

Art:



IN CHURCHES, IN THE KITCHEN

by Charles Schorre

C THOUGHTS: If I have to go back into history to have my religious experience, I cannot have one. Someone else, living in that time in history, has already had it for me. An historical event, if misused in this manner, is adult thumb-sucking. It is an excuse for the individual to by-pass his own religious experience, a symbol of his non-involvement. If this historical religious experience is his *only* experience, he can't be blamed if something goes wrong; he can't be blamed if someone "proves" it didn't happen; he can't be blamed for not having the guts or courage to have his own religious experience. He's afraid it might be the wrong thing to do; it might be "out" or "camp"; it might be the wrong thing to do that year, just as Christ's being on the cross was the wrong thing to do that year.

Some of these things became a reality

to me while working (since early 1960) on a theme of crucifixion-birth... life-death... to die to become... stop, turn around, go again, live again... in another direction.

At first I just *had* to witness a hospital birth. I *had* to tie a cadaver (as near Christ's physical appearance as I could find) to a cross. I *had* to get a live man and rope him to the same cross. Some of these things could not be realized at the time: "Staff disease" in hospitals, couldn't get a doctor or hospital staff to let me in. I wanted to go to Mexico or some place and "be there" when a woman delivered her own baby rather primitively. This wasn't realized either.

Then it dawned on me that if all these things could be accomplished, the end result, no matter how successful, would still only be an *illustration* of an historical event—"They could have used a brighter color in the stained glass around the head of Christ"—the way all critics aren't involved. Unless you are in it, working with it, doing it, building it, with your hands and mind and feet and anything else that's handy. Like being a large file cabinet, full of facts about love, an authority, yet never having been there just once. A living dead authority; go to the Holy Land and see where *they* did it. I started to realize that I might use some facts, historical facts as a crutch, or springboard, but if anything authentic was

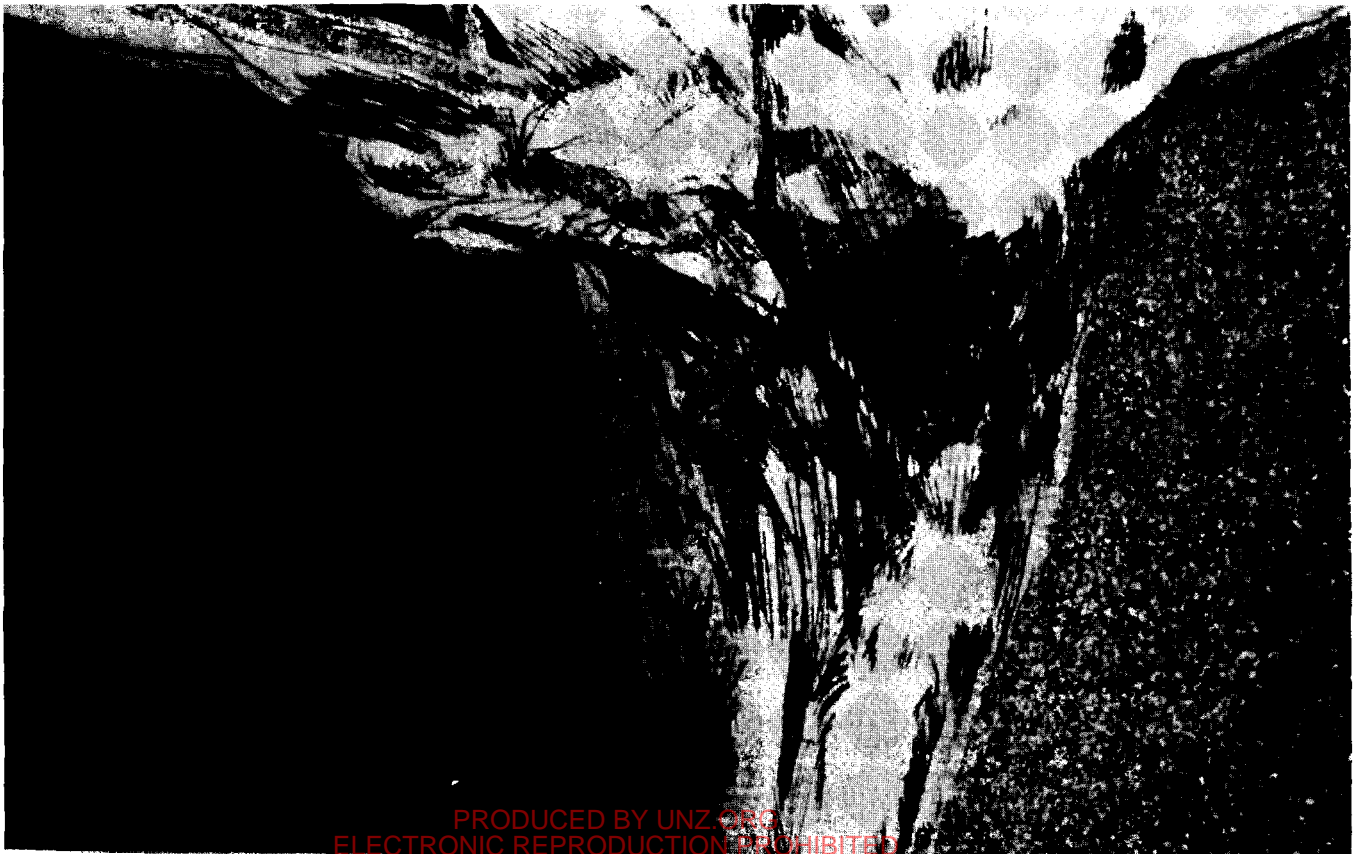
going to happen it was going to have to come from me.

