

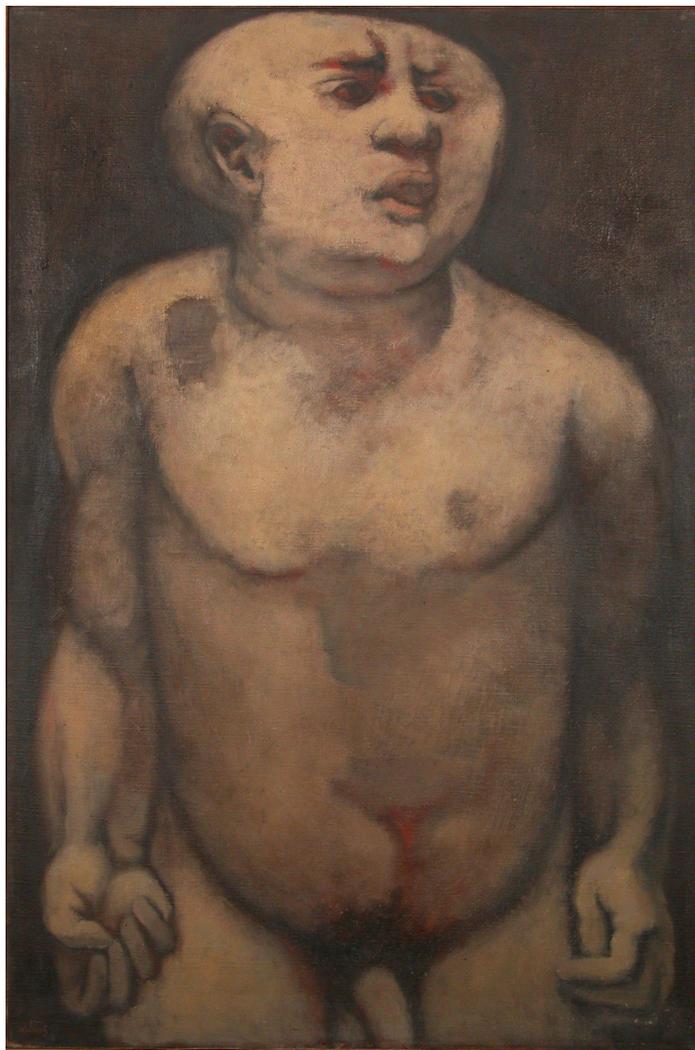
the art of elias friedensohn

1924—1991

25th Anniversary Issue

The 10th issue of the Elias Friedensohn Newsletter marks 25 years since his death in August of 1991. As writers have observed in previous issues, Eli was drawn to darkness and dreamed of light. His take on experience was multi-faceted and ironic: not either/or but both/and. Our featured retrospective essay by his son Adam explores these and related matters.

