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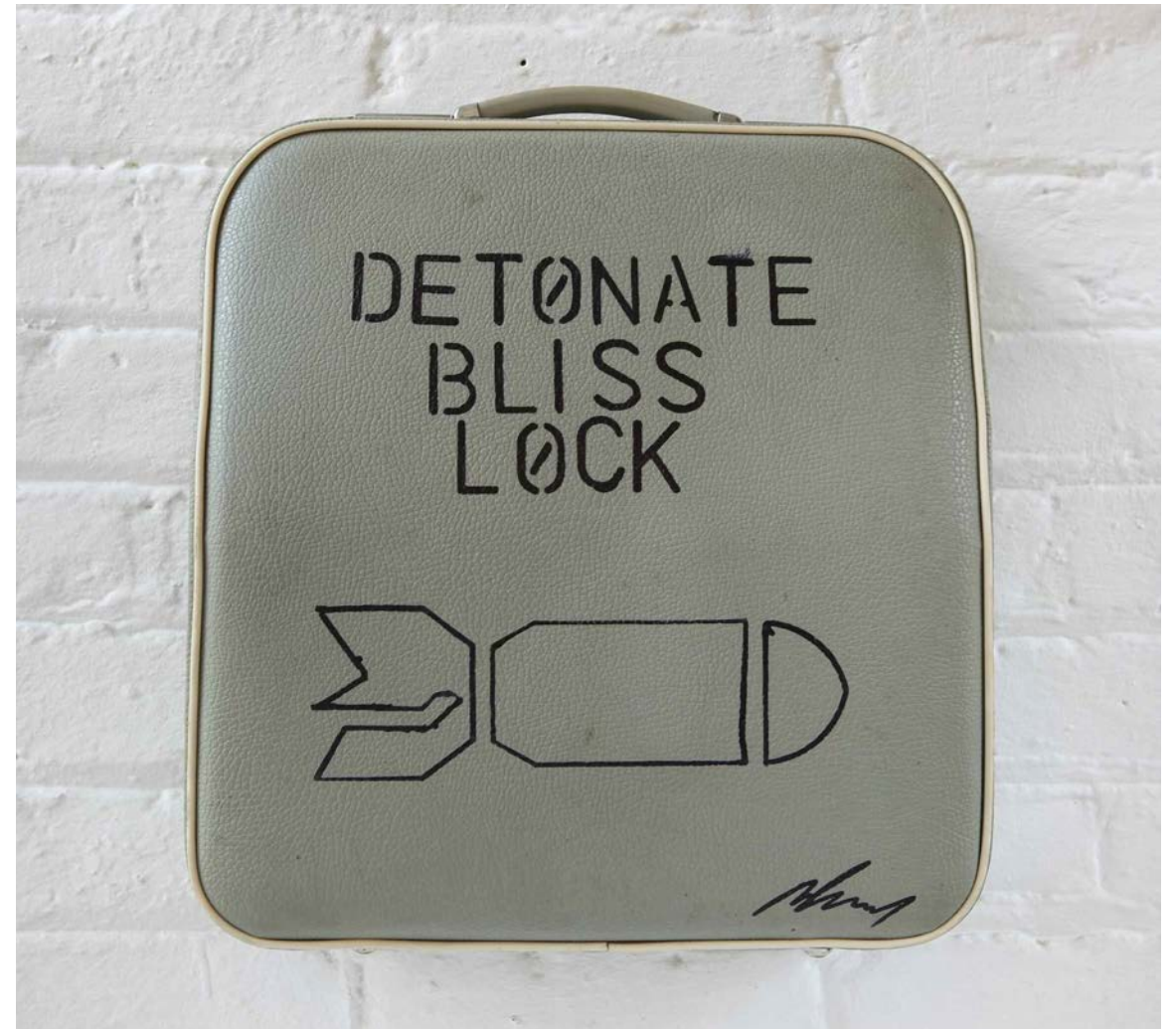
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MAX BLAGG  
WRITING ON THE WALL

SHALLOW BOOKS

Things Still Here

Who bathes in the radiance today  
of that sunlight pouring through mist  
stretching like a cat along  
the wet carpet of grass?  
Some days you're dizzy as a bat  
in a radar station and sometimes  
it's easy as walking on water  
to emerge from the drowned life  
to detonate the bliss lock  
shovel back ghost fleck  
flog the nag harder keep her  
nose on the rail load the spring  
come out swinging.