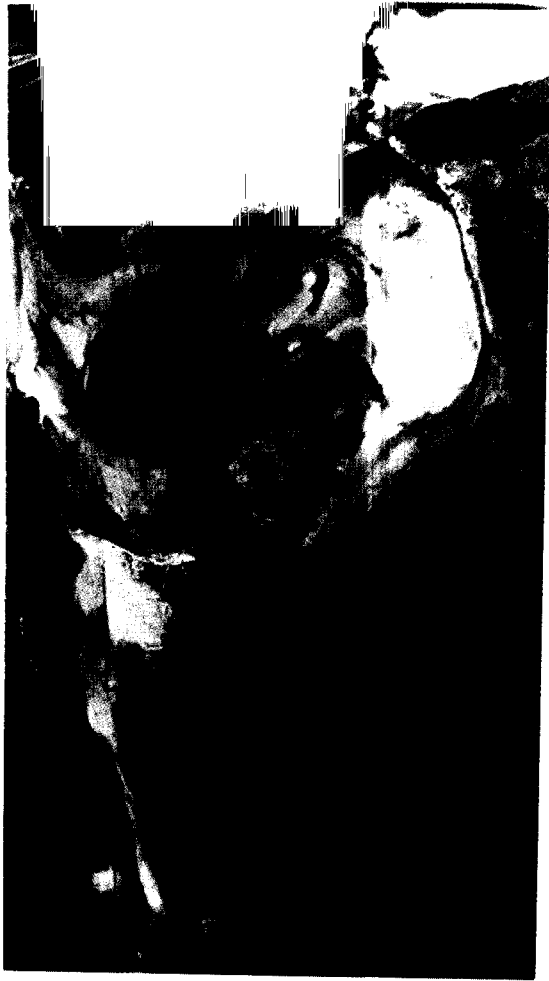
Recently about 14 "religious paintings" were on exhibit in the Chapel (Rice University campus). Because they were "religious paintings," no "art authority" committed himself in print about the exhibit. It was stimulating, however, to find the great number of people who weren't particularly educated about art who accepted a JFK assassination painting, a heart painting, a love painting, a birth painting, and a landscape in a "religious art" show.