Behold the Man By Adam Friedensohn



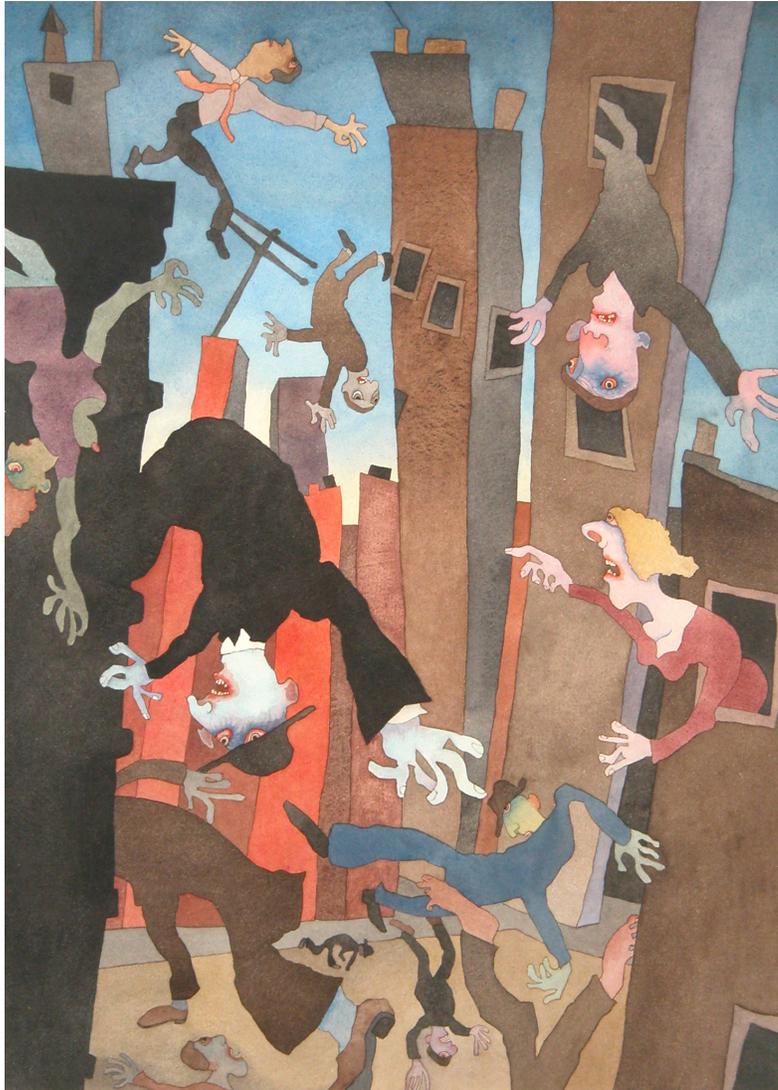
As an intense man who set up his life so that he could communicate his passion as a teacher and painter, my father influenced me greatly. As I careen through my mid-fifties, I often reflect on what motivates me in my own life; and in doing so, I consider what forces shaped him and how he made use of them.

Although he rarely spoke of it, Eli was deeply affected by World War II. It formed a permanent root deep inside him. He had seen first-hand the atrocities humans were capable of—without any evidence of compassion. In his mind, a strong disconnect from the suffering of fellow humans was an inherent danger. *(Continued)* ▼

Behold the Man | Oil on canvas | 30" h x 20" w | Circa 1957

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Remembering my father from this perspective, I see a man ensconced in unrelieved suffering—trying, as I do, to make sense of the world's cruelties. His experience of futility grew out of feeling responsible for deeds beyond his control. He suffered from the job he had to do as a soldier: dodging tank fire and sending mortar bombs across trenches to kill men he never met. His career seemed to be fueled, in good part, by a drive to communicate violence out of control. Eli's art expressed everything that was unstable and unbelievable.



His paintings exposed lies, insecurities, desperation and the groping for meaning we all go through. In the end, only art had order. I remember him telling me: "Make order out of Chaos, son. Art is ordered chaos."

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Grand Defenestration

Watercolor
18 3/4" h x 15" w
Circa 1987



Levitation of Lovers

Oil on canvas

72"h x 60"w

Circa 1972

I endeavor to find redemption in my father's work. Today, we watch the re-run of pre-war Nazi Germany in our own 2016 election processes. Yet again, we fail to read the signs that we are obedient cogs in a machine designed to make a fortune for a few fat old white men and their soulless offspring who will inherit a barren earth.

Will our bodies evaporate in the coming Rapture now that we have accepted Jesus? Or will our souls, released by nukes from our carnal prisons, be delivered on floating airless journey through space to some hospitable planet we saw in pictures in the most recent *National Geographic*?

(Continued) ▼



Fidelity Insurance

Oil on canvas

90"h x 78"w

1971

Wherefore Art Thou, Salvation?

Certainly we shouldn't protest in the streets. We'll only be carted away in police busses to live with incarceration and a record. We shouldn't bother arming ourselves against a militarized police who handle "domestic terrorists" in untelevised ways. Our life's stewardess will deliver a "brace and kiss our asses goodbye" announcement after earphone distribution and drink service. Additional life insurance from the airport counter may help us even though it did nothing for the free falling victims in *Fidelity Insurance*. Alas, each outward move we make only strengthens forces that harm us. What will necessary disobedience achieve? This is the lesson of quicksand: struggle makes for a faster sinking. "Resistance is futile; please board the train and follow instructions."

(Continued) ▼

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Mrs. Gorton's Finest Grass Seeds | Oil on canvas | 45"h x 38"w | 1968/1988

Although at the time he painted the grass goddess legalizing the substance was nowhere in the offing, he foresaw that an enhanced love affair with marijuana could easily seduce us all.

