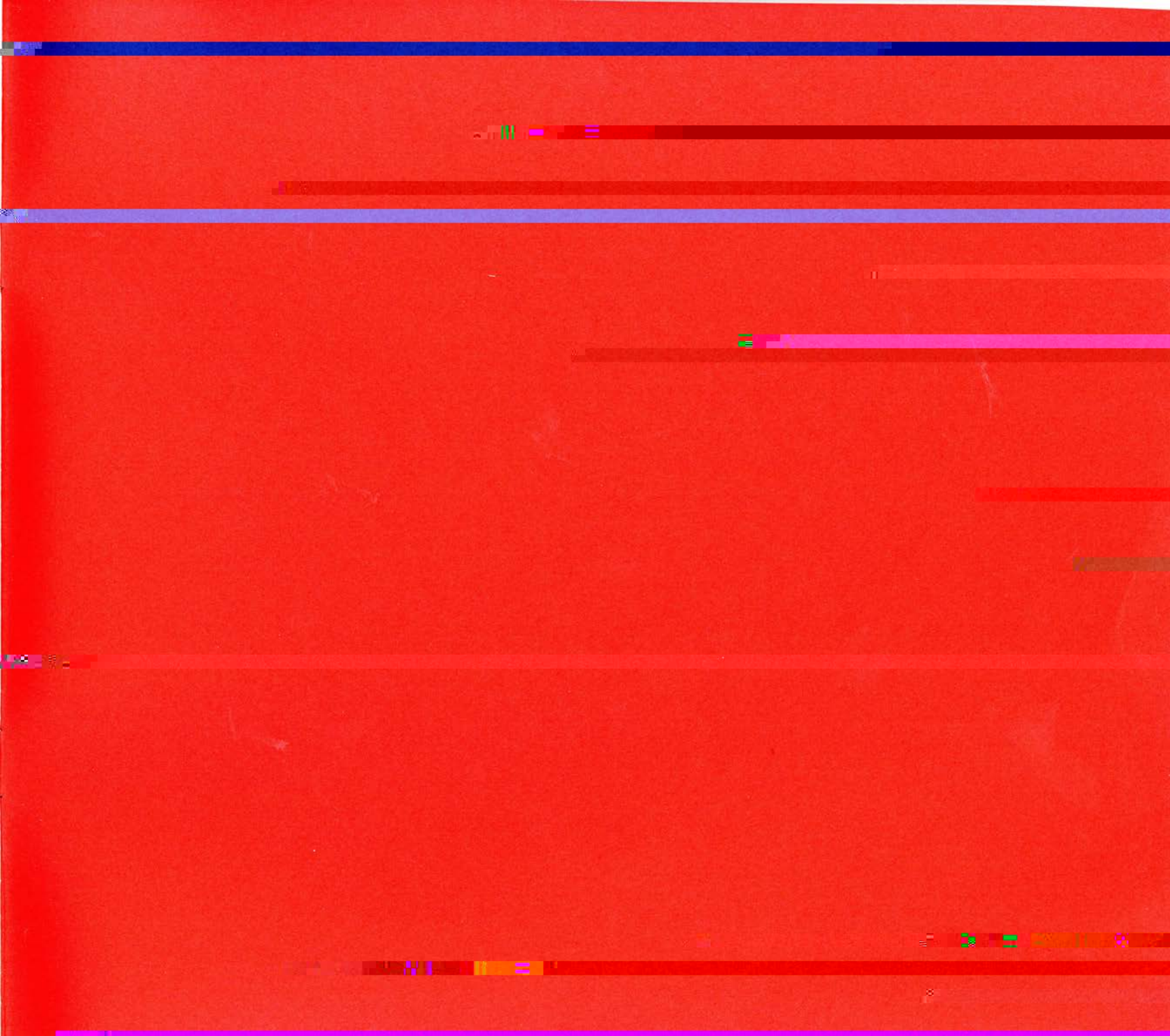


PEE WEE ROOLES
AND
GEORGE WASHINGTON



THE ART OF

DEWEE RUSSELL
AND
GEORGE WETTLING

Sordani Art Gallery, Wilkes College
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

April 27 through June 4, 1994

Essays by Hank O'Neal and Dan Morgens

Exhibition Organized by the Sordani Art Gallery



Left to right: Max Kiminsky, trumpet; Eddie Condon, guitar; Pee Wee Russell, clarinet; Frank Orchard, trombone; George Wettling, paintbrush and palette.

Lenders to the Exhibition

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

painter was an American abstractionist, Stuart Davis, with whom he traded drawings for paintings. Weiling's images are bold, geometric abstractions of animal subjects like Eddie Condon's night club. Like Davis's paintings, they reflect a deep love for jazz.

