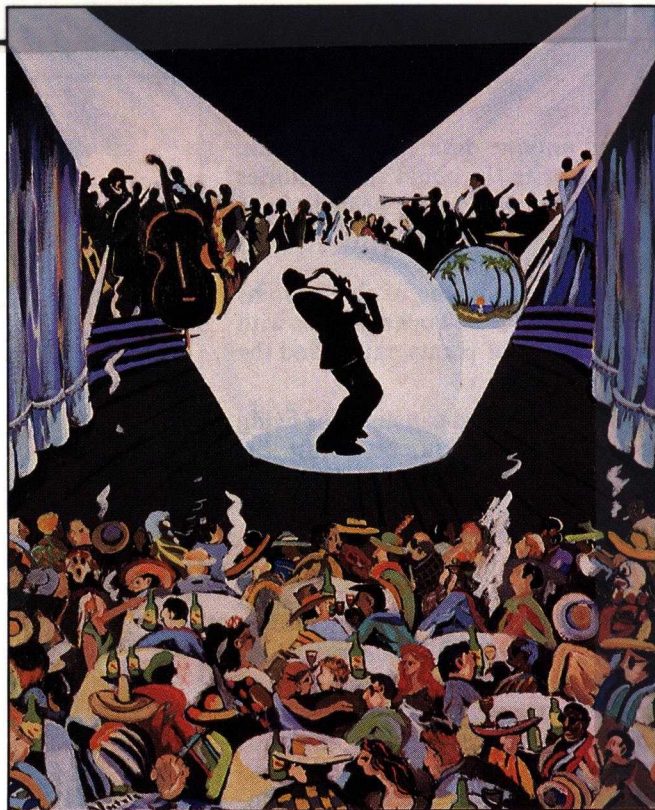
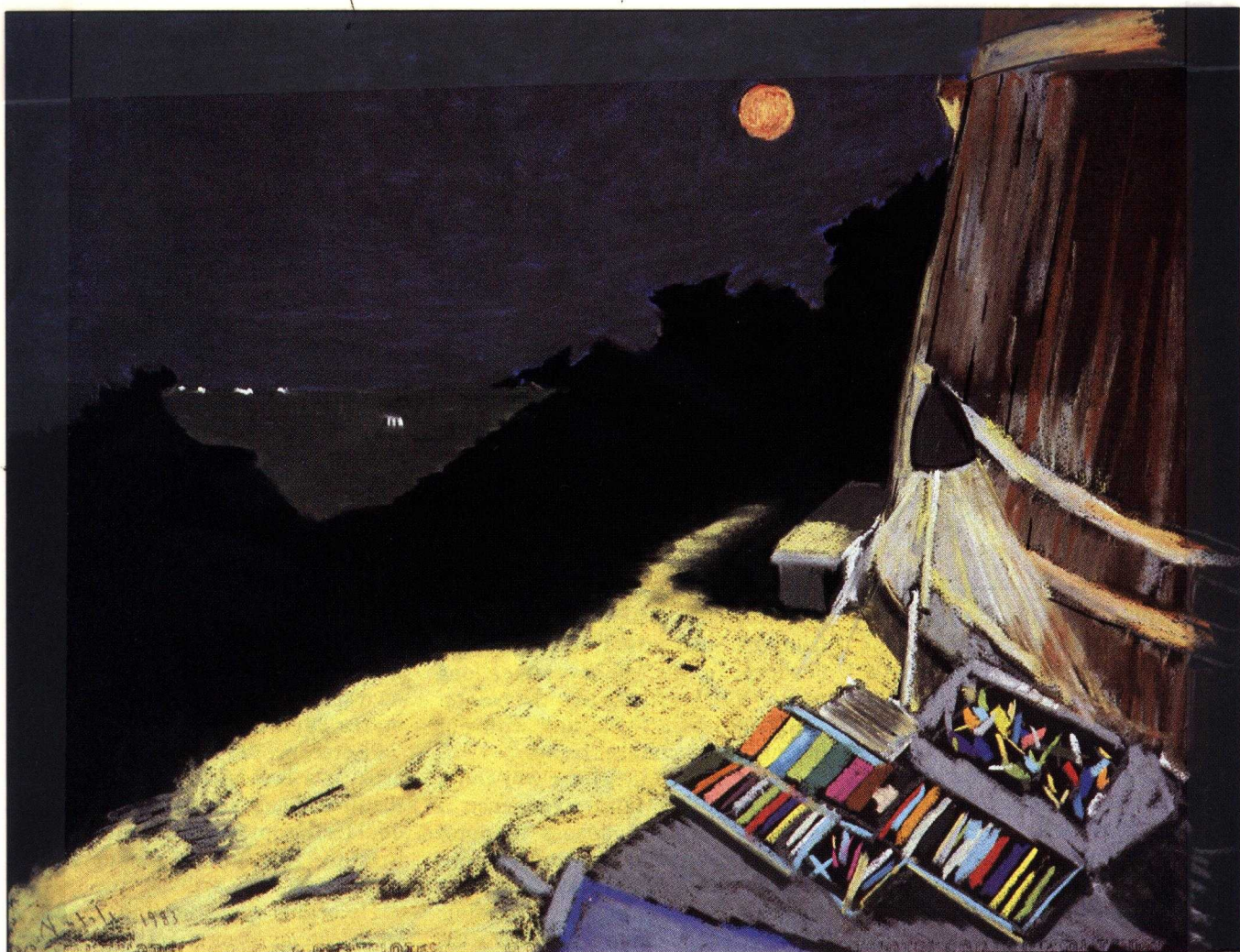


