

## FROELICK GALLERY

### **Rick Bartow**

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Drawing: 1979-2001

Using Coyote's tail for a brush and Raven's beak to make my marks, I am blind to my destination. I begin to erase marks, attempting to cover my tracks and, like forgetful Coyote, I lose my way. Yet the record of my comings and goings is visible like the lines left by the tide as it advances and recedes.

Drawing comes from inside my head, down my arm, to my hand. As the work begins to intensify, there is little of importance below the armpits. My legs carry me back and forth in front of the drawing. Occasionally I blindly run into objects, cussing and moving on from the shock of the collision.

The marks become little dictators. They demand my attention and, sometimes, even my blood as fingers crack and bleed. Still I believe in the power of drawing as medicine.

In my life I have used this medicine to overcome many obstacles—alcohol, drugs, cigarettes—everything but the death of my beloved wife. Here I found the therapeutic limit, the end of the rope... or so I thought. For even as I dangled over the dark abyss, clinging to the end of that rope with my left hand, the right hand began to draw the horrifying final moments of my lover's life.

Eventually I worked free of that great sadness. Drawing wouldn't allow it to be more than what it was: a cold, hard fact that all of us—like the lines I draw—come to an end, some more abruptly than others. Then the eyes and hand move on to a new sheet of paper, to begin yet another work. I draw because I have no choice: it is my blessing, it is my curse.

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