Such extraordinary jazz musicians, we are indebted to those who helped organize this exhibition and the concert held in conjunction with it: Pee Wee Russell once said that he didn't know what he would do without his clarinet. He couldn't live without music and his music was a strong and vital force in his paintings. One of the lenders to the exhibition was Andrew Spaulding III, Chairman of the Sordani Art Gallery Advisory Commission; Hank Neal, clarinetist and producer; Dan Morgenstern, Professor of Music, Rutgers University; and Kenny Davern, clarinetist.

Most of all, I would like to thank the lenders who, through their generosity, have made this exhibition possible.

Judith H. O'Toole, *Director*

CHARLES ELLSWORTH PEE WEE RUSSELL

Within a music business in which, by the late 1920s, Russell stood out. He was a maverick whose approach to the clarinet — and to jazz — was, in many ways, his own. And he was far from venturing into what musicians of the "space" long before being far out had become fashionable, but always landing safely on his feet. Pianist Dick Wellstood has described "the miracle of Pee Wee's playing" as "that crabbed, choked, knotted tangle of squawks with which he could create such woody freedom, such a sense of being in a private universe." But while that unique vocabulary of riffs and effects is one side of Pee Wee's music, the other side could also coax comrasingly lovely, gentle sounds from his horn.

Pee Wee spent most of his career playing with small groups of a rather freewheeling kind, and has been apprehended by some as an intuitive musician. But he was far from intuitive. In the late 1920's, in fact, he was a first-string recording artist, doubling on soprano, alto and tenor saxophones and bass clarinet. In Muskogee, Oklahoma, he took lessons on piano, violin and drums, but the clarinet became his chosen instrument (when he heard the famous New Orleans clarinetist, "Papa" Joe "Yellow" Nunez). He pursued his studies with the first-chair clarinetist of the St. Louis Symphony. He was a self-taught, self-motivated, not untutored.

Though he was sent to the University of Missouri, Pee Wee was not yet a professional musician. Early on, he encountered a fellow maverick, trombonist Ted Garden, with whom he formed a close friendship, and by the time he was 18, he had roamed the southwest and played in Mexico and Carroll. Back in St. Louis in late 1925, he booked up with the legendary cornetist Bix Beiderbecke and his sidekick, saxophonist Frank Trumbauer.

In the following summer, Pee Wee and Bix roomed together in a rooming house, and they fed themselves on a diet of canned pork and beans, corn

Thus Pee Wee's jazz credentials were in good order when he arrived in New York City in 1937. On the same date, he recorded his first solo, "Sweet As Apple Cider" for Pennies, he cut a solo on "Ida, Sweet As Apple Cider" that revealed his sophisticated, sophisticated sound.

Early in 1935, Pee Wee was a key member of the band that put 32nd Street on the map as "Swing Street." It was the quintet led by the Chicago-born trumpeter and singer Louis Prima, which also recorded prolifically. Because of Prima's emphasis on showmanship, these records, and Pee Wee's two by co-conductors, were all hits, but Pee Wee felt they were all "same old same old." He made a short film, and he started with the trumpeter when he

stepped out on his own. His association with Prima was his first. He'd first worked in New England in 1933, and this also included big-band work. — Pee Wee's lasting in this

Pee Wee joined Bud and the Pan's Summit College band, a freewheeling type identified with a jazz entrepreneur

— a musical home for Pee Wee and other musicians as well. Mixed with this style of jazz were known care for stylistic pigeonholing, and

the '20s

In 1950, Pee Wee moved to San Francisco, where his playing had reached a new level, and he had

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exhibition is the second in a series established in 1984 with the presentation of the music and paintings of jazz pianist Erroll Garner. The paintings of Art Haggart, the paintings of Pee Wee Russell and George Wettling are visual evidence of the creative impulses which made them such extraordinary jazz musicians.

Pee Wee Russell once said that he didn't know what he would do without his clarinet. He couldn't live without music. The same sentiment is the presence in his painting. The curator for this exhibition said he liked Pee Wee's paintings because they reminded him of his playing. They reflect an interest in syncopation, strong rhythms, and vibrant color — all terms that are applicable to both mediums.

George Wettling always carried a sketchbook with him. He drew on a gig, wherever he was. His mentor as a

pianist was the American and his paintings were based on familiar subjects like Eddie's London's night Club. Like Davis' paintings, they reflect a deep love for the jazz.

We are indebted to those who helped organize this exhibition and the concert held in conjunction with it:

Gallery Advisory Commission, Hank O'Neal, author and producer, New York City; Dan Morgenstern, Director of the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University; and Benny Davern, clarinetist.

Most of all, I would like to thank the people who through their generous efforts have made this exhibition possible.