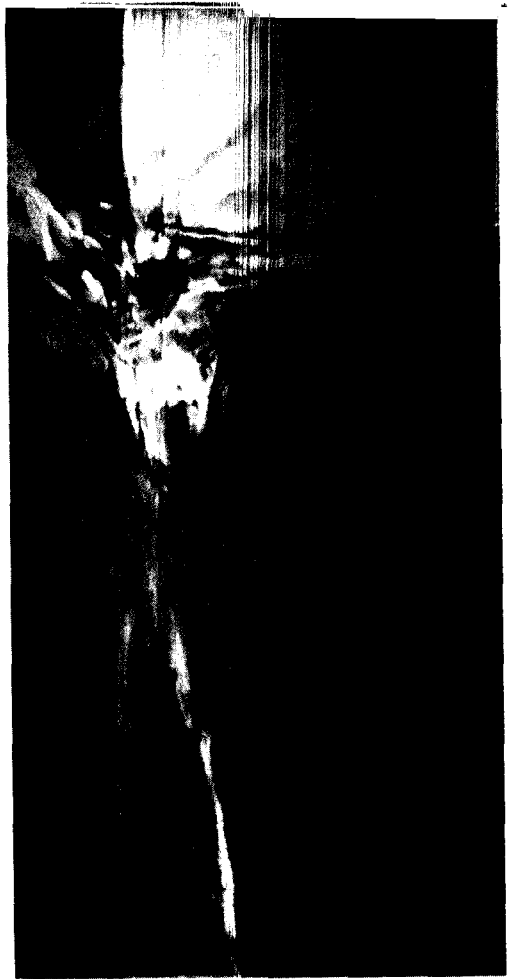
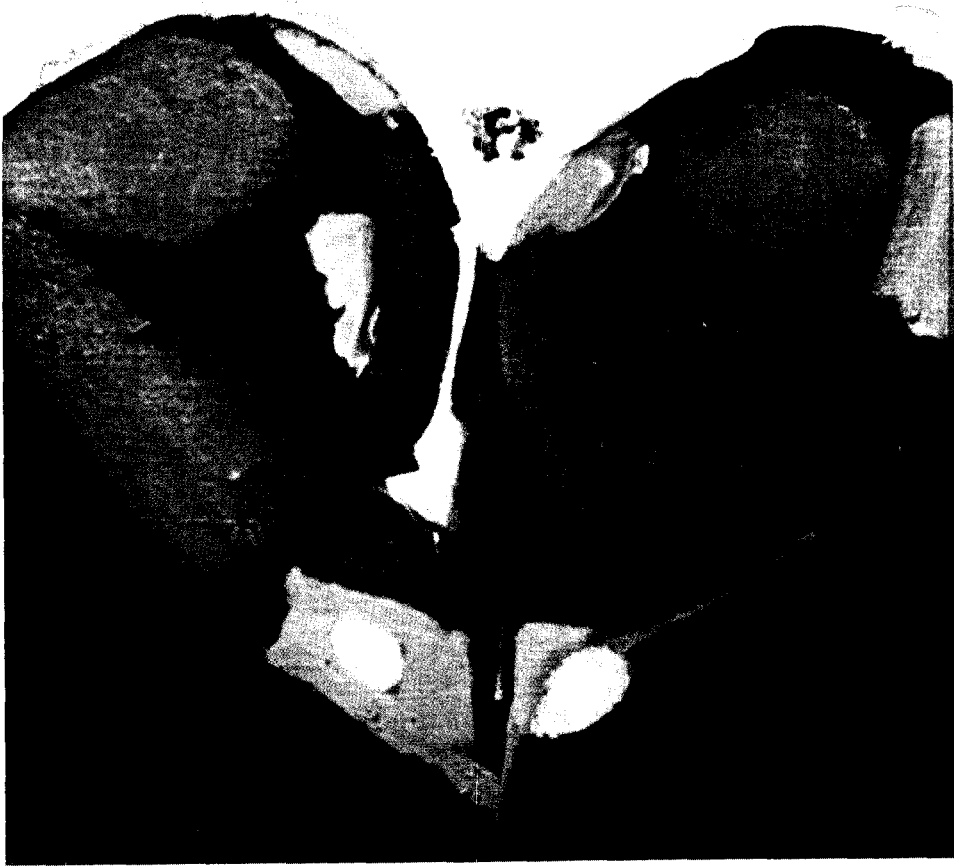
The movies "Patch of Blue" and "Zorba the Greek" were religious experiences for me; I have also had them in churches, in the kitchen washing the dishes with my wife, with my children in the back yard, with persons in strange places, with a life class in a university.