HERMES 3000 #1 Vinyl, Plastic, Metal, Magic Marker 14 x 13 x 6 in

'There's beauty everywhere'

A picnic boat glides across the waterway  
and when the light hits  
it turns into Egyptian gold.  
There's beauty everywhere  
I follow it around like a man  
chasing pike in a kayak.  
August triggers alarums,  
paint won't dry electricity shuts down  
the sun doesn't move.  
Get a jump on the hump of it, guilt  
carried off by bicycle to the dump.  
Look at the beach and then  
look at the beach.





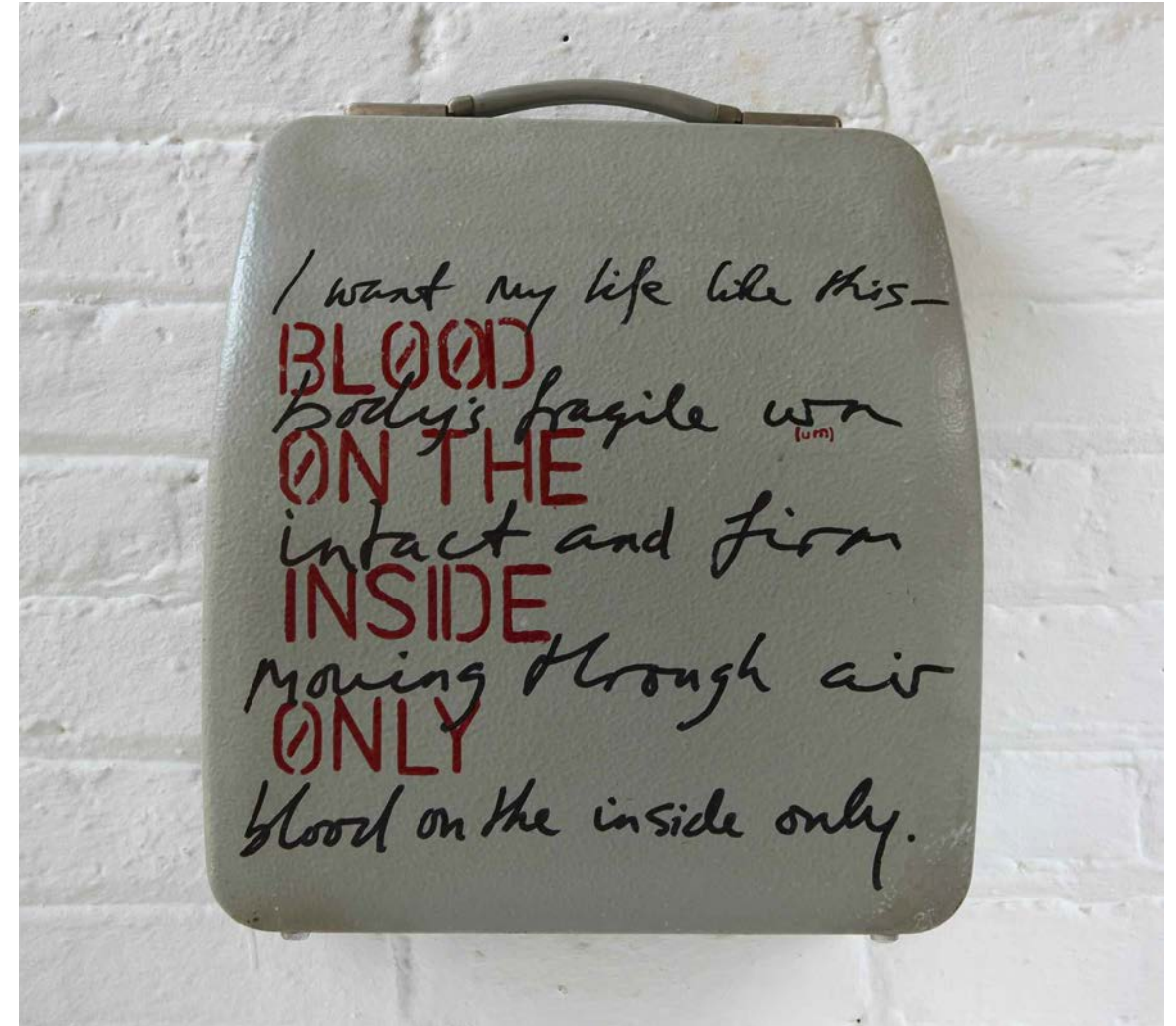
In Every Dream Home A Heartache

An English bicycle with steel brakes  
lying against a white picket fence,  
self conscious snapshot of bucolic serenity.  
On the gravel the zealous crunch of self on self  
shuffling to embrace these ~~the~~ small knives of the day.  
Nobody ever bled to death from paper cuts.  
Inhale the melancholy, ~~the~~ a cleansing rain  
polishing every leaf in the garden  
to a fine green glow. Afternoon light  
slants lower as the sun bears down  
into deep freeze and darkness.  
Bleak skies match the curdled mood  
the self regarding itch you cannot scratch,  
heart closed like a fist.  
Despair is a cold thing/cold as the stars in January.



From 'Jive' (Pink Instrument ~~est~~ p.71)

I walk out into a shiny moment  
light striking yellow cabs and  
smoky red brick walls all  
movement specific and directed  
infected by my optimism  
order and civility briefly feasible  
the garbage packed correctly  
bottles cans and plastics stacked  
the sidewalk suddenly clean  
the dogs bark and their owners  
pick up the tab. Skaters surge  
past my left wing in a fluid  
undulation of muscular grace  
and I want my life like that  
feet sliding lightly over pavement.  
body's fragile urn intact and firm,  
moving through air,  
blood on the inside only.





## Zulu

'How come you're still alive?'  
my old neighbor snarled when  
she bumped into me on West Broadway.  
She seemed genuinely upset that  
I was still walking and talking  
bent but not broken, bowed but not down,  
cutman in my corner but not yet  
quite out of whatever it ~~is~~ is,  
frequently unstrung but not entirely unhinged,  
still occasionally intersecting  
with the paths of glory  
where the words line up  
like Bengal Lancers, tunics vivid red  
against the dry brown landscape,  
shoulder to shoulder with Stanley Baker and Michael Caine.  
I gaze into my neighbor's faded eyes,  
the light long since burned out, and I say,  
