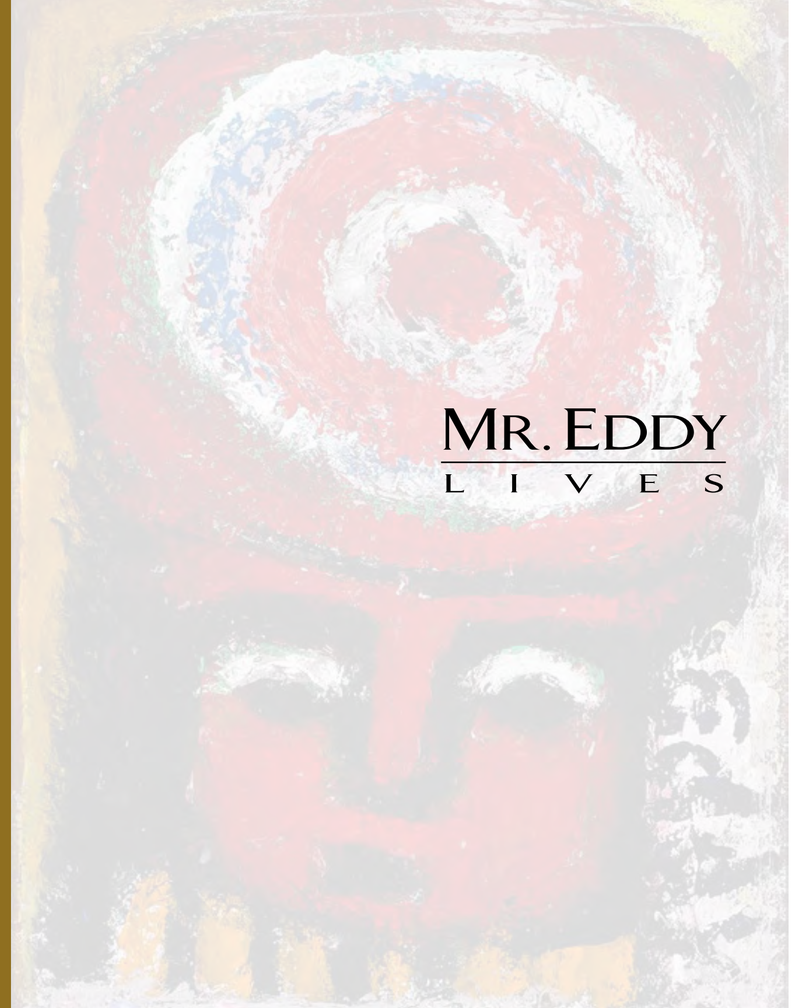
MR. EDDY LIVES

The Art & Life of Eddy Mumma

Anne E. Gilroy
Essay by Nancy Thebaut



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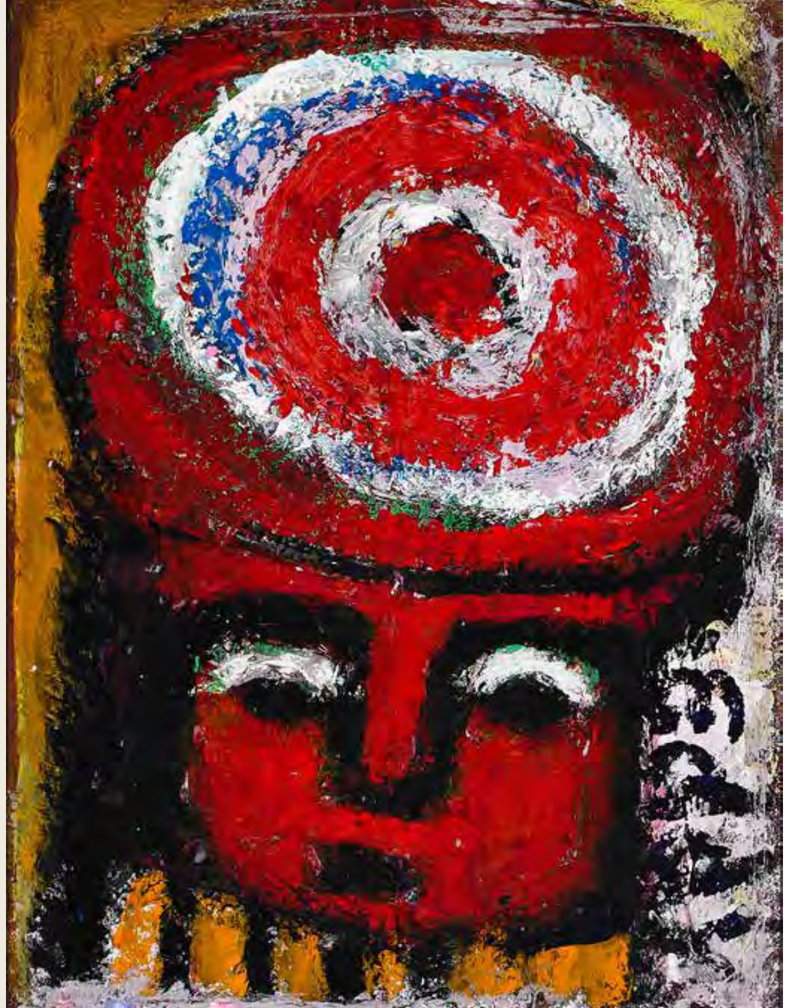

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Washington, DC

In Praise of Eddy Mumma

"We don't create a fantasy world to escape reality, we create it to be able to stay." –Lynda Barry

Twenty years since first opening our national museum, Eddy Mumma stands out for me as a wholly ideal outsider artist, one alchemized by the classic visionary forces of shock and loss too overwhelming for their relief in mere words—the death of his young wife, followed by his ensuing health challenges. Like those other visionary greats, Reverend Howard Finster and Vollis Simpson, Eddy, too, was the magic 60-years-old when first his tsunami of art making began, transforming with obsessive focus and delight all his waking hours.

Mumma's color saturated paintings fast exploded into mountainous stacks of double-sided, paint soaked canvases, spreading out onto the figurative painting of his kitchen appliances, cupboards, lamps, and doors. Like artist and song writer, Joni Mitchell, who sang, "Oh, I am a lonely painter, I live in a box of paints," Eddy Mumma's small Gainesville, Florida house became his personal box of paints —transformed into super private, color-filled wunderkammer and populated by Eddy's distinctive companions of nobleman, historic figures, bullfighters, ballerinas, nudes, sailors and playful animals among mini scenes of domestic bliss.

Not only did Mumma not seek outside praise for his art during his lifetime, with the exception of his trusted friend Lennie Kesl and his own family, Mumma's would-be art admirers were unwelcome intruders whose knock on his door acted only to break the spell of his self-created sanctuary.