ART & THE ARTIST

by Steven W. Morton

Futzie Nutzle





I am picking on corporations," Futzie Nutzle says as he stops at a fence near the top of a grassy hill. He is painting in the field and his easel box lies open to the sun.

"I am not going against anything. I am going with it." Futzie Nutzle has been going with it for over twenty years. He has authored two books of drawings. His works have appeared in countless publications, on posters and T-shirts and in galleries around the nation. His name is calculatedly absurd. His art is cunning.

Nutzle speaks of the increasingly structured life the corporate world imposes. He's against what he sees as the "Big-Brotherly" influence of large corporations in this country, indeed, in the world. He says that even in rebellion an individual must find or make his place in the corporate world. Nutzle seems to have found this niche. He is a gadfly. He wields pen and brush to prick at the corporate giant so the Goliath can never ignore the power

of the personal, the seemingly insignificant spirit.

"Sometimes it's a fight; sometimes it's a joy. I am trying to find the flow and ride it, channel it, focus it so I can get to what I want."

He has pursued his "flow" even prior to 1961, when his drawings were first published by *Sundial*, the Ohio State humor magazine which once showcased James Thurber's cartoons.

He walks up the hill to an open

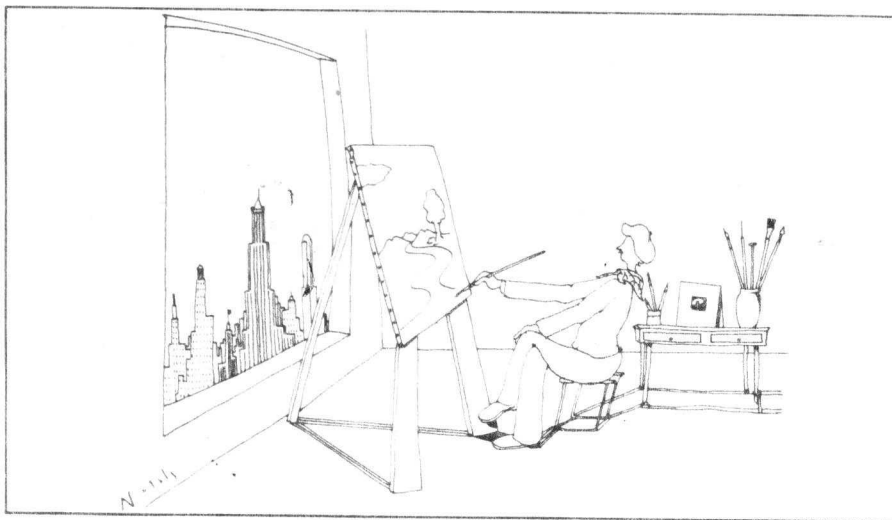
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space surrounded by old oaks to his studio—"Tanktown." It's two tall wine vats connected by a rectangular living area. Inside, Tanktown is simple and pleasant. Nothing fancy, except the paintings on the wall.

"Being an artist is the pinnacle. Everyone wants to be known as an artist, as opposed to a musician or a painter or a writer. An artist is one of the few people in the world who can exercise his personality in a world which becomes increasingly commercial.

