couple o' weeks, invitin' the lads from
the shop. Would ya want to be comin'?" I
expressed a great interest in going to a party that Mr. Gibb
would throw for his "lads" and thanked him for invitin' me. He
said "Oh, it's no big deal, mate, just a lot of beer and talk."

And as for myself, well... I guess I don't have an easy answer for that one. Sure, I wish I hadn't broken quite so many ribs when I went over the fence of my Hanford Studio on Saint Street. They sure aren't healing very fast and such is the curse of growing old. But the real pain is deeper. I don't feel very comfortable with this Artist-in-Residency.

Like I'm doing a great job to all external measures, like everybody thinks I'm doing a great job - but inside my own head I don't feel I'm doing a great job. And am not even sure I'm doing what I should be.

I feel very stressed out and under a lot of pressure. My commute is generally a 1 1/2 hour ordeal each way squeezed into over packed buses and tube (subway) trains with miles of stairs going up and down even changing trains, and everything; stairs, escalators, buses, trains are packed shoulder-to-shoulder, cheek to jowl, with people rushing in a hurry to be like some doomsday movie set in the future. Your standing or walking with body contact with at least 2 other people at all times. In the nine days I have commuted to Imperial College and back (That represents 27 hours, 18 bus rides and 36 train rides) I have had a seat 3 times, and then only because I stayed 'til after 8 PM at the College. I know that many people live like this in a steady state, and walk the additional couple of miles a day that I do, but so far I'm not

enjoying it very much. Thank god Jacqueline picked out comfortable shoes for me!!

Another source of discomfort is that my bad hearing coupled with everyone's accent makes it nearly impossible to understand what any ^{one} says to me. And, of course as soon as I speak everyone knows I'm an American and wants to talk about Bill Clinton's sex life. And now with all the publicity I've been getting since Cardiff it seems like everyone recognizes me, even in the little Turkish grocery near my flat.

I do know, in the abstract, how lucky I am to have this opportunity. It's the kind of break artists dream of ... and yet ten times a day I decide I just can't do this, don't want to do this and want to just get on the next plane out of here. I'd rather row the Kalakala from Kodiak to Seattle in the dead of winter than be an exotic hot-house plant in the greenhouse of London. Oh well, enough bitching. Each day begins in dread but I decide to try it one more day, then I'll quite.

This letter to you is so over-due that I need to close it, and with an upbeat ending. Today is Monday the 21 Sept. and I had my first full day in the Blackett Lab's shop. I have a work-space in an alcove with a work table, welders, etc. I got in early, pinned up ^{some} drawings and my "MAAKIES" and "Nuzzle (he's a junky)" cartoon from the Seattle Stranger and cut out the back-plates for 3 reliquaries, got my hands dirty, a couple of small cuts from sharp steel I had sheered down, a few spark burns in my white shirt (white shirt, tie, carheartl bibs). One by one the 12 guys (lads) stopped by to watch, looked at my cartoons & Drawings at 1:30 Tea-time break they invited me to join them in the break room. Although clearly in the middle of a serious nervous breakdown

-16 (and last)

and serious ~~nervous~~ nervous breakdowns are the only ones worth having, today offered some ray of hope. Doing lay-out with a scribe, sheering and bending up some metal in a break, a little oxy-acetaline cutting; and the broken record of despair and depression eased off in my mind... the volume went down a few decibels. All my life I have rather made sculpture then draw or write and perhaps that is what has been missing those past years.

As I sat in the break room at 1:30^{pm} drinking the strongest cup of tea I've ever had and listening to the 12 (mostly young) metal-workers, feet on the table, talk about their motorcycles, girlfriends, ex-wives and how close their members were to winning the 12 million £ lottery in last night's drawing - for the first time I felt OK about being here. Maybe I can do this... less press interviews and dinner invitations and more shop time-making things. I'm not out of the darkness yet but I do see some light. Maybe I won't leave tomorrow.

And so I close on a bright note. Now to find my secretarial service to copy this, issue me some envelopes and add personal cover letters. I haven't found my secretary yet. All I know is she is on the 5th floor.

I love and miss my friends a lot.