Judith O'Toole, Director

that year he collapsed. His friends in the jazz world rallied to his aid (a touching photograph of Louis Armstrong and Jack P. Morgan at his bedside appeared in *Life* magazine), and staged benefit concerts on his behalf. Music pulled through, and by October 1951 resumed work at the helm of his own group — a rare instance in his career. Soon he was playing as well as ever, and just as soon had given up leading bands. The then-new genre

him, and he became a member of George Weins Newport All Stars, with whom he visited Europe for the first time in 1961. In the following years he formed a quartet with trombonist-arranger, Charlie Brown as co-leader. Though short-lived, this group attracted considerable attention, not least because his repertoire included compositions by Thelonious Monk (with whom Pee Wee had appeared at a Newport Festival in 1955).

Wee had not changed his style, but the material and setting were different. He brought and recognition from a new generation of listeners. He won the *Down Beat* International Critics Poll through 1968, and in 1969 was voted into *Down Beat* magazine's Hall of Fame.

Pee Wee's final years were busy and productive ones. In 1964, he toured Australia, New Zealand and Japan in a position to select the jobs he wanted, and his devoted wife, Mary, felt that he should no longer commit himself to exhausting travel schedules. Like most jazz musicians,

learned that he should find something which would occupy his spare time. One day he came across a paint set in a department store, bought it and some pre-stretched

husband. "Here," she said, "Do something with that. Though I have never seen you paint before."

To her surprise, he proceeded to do just that. Though he had never seen a painting of any kind, though his knowledge of painting or works of art was limited, he took to his new task with zeal. Within a few

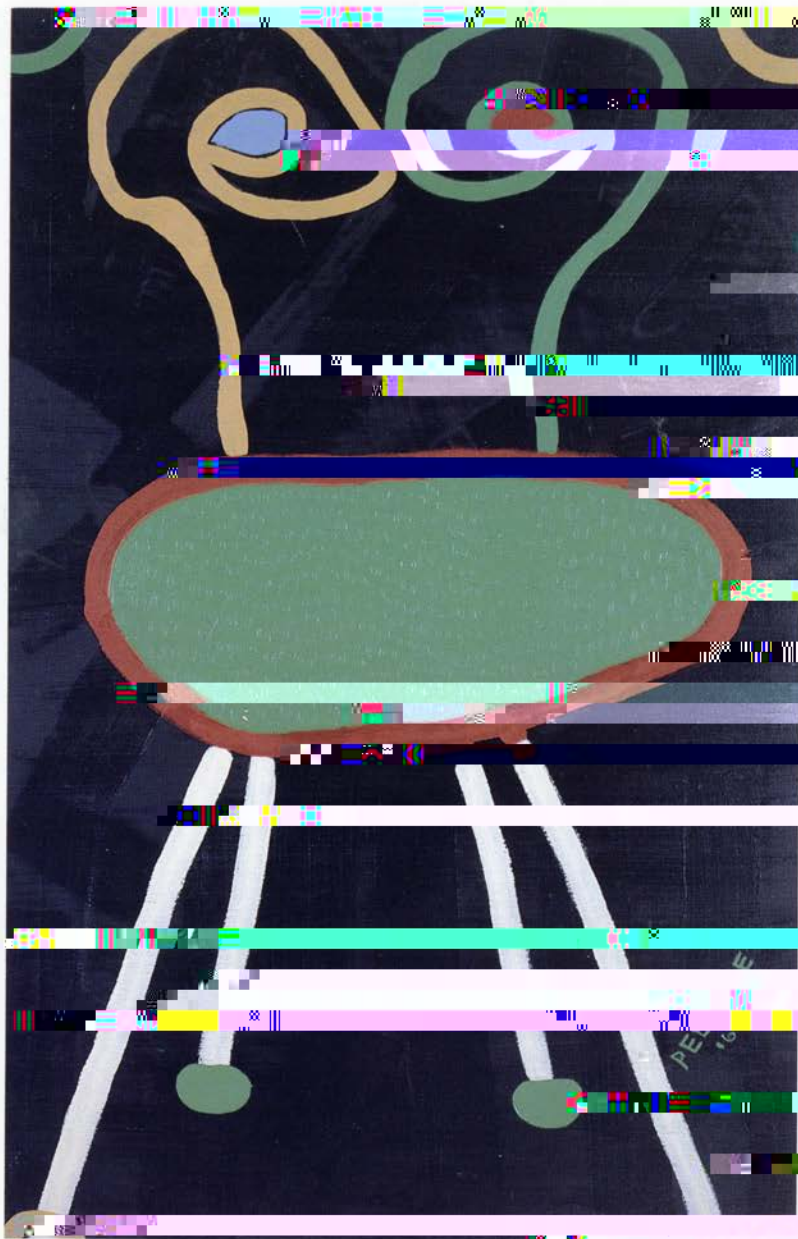
years of work, he had converted his spare time into a hobby. His art — his touch was sure, his sense of form and color, and his work in the medium displayed the same unclassified originality that marked his playing. In a burst of creativity, he

immensely when they were praised by his friends. He had been able to do this — his touch was sure, his sense of form and color, and his work in the medium displayed the same unclassified originality that marked his playing. In a burst of creativity, he