Now that grass is legal, we can finally smoke enough to relax in the face of death. Today, when white men can make dope fun and profitable, we forget how many black men were incarcerated simply for using it.

If we are stoned, will our rigidities truly soften? Remember how cameramen used to smear Vaseline on their lenses to make women look soft and dazed?

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Ecstatic over Brooklyn

Oil on canvas

60"h x 48"w

1973

Eli's work could lead us to the mistaken conclusion that human nature is too dark to transform and that whatever individuals decide to do is irrelevant. But there is redemption in his work. We need to reckon with our dangerous hidden sides; we should appreciate that he was going through the vital process of disarmament on our behalf.

In this process, catharsis and transformation are both critical. Like a peacock, Eli's work transforms the poisonous plants we are fed daily into the brightly colored feathers that seduce us into examining our darker sides.

In some cases he offers humor as a possible lighter exit, as demonstrated by his satirical watercolors; and lastly, in *Ecstasy Over Brooklyn*, Eli shows us that we can rise above the chaos of our lives by mounting the vehicle of love. ■

This monthly newsletter is produced by the Estate of Elias Friedensohn.

Among our goals are to showcase the originality and diversity of the artist's work and to circulate comments on the paintings and sculpture by critics, artists, friends and fans.

Books available (please see next page) ▼

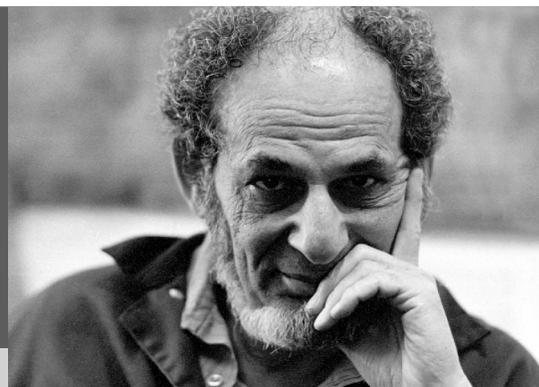


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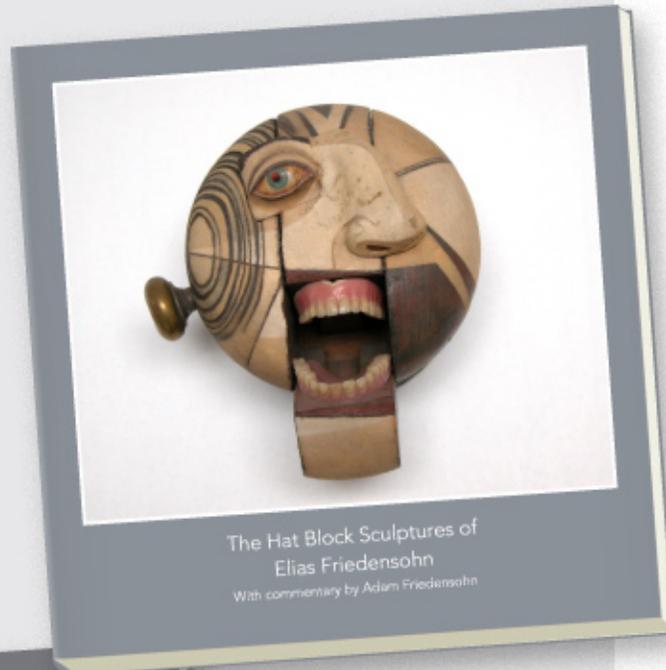
Books

Two full-color books on work by Elias Friedensohn are available for order:

The Hat Block Sculptures of Elias Friedensohn, designed and with text by Adam Friedensohn

and

The True Book of Crows, designed by Shola Friedensohn and with text by Elias Friedensohn



The Hat Block Sculptures of
Elias Friedensohn
With commentary by Adam Friedensohn



The True
Book of Crows
by Elias Friedensohn

These handsome books illuminate two aspects of this multi-faceted artist's oeuvre.

New price:

each book is \$50, which includes shipping and handling; add 7% NJ sales tax of \$3.50.

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To order, please contact:

doris.friedensohn@verizon.net with your order. She will request your mailing address, phone number (for delivery purposes) and check. Your order will be shipped directly to the address you provide.

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