'Zulu to you too, baby!'.



Shiny Arrow

Songbirds freeze as a falcon  
streaks between buildings -  
shiny arrow from some god's bow.





## CAKE #2

Hoodwinked and slammed to the mat again  
they wanted to keep me in pennies not heaven  
but I came off the ropes like Archie Moore  
or Archimedes leaping from his bath tub  
yelling 'Eureka' and 'What Is?' and somebody else  
says 'Well what is?' and you say omigod am I here and all alone?  
Then you recover your bearings and  
strap your balls back on like Stravinsky  
going the distance with the Ballets Russes  
as it grows dark in Bryant Park where  
I am discovered mounting Gertrude Stein  
from behind, lifting <sup>her</sup> the great bronze  
skirts on the greensward.  
Day gone down to zero, snow in the air,  
winter storms moving in from the Midwest.  
Across the street a meticulous student traces  
a pattern at the drawing board, working  
in solitude on a Friday afternoon.  
I envy his diligence. ~~as~~ <sup>Set</sup> The cake bakes,  
the bell rings, the year runs out.





In the Now

Watchman, what of the Now? Are we in it?  
Dreams of envy don't lead to any heaven,  
dirt roads only lead to dirt.  
The Finger points a bony nail tonight,  
hiding from the moon  
instead of basking in it like  
a shark in the ~~swine~~ dark sea'  
the ripples making my nipples harder  
than the rubber of handlebar grips in winter.  
Somewhere between washing and dying  
between the sea and the lee of the shore,  
it's always now and never never.



ADLER TIPPA (West Germany) Plastic, Metal, Oil Paint 12 x 12 x 3 in

Cake #1

Need music here, not the ~~small~~ bells of regret  
rung by cheap chimes on some stall in Chinatown.  
Give me clarity or give me meth,  
turn my dreck into cake and I will feed  
the multitudes ~~with fine~~ <sup>e</sup>chocolata.  
So much depends on pure intention,  
the way the wind carries ~~music~~,  
weightless, a spear tipped with leaves,  
harmless as angel food emerging fragrant  
from the stove.  
Double indemnity dual identity,  
layers of cake in my head  
threaten every working space,  
thin mind remembers nothing,  
narcolepsy urging me from solid ~~chair~~  
to the swansdown of the couch.  
Even bleeps at 400 degrees  
'sleep, sleep,' the voice says  
like the children in Blake's poem  
who sweep and weep.  
On Canal Street fake cakes fly  
off the shelves explosive /projectiles  
erupting like swords /from the  
swallower's throat.