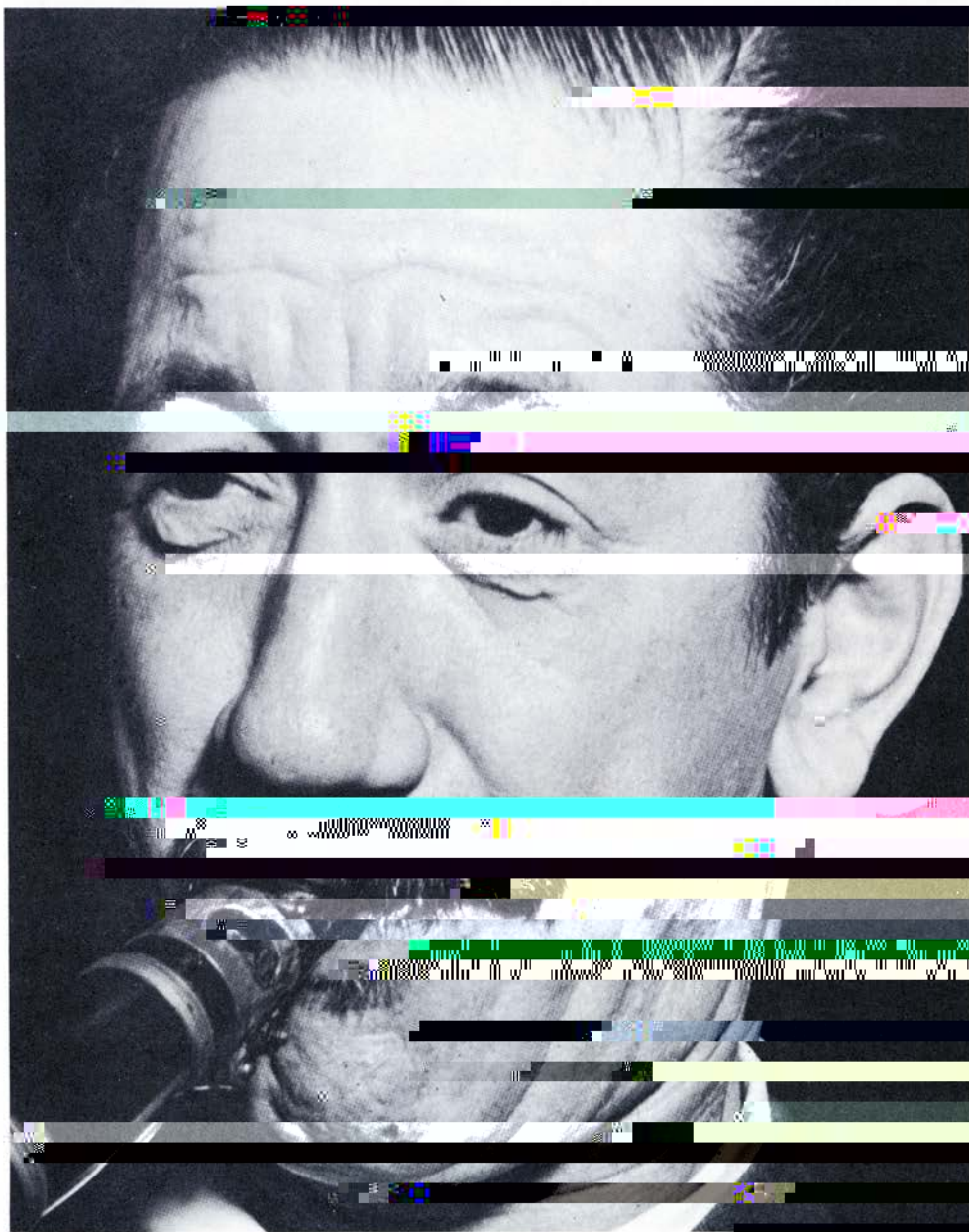
painting ceased, and the drinking, which he and Mary had been able to do for many years. There were still some things that he had been able to do for many years. There were still some things that he had been able to do for many years.

1969. After that, Pee Wee felt very tired and with friends in the Washington, D.C. area. On his own volition, he entered a private hospital in August 1969. He died on 10th October 1969.

