

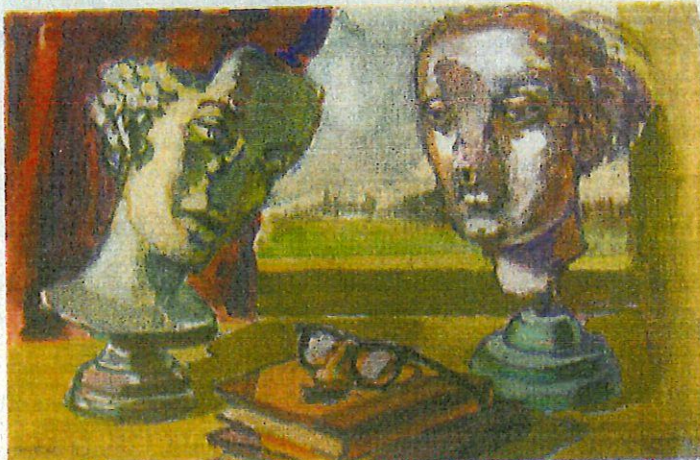
# THE EAST BAY MONTHLY

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## ART



M. Louise Stanley, *Truncis naribus, airplane back home (sketchbook page)*.

### Two RAC Shows Mix Humor, Critique

A pair of Richmond Art Center exhibitions, one a group show, the other a solo show, examine environmental and aesthetic themes. Nature and culture, again, do their eternal parallel-evolution dance, seen through sociopolitical/informational and aesthetic/poetic filters. It's style-plus-content art that looks good and is good for us.

*Here Is the Sea*, in the Main Gallery, features works by Stephen Bruce, Christy Chan, Tanja Geis, Richard Lang and Judith Selby Lang, Jos Sances, and Dimitra Skandali (with others to be announced). The city of Richmond, with its 32 miles of shoreline and its renowned history of maritime construction during World War II, has every reason to be invested in the bay's ecological issues. The colorful assemblages made for many years by Richard Lang and Judith Selby Lang from plastic

scavenged from a Marin County beach combine visual delight, even humor, with the serious issue of oceanic pollution.

A scratchboard drawing by the activist artist and printer Jos Sances is entitled *Or, the Whale*; if that title is the tail portion of the title of Herman Melville's epic tale: a cetacean citation, his battle-scarred behemoth swimming through inky seas is both grand and ironic, à la Melville. Look closer, and the whaling-lance

scars resolve into images from our carbon-burning history (after petroleum replaced sperm whale oil): is that Standard Oil mogul John D. Rockefeller, smoking a pipe, near Moby-Dick's blowhole?

John Updike, in an early poem wrote, "Death takes the noses," referring to the partial probosces of timeworn ancient Roman portrait busts — otherwise brimming with character and realism. The painter M. Louise Stanley, who has led artist expeditions to Europe for decades, cites the phrase used by a fictional art collector in George Eliot's *Romola*: "truncis naribus; wanting as to the nose, but not the less authentic." *Faces Without Noses* is a selection of her masterly, humorous sketchbook depictions of the Old-World glories to be found on the cultural-pilgrim path; the Grand Tour is given a comic spin.

Richmond Arts Center, *Here Is the Sea* and *Faces Without Noses*, both shows through May 17, Richmond Art Center, 2540 Barrett Ave., Richmond, 510-620-6772; RichmondArtCenter.org.

—DeWitt Cheng



Jos Sances, *Or, the Whale (detail)*, scratchboard drawing.

ED MILLER

M. LOUISE STANLEY

COURTESY JOS SANCES. PHOTO BY JOHN WEHLE