M~~a~~r~~i~~ne

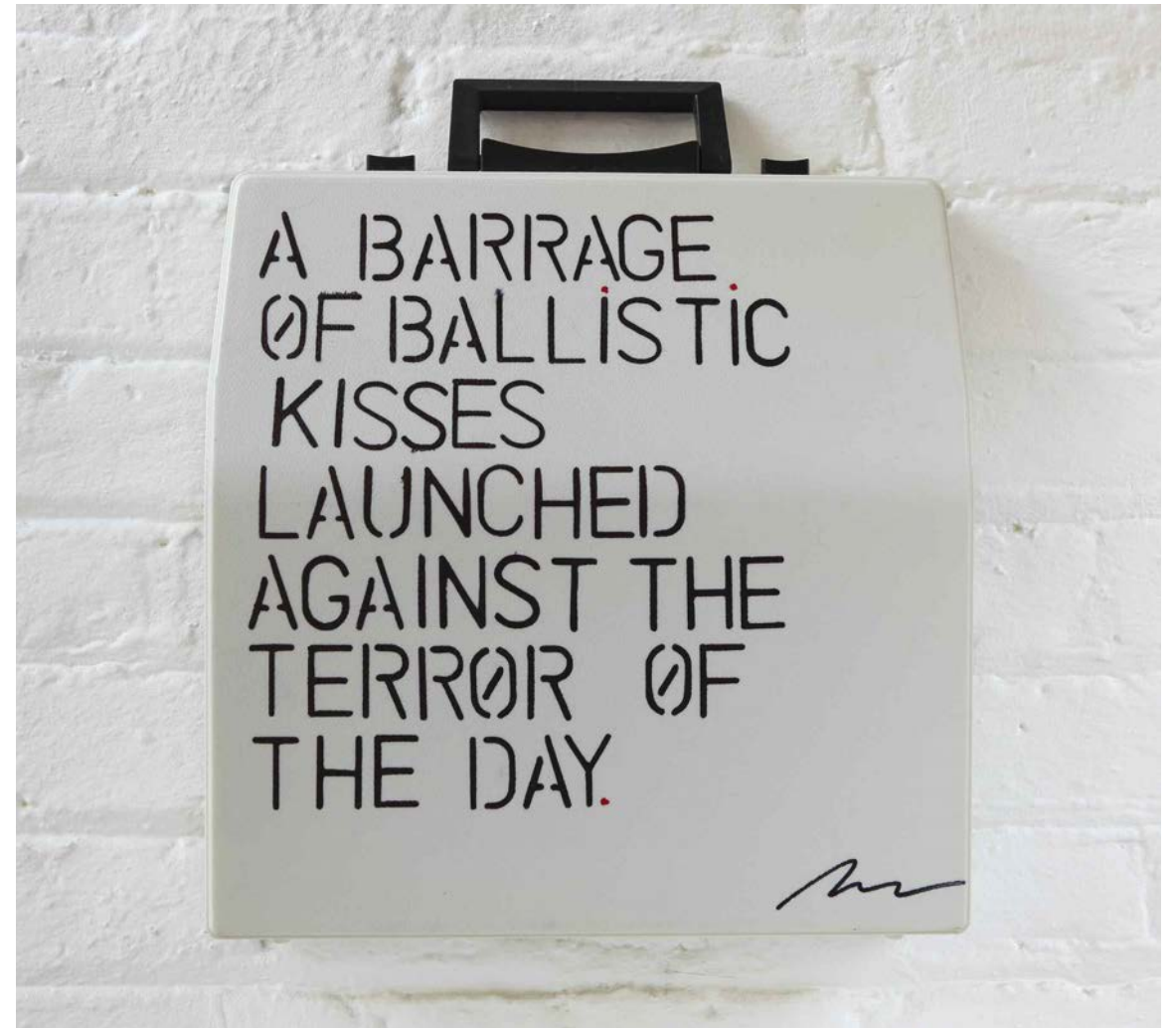
Open mouth tasting the sweetness  
of a summer shower, blueberry,  
violet, aquamarine, tourmaline  
smooth as a stone beneath the tongue.  
Nerves remain on the inside now,  
light pours in from far/out in the Atlantic,  
a righteous light, shimmering like  
the pearls looped around/your swansong neck.  
Some god embedded in it, god of the floating  
world shares this sunflower splendor,  
leaves already spinning from the walnut tree,  
as I stand among flowers  
eating figs, cat nuzzling bare leg.  
Life is good, even with  
your tongue cut out. Later,  
under cover of the night,  
the sky slides down into the sea.