Dan Morgenstern
March 1980



10. Pee Wee Russell, *The Twins from Mars*, 1966



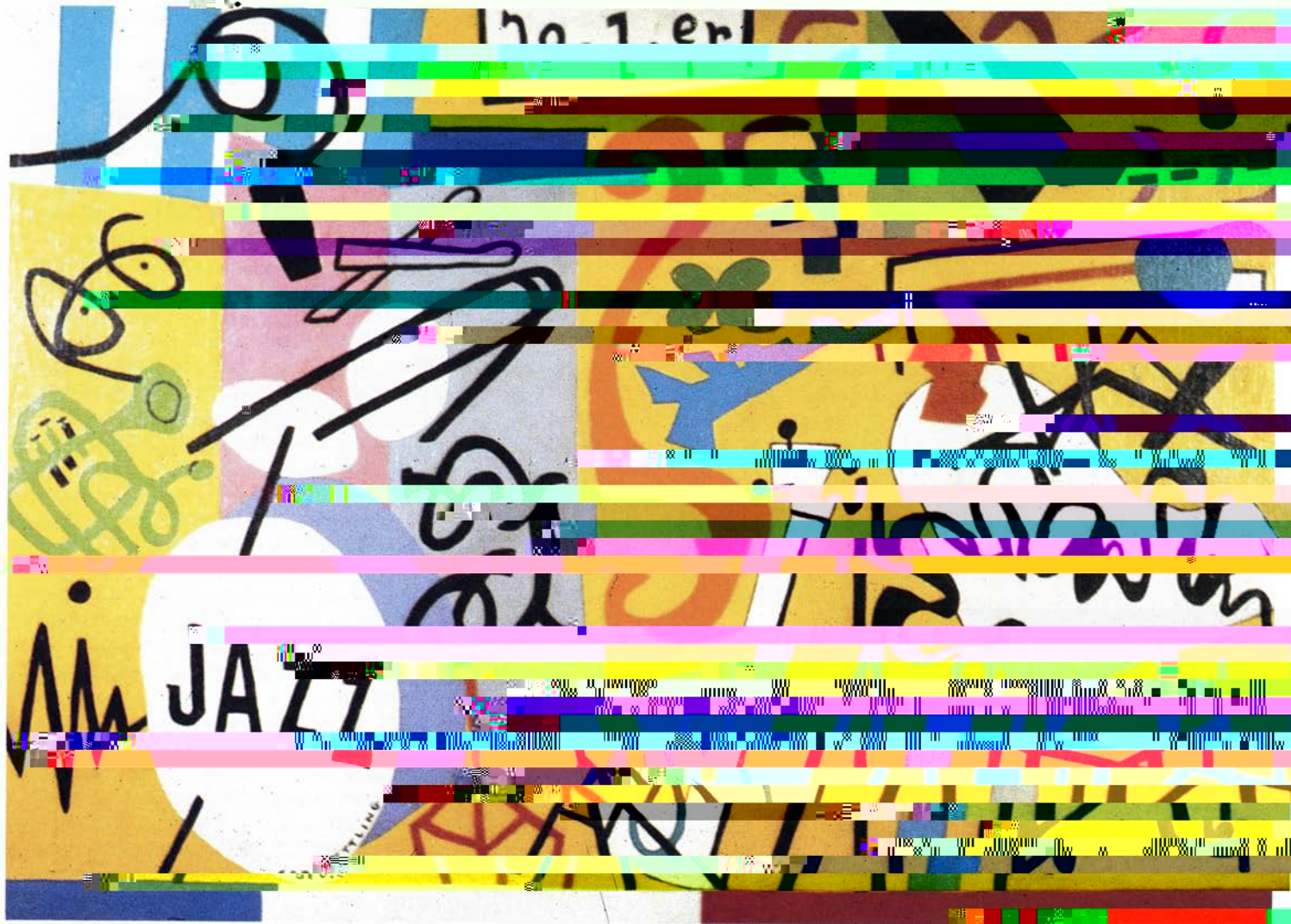
Photograph of Pee Wee Russell





29. George Weiming, 7 2006



8. Page 10 of 10



22. Ger.  Rae Wejtina. Ja 

GEORGE WETTLING

April 16, 1954, *Celebrity Service's Celebrity Bulletin* picks its celebrity of the week along with Willie Holdrege, Duke Allen, Ella Fitzgerald, Ivonne DeCarlo and Portland Hoffa. George Wetling, the multi-talented painter, writer, photographer and highly skilled jazz musician. He died at Weill Hospital thirteen years and one month later, remembered by a few, but not many, was a bad little sort of an in-between time in terms of the historians and scholarly types. It's a pity that quickly he's been forgotten. Don't mean by you jazz fans or even jazz fans who emerged in the 1970's who have had little or no opportunity to hear his music, let alone know about him but by the current batch of writers, critics and educators who show what better in Wetling's oblivion is, however, much more complicated than simple happy scholar's ill-informed listeners who really believe *Swing* plays jazz.

