

Notes of a Mad Girl #12 - Interview via Hearse

Artists who are considering teaching on the college or university levels after Graduate School typically head to the College Art Association Conference for interviews. You apply for numerous positions and you pray that you are on the short list for any C.A.A. spots.

Scheduled to graduate with a Masters of Fine Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin, Madison I had five interviews lined up for the eight-printmaking jobs scattered across these United States of America. The conference in 1980 was held in New Orleans, Louisiana and my new, stylish and only tailored wool outfit was ill suited for the Big Easy's warm and muggy weather.

My interview with the University of Houston folks turned into three different meetings in New Orleans, which sent me racing to borrow clothes from my art friends. In graduate school I wore a uniform of denim coveralls and tee shirt.

It was exciting, then, to receive the follow-up phone call in Madison from the University of Houston for a formal Texas interview. Same suit in tow I headed south and stayed with my cousin Patty and her husband Lenny. They lived in a subdivision somewhere west of Houston. When both of them left for work without a word, I on the other hand was left without a clue as to how I was to get to the interview or where this University of Houston was located. Who knew Houston was so large and sprawling?

I unsuccessfully searched for a phone book and the telephone operator refused to give me a taxi company number. So I grabbed my large black portfolio, walked out the door to the street corner and armed with a weird recollection of a nearby highway I started walking. You could see Houston on the horizon so I put out my thumb while standing on the highway in hopes of a ride.

It amazed me how huge a loop called 610 could be. But three rides later and with a vision of oil refineries as far as one could see I knew I

was lost. Finally the sweetest guy driving a shiny black hearse pulled over to give me a lift. That guy was calm, funny and the first driver to actually know where the campus was located. After years of seeing sadness and desperation on the faces of grieving relatives this kind man went miles out of his way to drive me to the very steps of the art department of the University of Houston.

My hopes of a clandestine hearse drop-off were dashed upon seeing a number of professors and students waiting for my arrival. I leapt out of the hearse, hugged the man in sincere thankfulness and babbled incoherently to everyone about having to hitch a ride to my interview. They were pale and speechless.

I did not get the job. I came in second place to one of my Madison colleagues. The following year UH offered me that very same job but by then I was happily tooling around the print room at Rice University not far from that very same campus.

Maybe in retrospect they actually came to think more highly of a person who was so determined to arrive for her interview even if it meant via a hearse. I really can't remember whether we were with casket or without.