Sugar Bum

Dry bones ache on waking  
a barrage of ballistic kisses  
launched against the terror of the day.  
My dream was foxy Sapphic sisters  
all of them named Betty except for one;  
I call her 'Sugar Bum'.



L'Avventura

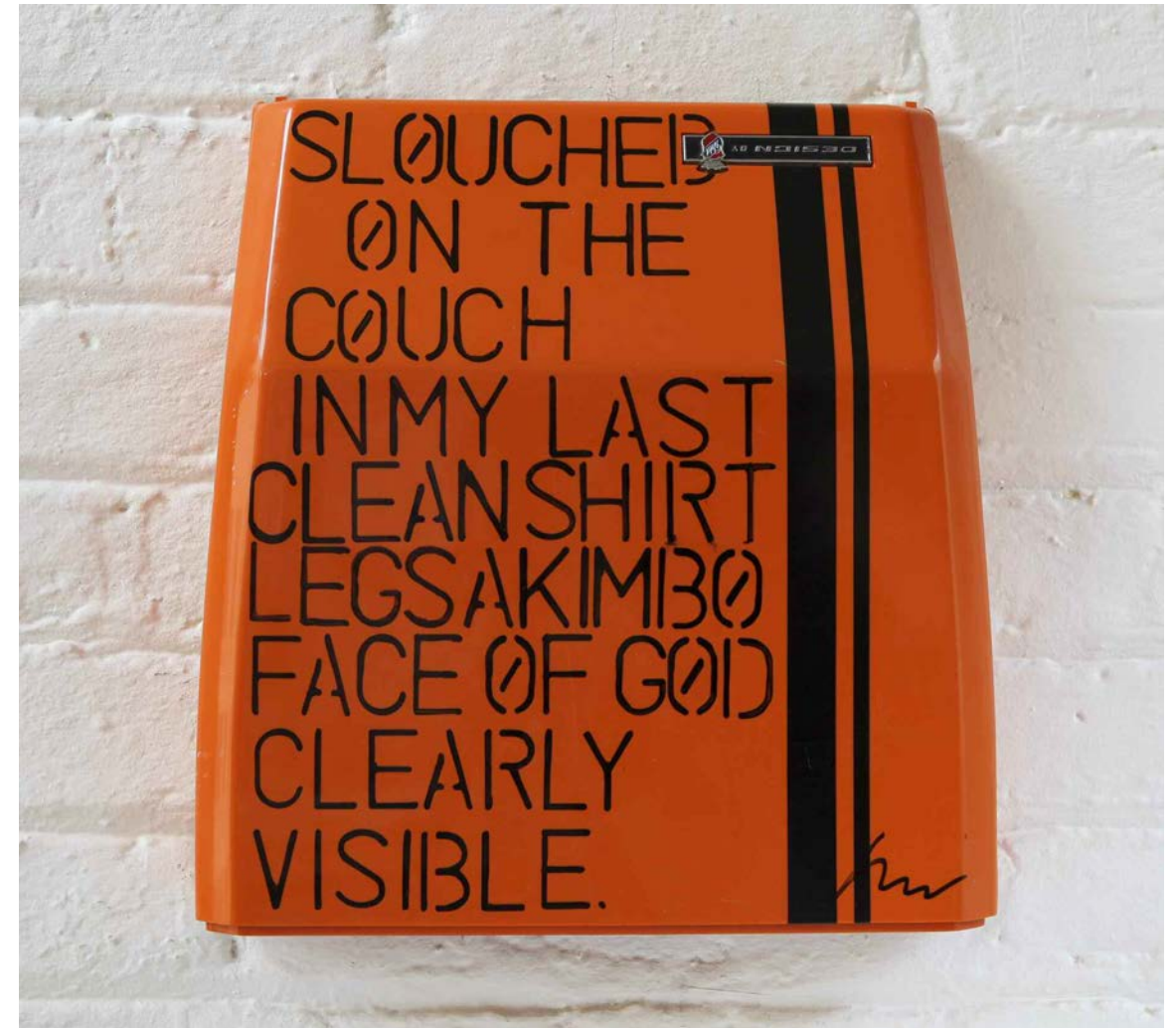
Monica Vitti,  
her Roman nose  
arose,  
a rose.

