

October 15, 1988 (Vol. 4, no. 4)

Dear Colleague:

I look out of the window from the second floor of Sunprint Gallery (a State Street café) and see a man lifting up his small son so that he can look into a shop window. I am struck by the grace of the movement, so commonplace in itself that it almost never merits a glance. It is like a well executed pas de deux. The man lifts up the child with ease as the male dancer must seem to do with his partner. The child seems to float up and then slide into and partially merge with the upper part of his father's body. Once in position, the child moves one arm around his father's neck while the other rises to point at the shop window, again as a ballerina might move her arms in midair. Then again like a ballerina, the child slides smoothly down his father's body to touch the ground.

I have often found aesthetic pleasure in the quite ordinary, unselfconscious movements of street life. Street is theater. On the other hand, when the street selfconsciously becomes theater--as, for instance, during Halloween--I feel indifferent or mildly irritated. The performances all seem amateurish compared with the gestures of someone washing the window of Discount Records.

Folk art does not appeal to me. Folk life does. High art appeals to me. High life does not. American Ballet, yes; Latvian folk dances, no. I suppose my biases are influenced by the notion of work. Sweat and toil lie behind folk life, but not behind folk art. By contrast, sweat and toil--a sense of total dedication--lie behind high art, but obviously not behind high life.

Best wishes,

