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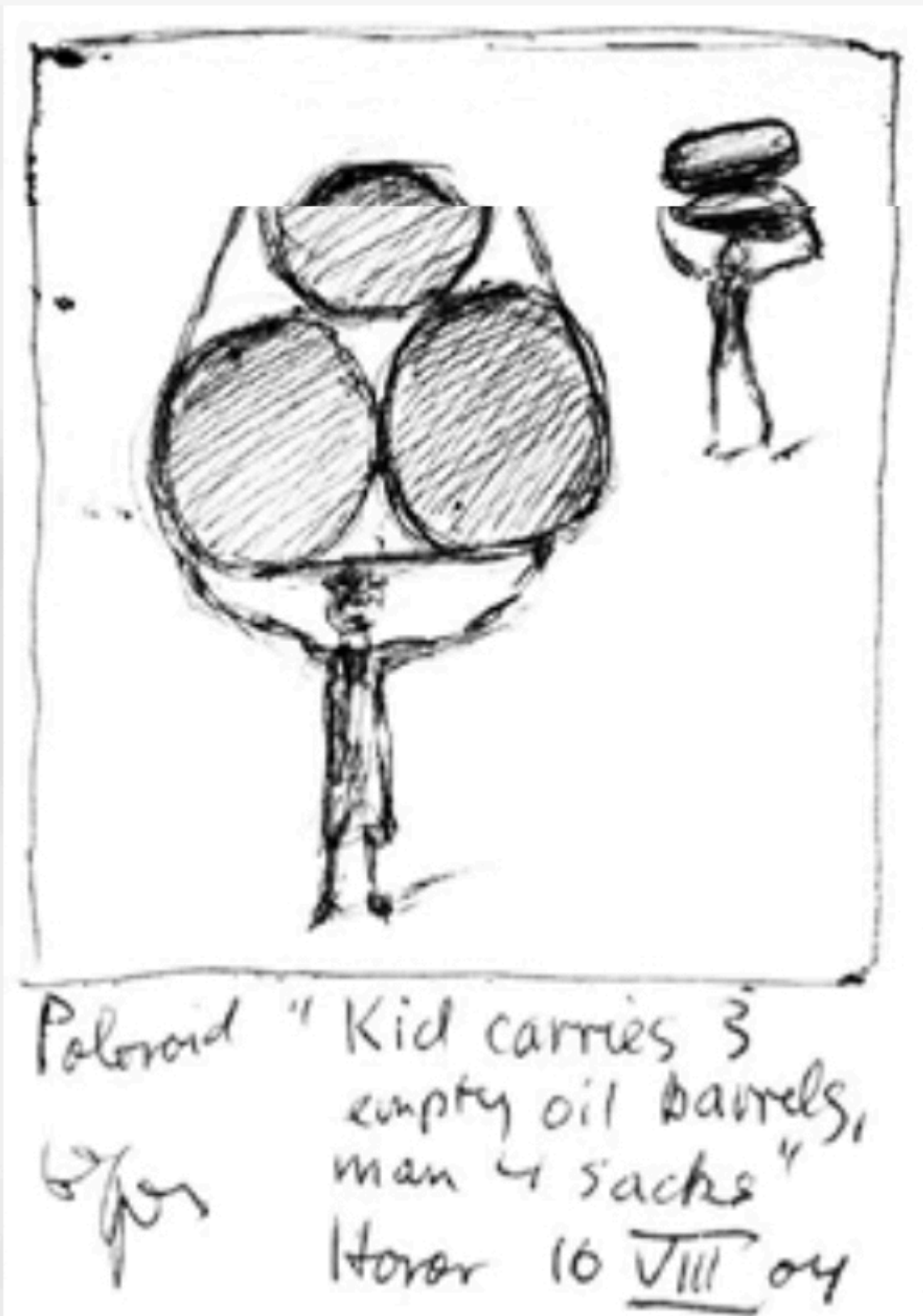


Downtown Express

A return to simple form

By amNY

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By Talia Page

‘Polaroid’ artist acts as the camera, filter and viewfinder.

Portraits of the Art of Traveling (and Observation)

Egon Zippel

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In ballpoint sketches, Egon Zippel champions the “hand of the artist” with a postmodern return to the direct experience. Demonstrating a sharp contrast to his training as a professional graphic artist, and as yet another facet of his work as a conceptual artist, his drawings abandon all reference to carefully considered digitized designs. Instead, they offer a sense of playful intimacy and insight into the dynamic creative spirit.

Zippel focuses intensely on physically communicating his raw expressive energy and intellect through mind-eye-hand coordination. Zippel refers to his sketches as “Polaroids” because they are made on the spot. The difference between actual Polaroids and his drawings, of course, is that with the latter, Zippel himself acts as the camera, the filter, and the viewfinder.

Unsurprisingly, Zippel claims, “It’s a challenge to create something that defies your education and training as a communications designer and at the Art Academy of Frankfurt’s Center For New Media. I have been doing handmade Polaroids for 20 years now and am more intrigued than ever by the simplicity and elegance of it.”

As he is accustomed to creating time-consuming constructions requiring complex technologies, the human mechanics and basic tools involved in making an artistic “final product” are of particular interest to him. “Cameras can be manipulated, so they are subjective, but I find that there is greater flexibility with pen and paper. I can give immediate life to abstract ideas, thoughts, associations, and words as soon as they come to me. It is always an honest portrayal. Nothing is covered or distorted with expensive equipment, or betrayed by technological glitches and shortcomings.”

In a world of affluent technical possibilities, Zippel relishes the challenges of a return to a simplicity that is rendered with ballpoint pens and index cards.

This month, Zippel’s Polaroid-filled studio is open to fellow travelers and cohorts. Selecting from 20 years’ worth of work and thousands of Polaroids, he has chosen to show pieces created in Ethiopia and Gambia, because he feels that these Third World countries are kindred spirits to the notion that complicated, personal experiences can be shared with the most rudimentary of tools.

“The Polaroids contain my artistic universe,” says Zippel. “They are the visual essence of my daily experience. They are both a point of departure, an art diary that carries in itself the nuclei for all my other work, as well as finished works which stand on their own.”

To compliment the Polaroids, Zippel is also displaying a series entitled “Twenty Years Of Waiting.” These are small cards, made on a daily basis, that list the date, time, place, and names of people that he is waiting for.

Combining the universal and the personal, Zippel’s sketches recall the intuitive nature of Jackson Pollock, the small-scale poetics of Paul Klee and the radical conceptualism of John Baldessari, replete with a contemporary global twist.