George Wetling the same year as Dave Tough and two years before Gene Krupa, the others in the triumvirate of exceptional white drummers from the midwest. He was in Chicago by 1921, the right place at the right time able to be influenced by the influx of great musicians from New Orleans and some equally great young musicians growing up in Chicago. By the time he was twenty he had already formed a line-up of men and recorded with Muggsy Spanier, Frank Teschmacher, Joe Sullivan, Freddie Condon and a host of others. He was not only an exceptional drummer with small jazz ensembles but was also sufficiently versatile to handle big band chores with Paul Whiteman, Chico Marx and Burns. In the 1930's and the ABC staff in the 40's and 50's. Jobs like these paid the rent but the musical friendships he made in the 1920's allowed to his finest performances and the best working conditions. But the good jobs were never sufficient to provide a steady income, even during the 1940's and 1950's when the

music that and fewer jobs for a drummer like Wetling, with his old who were less and There were no red music festivals, with the Duke of Dixieland or Hatcherider's Trio at Bill Gay Nighties, a place in a hamburger to hurried he martinis to the same old stairs. In the Spring of 1960 no longer climb the stairs. He gave up and died in June. A few weeks later became aware of his

Me: an Meard and telephoned me sometime in mid-June 1963; told me Wetling had died, that be cheered if they were quickly removed that it was my duty to help her. I loved the music, had a strong back. I'll see an auto child in Memphis. I agreed with her on all points and we did the job on a sunny Saturday afternoon.

When I was in an apartment I was not surprised to see everything in a state of disrepair. That housekeeper was on Jimmie's street but she had not warned me about the state that Wetling painted. I had some at his house but I was unprepared to see anything lying about the apartment.

was not surprising. We placed the drums in a small room and then went to see the widow Wetling. She was not having a good day. In fact, it appeared she had but one thing registered very quickly: she



30. George Westinghouse, ...

exhibition at the Sordani Art Gallery and it is likely a third is also present. Age and stylistic similarities point

to the City No. 2 or the City No. 3 being omitted No.

One in the cup.

Wetling's paintings fall into four distinct stylistic periods; examples or each are presented in this

technique and lack of direction, as mentioned in **Maggie Condon** at **My First** page. These

paintings are charming but very primitive. He entered his second phase well before the 1947 show, exhibiting

a much stronger dependence on Stuart Davis; shown in **Stuart Davis**

phase, perhaps his best, began in the late 1940s and lasted into the early 1950's where the complete

dominance of Davis is apparent, as is a secure technique. **Jazz Is In**, a painting that tells about a

recording session and was the focal point of an article and

example of his work at this time and is perhaps his finest painting. **Roadgraders and High A**

exhibited at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1952.

are also in the late 1950's shows the influence of Davis but here

Wetling's is presented in more personal vision, as may be seen in **Self Portrait**, and **McSorley's**.

It is likely Wetling did not continue to paint in the 1960's, even though his sketch books continue to 1967. It

may well be the sketch books took the place of larger works for, beginning in the early 1950's

date and many of his tiny drawings, **Torino 33** and **Gay Williams of 7**. It also appeared

stopped to give up painting. There is nothing in his scrapbooks

unclear why he stopped, or whether he was

supper longer interested but this seems unlikely. The death of

Stuart Davis in 1964 was probably demotivating. He had stopped well before

apparently he never had any particular commercial success with his paintings.

the lack of commerciality would have stopped Wetling. I don't seem to be the kind of person who was only

reasons that he stopped because of personal disorders and serious health problems. Wetling's

into

mitigated against his painting but as gloomy as the circumstances might have been, it might

real and seems to have suffered a severe case of lack of confidence and this condition was exacerbated by

some very poor guidance.

Hidden away in the back of Wetling's large scrapbook of clippings I found

matchbooks and in cheap magazines, sharing the

George Wetling; he sent in a dime to be turned

employment of this school, offering all sorts of manufactured suggestions on how Wetling might

improve. Apparently Wetling would submit a picture

repaint the picture, showing him how it might appear, properly executed. Perhaps it would have been best

shouldn't have dealt with it.