Then there is the matter of an ideal collector. When Eddy died and much of his art and entire painted kitchen was about to be loaded into a dumpster, it took the great good fortune of a passionate young collector who happened to be passing by to act immediately to save Eddy Mumma's paintings from oblivion. This was not shrewd or established investment instinct; rather, Josh Feldstein just loved Mr. Eddy's work like mothers do their newborns. Josh had been one of Eddy's rejected art suitors, having first fallen smitten of Eddy's work shared by mutual friend Lennie Kesl. During Mumma's life, Feldstein actually had Eddy refuse him entry. Feldstein understood and ironically ended up spending decades preserving and championing Eddy's legacy post Mumma's death, now generously gifting to major museums hungry for including Mumma's work within their own permanent collections and hanging his own favorite Mumma works throughout his home and office, never tiring of having "Eddy's" as breakfast companions: "They never fail to make me smile." Josh Feldstein was the only collector/lender I ever met who audibly groaned and sighed as he took works by Eddy off his wall for a one-year loan to our American Visionary Art Museum. It was like watching a bereft parent struggling to send off a cherished child to college.

The combined experience of Mumma as artistic tour de force and Feldstein as smitten collector/protector proved a mega rare and joyous double punch—a profound all around delight for both me and my entire staff and the throngs of visitors who have so enjoyed Mr. Eddy's art.