*Alain Delon*



A Face in the Crowd

Somewhere a man is standing in line  
for the movies while designing a landmine  
that looks like a child's toy.  
Should he be allowed to live? On this planet?  
The scientist who claimed her brain  
was as big as a planet, her  
presumption made me laugh aloud,  
a grain of truth embedded in it like  
a hurricane will embed a sliver  
of straw in a fencepost.  
Truth, beauty, coffee in the morning,  
what else is there? Only ~~you~~ you  
slouched on the couch  
in my last clean shirt, legs  
akimbo, face of god  
clearly visible.





In the Now

Watchman, what of the Now? Are we in it?  
Dreams of envy don't lead to any heaven,  
dirt roads only lead to dirt.  
The Finger points a bony nail tonight,  
hiding from the moon  
instead of basking in it like  
a shark in the ~~swine~~ dark sea'  
the ripples making my nipples harder  
than the rubber of handlebar grips in winter.  
Somewhere between washing and dying  
between the sea and the lee of the shore,  
it's always now and never never.



UNKNOWN LEATHERETTE Vinyl, Plastic, Metal, Magic Marker, Nail Polish 13 x 12 1/2 x 3 in

Eat A Peach

June spreads its beauty like a cloak  
a tarp on wet grass a trap for cats  
young men glued to Page Three gasp  
at the streamlined god-built ~~for~~  
beauty of the thing itself.  
Eat a peach, eat it down ~~to~~ to the bone.

down to the bone



Nature Study

Sunlight falls on the brim of a Panama hat,  
precise moment of a June/afternoon when  
the light seems poised to  
reveal the utter truth of  
something if only you could  
translate sun into word.  
The cat walks by the window,  
a bird fluttering in his jaws.  
He looks at me and drops ~~it~~ it,  
but before I get outside  
he has run it down again  
shocked its little life out into  
the overheated summer air. *e*  
The average songbird/~~sings~~ sings  
five thousand songs a day,  
but the cat just won't listen.