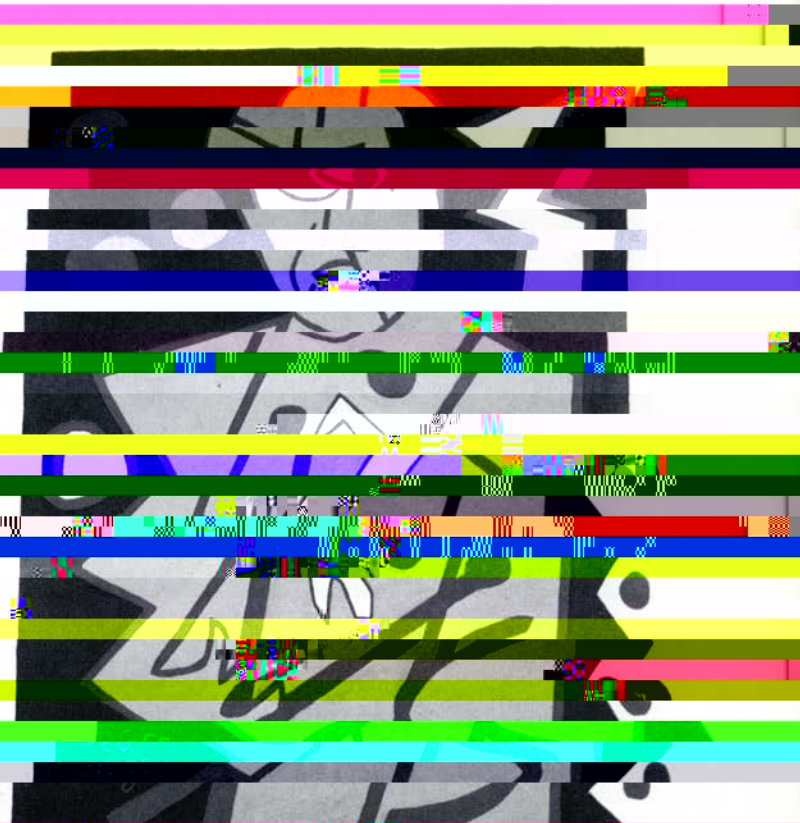
everywhere but such no prominently exhibited at county fairs and

reduced to working for the

paint. There is even a

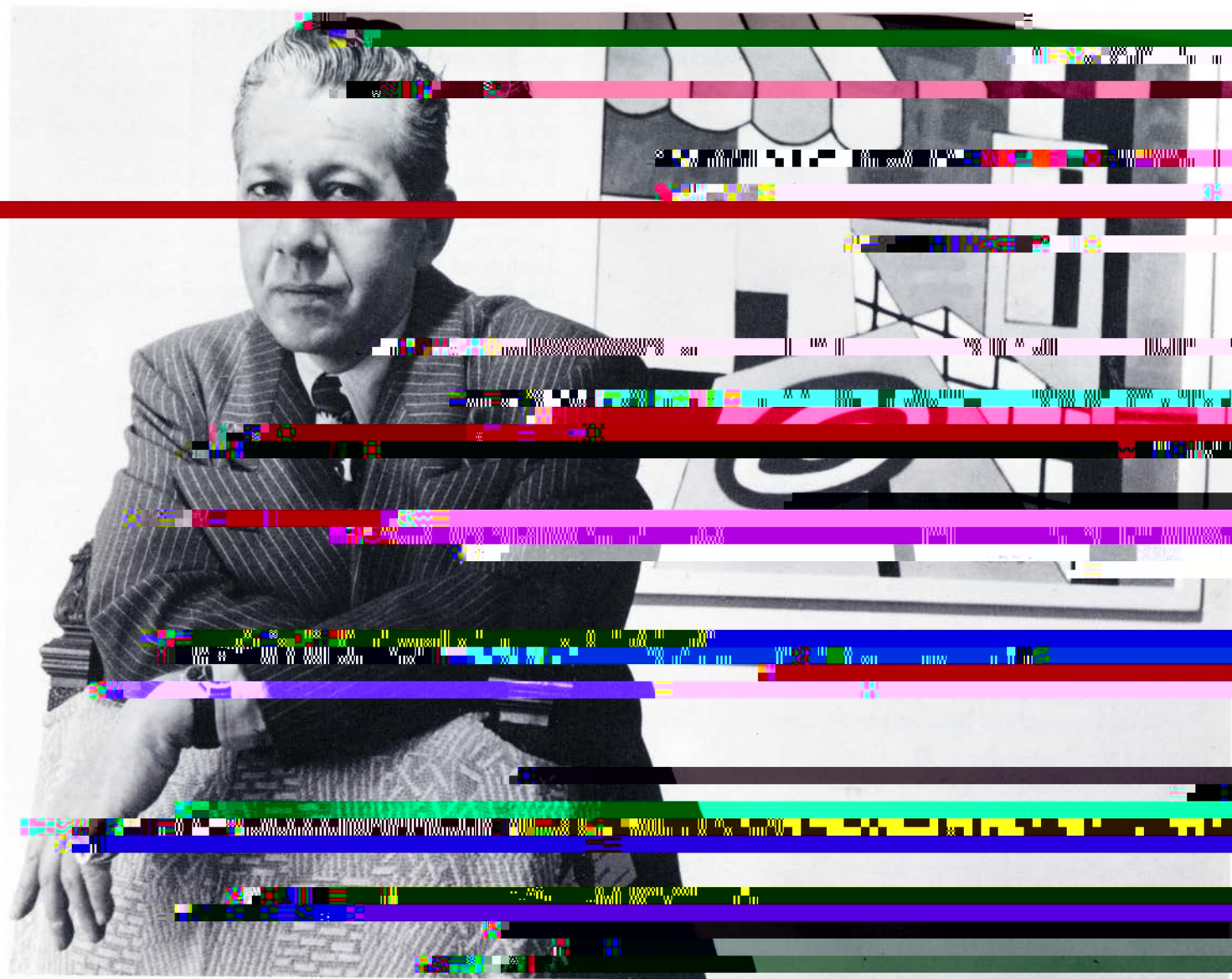
Art School store plus a \$10 bonus for a professional photographer to take a picture to travel along with the jazz drummers, a student and close friend of one of the finest painters this country ever produced. And \$10 for a photograph? George Wettling had by Wegae, Ghon Mill, Lisette Model and goodness knows how many other photographers of note. Wettling started painting the walls of the apartment from which Eddie Condon was being evicted and ended fumbling about with the famous Artists School. His points equally ridiculous, but in between, he produced some good work.