"Being an artist," he adds, "is also the ultimate paradox. Art is acceptable. It is everywhere around us. And yet to live within the ideal of being an artist is extremely difficult. Knowing you are different...that there is a calling. And also realizing that your art must exist in today's economic climate. Not only does it have to be good, but you have to sell it." Nutzle's piercing, deep-set eyes soften to thoughtfulness. He acknowledges that his recent "picking on corporations" is not merely tilting at windmills, but is a careful task of observation, of definition, of personal depiction.

He brings out some canvasses, some fantastic, some realistic. He has been working in pastel chalk and oil paints.



Several night paintings stand out. Nutzle has been working by the light of the three-quarter moon. After choosing a location, he returns to the studio to select the appropriate colors and arranges them on the palette so he can use them in the near total darkness. A dark serenity resides in the night-scapes. A shadow barn sleeps near a huddle of low trees. A solitary yellow light illuminates the scene like a lamp left on as a guide to home.

These paintings and a body of other work represent a complete departure from the drawings Nutzle has become known for over the last ten years. Nutzle has always painted and he has worked in mediums other than pen and ink. But his drawings for *Rolling Stone* magazine, and his myriad piquant cartoons and captioned sketches brought him fame. Now Nutzle concentrates on oil painting.

"Painting is my self-development. It's what I'm after. It seems like a lifetime effort. I am always doing something. There is so much to paint."

Since his early days as an illustrator in a Cleveland ad agency, Nutzle has been prolific. Now in his forties, he feels particularly energetic. He considers painting "the supreme craft."

"Painting is so primitive and yet so sophisticated at the same time. On one hand exists the elemental concept of ancient man daubing colored dyes on a scrap of hide stretched over bone. On the other hand is the incredibly complex concept of creating a three-dimensional scene from two-dimensional materials. Painting has to do with the

surface. This distinguishes painting from the other arts. It is the ultimate challenge for me," he says after a long pause. Nutzle affirms that the painter still stands as a living link with our beginnings as cultural beings.

"What can an artist tell you about his work? You must experience it yourself." Stylized images of automobiles, factories, appliances, tanks and battleships all play important roles in his drawing and painting. There is a compelling sensuality in the renderings of pre-World War Two battleships—juggernauts of an era when right and wrong seemed a mighty, heroic notion.

"World War II was a cutoff point. That conflict was the last romance with war. My real father was killed in that war. My step-dad, who died recently, was also a veteran. That era is past, but the shapes of those material objects defined the essence of that age. There is a belief among artists and critics that sentiment has no place in modern art. Modern art is the fore-runner of commercial art. And yet the beautiful shapes of that history become a symbology for me. I can't tell you about every detail in my paintings.

"One of my works I called 'Launching a New Career.' It came out of a time when I had lost my job with *Rolling Stone*. My step-dad had died. I was at a difficult point. I try to work to these points and through them. I paint right off the top. Some ideas come as a result of drawing. I never know what I will do until I get the idea and sit down to work. Sometimes it's a

fight...sometimes it's a real fight."

He turns back to retouching a fresh oil portrait. As he works, he expounds his personal philosophy: "The problems in the world are just that. They are out there in 'The World'. People look for solutions to their problems in the world, not in themselves. That is the problem. They do other people's work; they try to solve other people's problems. They ignore the problem in themselves. I create my own problems and then I try to solve them. That is the challenge." He continues to brush the painting, his angular profile is hidden by the shadow of his hunched torso.

"I do all right," he says when asked about money, "but my needs are simple. I'm not a consumer. I don't buy goods because I don't see anything worth buying. I would like to have my own spread and be able to settle down on the land," he reflects.

"Some people think that being an artist is a breeze. It's not. I work all the time. There's always something to do. I feel happy and successful because I have the free time to pursue what I want to do—my art."

He begins stretching and stapling a fresh canvas over a frame. "There's always work to do. Stretching the hide over the bone. Like the early man. I'm doing the same work. But now, in the modern era, it's not enough to be an artist. You have to do what you do and then document it, for sale. You have to paint and then take slides of your work to show to galleries and so on. You are no longer just an artist; you're a business. That's the way it is. You have to have all the trappings of the business world in order to be a professional. There are so many considerations."

As for the immediate past, Nutzle had drawings in a political show in San Francisco during the Democratic National Convention. As for the future, "I have a show coming up in Los Angeles, and a book is to be published by Capra Press in the Spring of 1985 called *Cabin Fever*. In addition, I'll be having shows here and in Europe. I have a couple books in the works and more paintings to be finished."

Comfortably sitting with a friend who has just arrived, Nutzle seems relaxed and going with the flow. 