HERMES 'BABY' Metal, Plastic, Oil Paint, Nail Polish 12 x 11 x 2 1/2 in



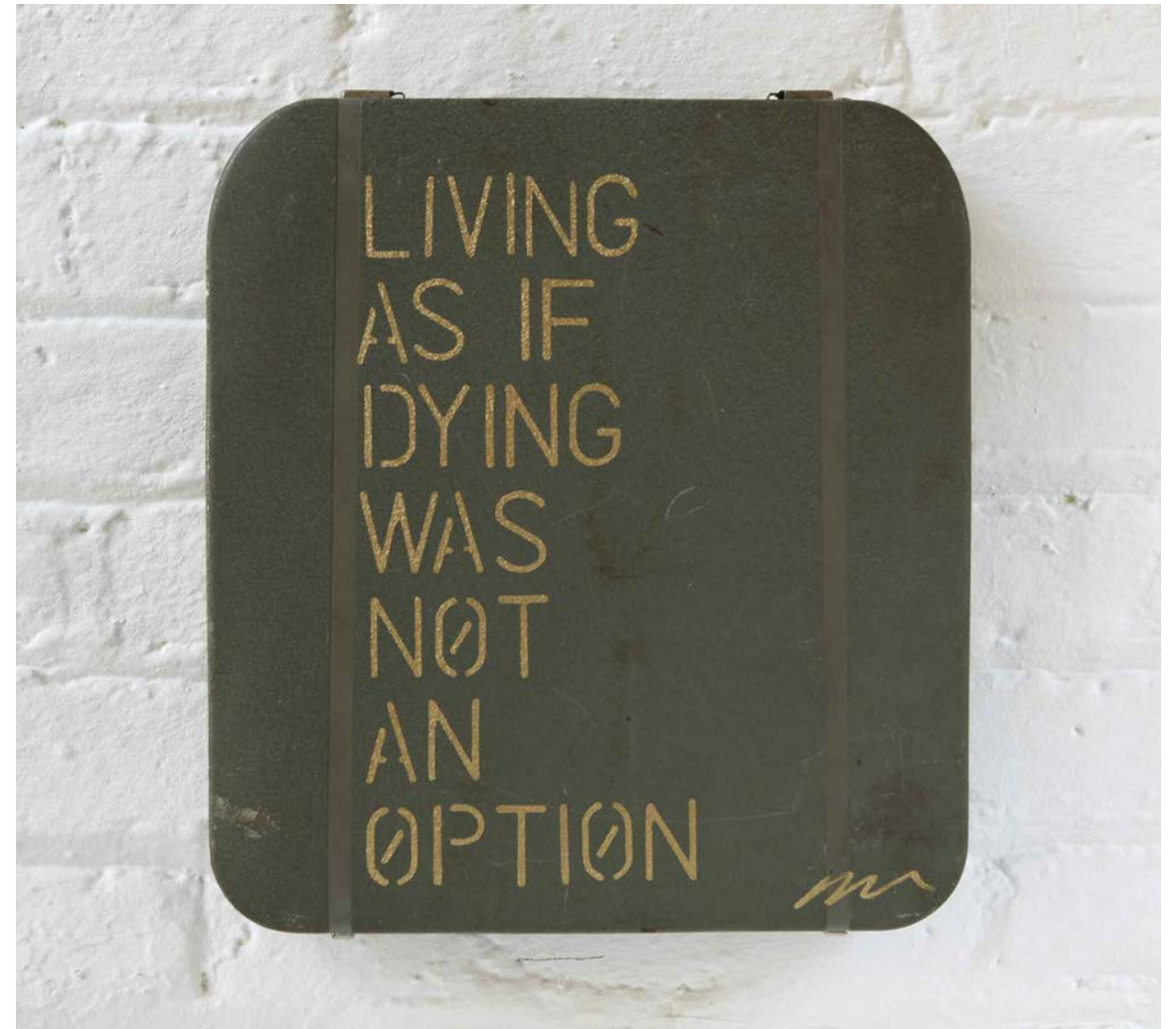
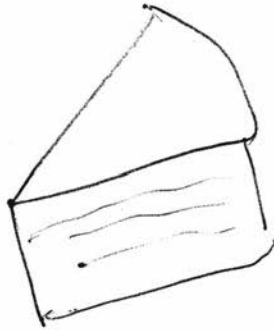
House on Fire

Big June spews out its brilliance  
each day lovelier than the last,  
Lucinda Williams' steel-tipped voice  
drips rosaries down my sweaty neck.  
Jesus Buddha Percocet who is calling  
who has something that will cool me down?  
Five o'clock on June 12th  
in the year of my disgrace  
Jupiter enters my sign with  
a smile that smells like gasoline.  
Ohio Blue Tip trembles in my fingers.



LIVING AS IF

Talked all day about nothing at all  
beggar took the cake mom baked  
strawberry inflected cheese,  
best I ever tasted standing  
on a corner in New York City  
living as if dying  
was not an option





Things Still Here

Who bathes in the radiance today  
of that sunlight pouring through mist  
stretching like a cat along  
the wet carpet of grass?  
Some days you're dizzy as a bat  
in a radar station and sometimes  
it's easy as walking on water  
to emerge from the drowned life  
to detonate the bliss lock  
shovel back ghost fleck  
flog the nag harder keep her  
nose on the rail load the spring  
come out swinging.



HERMES ROCKET #1 Metal, Oil Paint, Nail Polish 11 x 11 1/2 x 2 1/2 in



### Drenched in Roses

You can come round again you can ride  
that lioness found on your fire escape  
walk it and talk it regain the power  
of speech and speak clearly (and you feel)  
wet, light, physical, ~~where~~ you have  
turned the wave around you are back  
among the living, crooning to the crocodiles  
drenched in roses, narcotic perfumes ~~the~~  
and in your ears the measured sound  
of your ~~partner's~~ partner's breathing as she sleeps  
in a gold haze, everything mobile again,  
a vague and marvelous ecstasy ~  
suffused with the rich earthy flush of it  
join the hawk on his slow peregrinations  
above the earth, wired into new circuits  
where the blood flows fresh and clean  
and your eggs don't break from the DDT  
cut through the plastic and  
embrace the living bone even the idea  
of dying might begin to make some sense  
and on one of these clear Spring nights  
approaching daily you will press  
your ragged face/into the coolness of the lawn  
and all will/ be well.