George Wettling was not a great painter but he was a more than adequate disciple of Stuart Davis. He certainly painted better than Davis. He was also a fine photographer, it is obvious he used his camera as a sketchbook in the same manner as did Ben Shahn and Reginald Marsh. His writing was inventive and witty. Every artistic endeavor he approached, music, painting, photography, writing, showed a genuine creative flair. There was, however, a flaw somewhere in Wettling's personality; his personal life was a shambles and he was unable to cope with the way in which our chaotic society of its more creative, though faintly uncommercial, citizens. Had his personal affairs been better organized he could have perhaps overcome the difficulties caused by a chaotic commercial life but that is not been for Eddie Condon, Marian Ivy, Bertha and myself all the problems of his life would long ago have been solved on 57th Street or Grace somewhere. Most of Wettling's paintings are dispersed desultorily or by apathy. He was a good painter and his life a better treatment.



24. George Wettling, Self Portrait

Hank O'Neal
3 February 1986



Photograph of [unreadable]

CHECKLIST OF PAINTINGS BY KY PEE WEE HOON

(All dimensions in inches, height)

- Beauty and the Beast**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 18 x 24
Courtesy of Hank U'Neale
- The Invention of Jazz**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 18 x 24
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Downbeat**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 18 x 24
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Dance Around the Fire**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 18 x 24
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Life Room**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 35 x 24
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Anything Goes No. 2**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 24 x 30
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Untitled No. 3**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 24 x 30
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Ditto**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 24 x 30
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- The Turtle**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 24 x 36
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- The Twins from Mars**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 24 x 36
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Parisian Sewer**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 24 x 36
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Self-Portrait**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 30 x 40
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Friends**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 30 x 40
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Subconscious**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 22 x 28
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Improvisation**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 45 x 36
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Untitled No. 1**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 24 x 30
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Untitled No. 2**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 18 x 24
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
- Explosion**, 1966
Oil on canvas, 18 x 24
Institute of Jazz Studies,
The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers

19. **Untitled No. 11, 1966**
 Oil on canvas, 36 x 24
 Institute of Jazz Studies,
 The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
20. **The Prisoners**
 Oil on canvas, 36 x 24
 Institute of Jazz Studies,
 The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers
21. **Faces in the Crowd, 1967**
 Oil on canvas, 40 1/2 x 30 1/2
 Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy Day

CHECKLIST OF PAINTINGS BY GEORGE WETTLER

(All dimension in inches; height precedes width.)

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 22. Jazz Is In
Oil on canvas, 22 x 30 1/4
Courtesy of Hank O'Neal | 28. Baby Dadd
Ink on Paper, 10 x 17 3/8
Courtesy of Hank O'Neal | 34. Untitled
Pencil sketch, 9 x 11
Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. McParland |
| 23. Roadrunners
Oil on canvas, 22 x 30 1/4
Courtesy of Hank O'Neal | 29. Big Man
Ink on Paper, 5 x 4
Courtesy of Hank O'Neal | 35. Untitled
Oil on non canvas wrap, 14 x 24
Courtesy of Hank O'Neal |
| 24. Self Portrait
Oil on canvas, 20 x 16
Courtesy of Hank O'Neal | 30. The Queen Mary
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Phyllis Condon | 36-40. Sketchbook
Courtesy of Hank O'Neal |
| 25. Untitled No. 1
Oil on canvas, 16 x 12
Courtesy of Hank O'Neal | 31. Maggiè No Neck
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Maggiè Condon | 41. Gin Mill, c. 1950-53
Oil on canvas, 12 1/2 x 10
Courtesy of Richard Hadley |
| 26. Left Hand
Oil on canvas, 13 7/8 x 9 7/8
Courtesy of Hank O'Neal | 32. McSorley's Old Ale House, 1958
Oil on canvas board, 16 x 20
Courtesy of Jon Aaronsohn | 42. Stuart Davis
Oil on canvas, 9 x 11
Courtesy of Earl G. ... |
| 27. Untitled
Oil on canvas, 7 x 5
Courtesy of Hank O'Neal | 33. Untitled
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Hank O'Neal | |

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