Are we "saved"? It is up to each one of us to live up to our salvation with all we have in us, to be with all of our being. If we don't, we are slob, slopping through life, no matter how clever, beautiful, rich, lucky, talented, charitable, or religious.

Artist Charles Schorre lives in Houston, Texas. Although he would admit of no such divisions, he is a teacher at Rice University, a commercial artist, and a painter. A selection of his Cruciforms appear here and on the following pages.







“Does anyone here wish “I do.” “Done.”

BY WAY OF THE above interchange, transacted in an English club, the ownership of one of the most famous islands in the world passed into the collective hands of the Mitford clan. Now, some thirty years later, Jessica Mitford again offers *Inch Kenneth* up for sale with the same query, “Does anyone here wish to purchase an island?” Such is the caprice of a transitory society.

[*Inch Kenneth*]

INCH KENNETH IS A SMALL ISLE in the Inner Hebrides, just off the coast of Scotland. The low deep green hills rise up from white shell-sand beaches. The bathing is excellent [average temperature: 74°]. Black-faced sheep, beef cattle and Shetland ponies graze in the lush pastures. The shoreline ranges from beaches to high rocky bluffs, and the air is scrubbed clean by the surrounding water. The isle is a grand and tranquil place — the last of its kind that will ever be offered for sale.

[*Johnson & Boswell*]

ON THE 19TH SUNDAY after Trinity, 1773, Doctor Samuel Johnson and James Boswell visited Inch Kenneth. Johnson wrote, “. . . romance does not often exhibit a scene that strikes the imagination more.” Reported Boswell in his *Journals*, “Dr. Johnson said that it was the most agreeable Sunday evening that he had ever passed in his life.”

[*Daffodils & Yellow Irises*]

INCH KENNETH has lost none of its charm during the intervening years. In the spring it is carpeted with crocuses, daffodils, and yellow irises. The 200 acres surround a handsome 15-room manor house with all the conveniences, including electricity, four baths, no telephones; the staff cottage, barns, the dairy, stables, two

jetties, a pair of 21 foot motor boats, the ruins of a chapel and crusader’s graveyard dating from 563 a.d., and a garage at Gribun, opposite on the isle of Mull. All is in fine repair except, of course, the ruins, which are supposed to be that way.

[*A Fine Motor Car*]

THE GARAGE AT GRIBUN contains what is perhaps the best kept 1924 Morris in the world. In this you travel from Gribun across Mull to meet the steam ferry that runs from Craigmure to Oban on the mainland of Scotland. The motor car is, of course, part of the package.

[*Lobster, Pheasant & Fresh Strawberries*]

FORTUNATELY INCH KENNETH is, in itself, more than capable of satisfying the healthiest and most discriminating of appetites.

SEAFOOD THRIVES in the deep surrounding waters: to augment the many varieties of fish there are lobsters, rock-oysters, cockles and mussels alive, alive, oh.

THE DAIRY [four milk cows] produces cream, butter, and cheese — not to mention milk that tastes like milk should, and did before automated dairies. Mushrooms and strawberries grow wild in the hills; all manner of vegetables grow tame in the garden. Beef cattle, grouse, and pheasant abound.

[*Special Delivery*]

A MOST ENTICING PACKAGE to be sure. And it can be purchased for less than you might imagine; about what you might pay for a fine house alone — sans island, sans daffodils, sans all.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION just write to *Ramparts*, c/o Jessica Mitford, 301 Broadway, San Francisco, California. Or just watch this space and run the danger of someone else snapping it up; on second thought it might just behoove you to write us Special Delivery.