This book beautifully documents why we are so thrilled with the private delight of Eddy Mumma's paintings, now enjoyed all over the Earth courtesy of collector Josh Feldstein. Our endless thanks to both!

Rebecca Alban Hoffberger
Founder/Director
American Visionary Art Museum

Acknowledgements

The author owes a debt of thanks to the many contributors to this book.

Betty Zeller Thompson, first cousin to Thelma Huebner Mumma, generously shared stories and memories that made the history of Eddy, Thelma and Stella in Springfield come alive for me. Her compassion, sharp memory, good humor and forthright manner were a pleasure and an asset. Her daughter, Pam Thompson, offered both hospitality and encouragement.

Paul Eddy Gunsaulies, whose pride in his grandfather fueled his commitment to the project, answered endless questions explaining his family's relationships and dynamics, and provided detailed descriptions of his grandfather's life in Gainesville. Eddy Mumma's granddaughter prefers to remain unnamed, but is owed deep appreciation for sharing her mother's stories and perspective, and for providing invaluable family photographs.

In Springfield, xxxxxLibrarian Cathy Hackett took a proprietary interest in the project and offered critical support. Natalie XXX generously extended her professional research guidance and time.

Nancy Kesl and Charlotte Kesl offered insight into Lennie Kesl's friendship with Eddy Mumma. Joseph Rush, MD, and Paula Trabucco, RN, contributed an understanding of Eddy's medical condition and its effects. Nick DeCarlis' creative vision and attention to detail is apparent on every page.

Appreciation for Leslie Umberger's guidance cannot be overstated.

JM's confidence in me propelled the project forward at the most critical early stage.

Josh Feldstein's passion for the art is sincere and immeasurable—it drove the project

And I thank my family most deeply for all of their support.

–AEG

Introduction

Starting at the age of sixty-one, Gainesville, Florida resident Eddy Mumma painted hundreds of intense, color-saturated pictures—predominantly portraits—that seemed to reveal his search for identity. The compulsion to paint over a period of nearly two decades late in life proved therapeutic for the artist, who was isolated and – ultimately, as a double-leg amputee – inhibited by his severe disability. After his death, his small clapboard house was discovered to be overflowing with his paintings – hundreds of them, covering every surface. In some sense, they may have created a community for him, offering contemplative discourse.

In the portrait on the cover of this publication, *Mr Eddy Lives*, Mumma seems to depict—through whirling, concentric circles emanating from his head—his cosmic journey through time and space. In general, portraits engage the viewer in a dynamic relationship with both the artist and subject."[1] As Oscar Wilde wrote, "Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter."[2] Wilde's observation certainly applies to Mumma's artworks. Most of his paintings seem to be self-portraits.

As a creator, Mumma identified with some of the "greats" of art history, stretching all the way back to ancient Egypt. Many Mumma paintings are highly-personalized renditions of works by such luminaries as Hans Holbein, Leonardo Da Vinci, Vincent van Gogh, and Amedeo Modigliani.

Both eyes and hands are prominent in Mumma's portraits. He presents his subjects directly; most face the viewer with eyes wide open. The intensely expressive eyes seem a window into the artist's inner thoughts. His identity is further revealed in his quixotic "Mr. Eddy" signatures, especially those with open centers at the double D's, where the letters look like an additional pair of probing eyes.

In his subject's eye-catching hands, the fingers are often flattened, upturned and close to the chest. There is a body of literature on the depiction of hands in art. They've been considered symbolically, in gesture, appearance, prominence and placement. They've been analyzed historically, psychologically, and in religion. For Mumma, on a purely practical level, they were indispensable—necessary to navigate his wheelchair, and key to realizing his vision as a painter.

Mumma and his art may be considered from multiple perspectives. He joins a pantheon of significant self-taught contemporary creators—William Edmondson, Bill Traylor, Martin Ramirez, Clementine Hunter, and Nellie Mae Rowe – who flourished after the age of fifty. There is a long history of artists first tapping their creative potential after retirement, disability, or death of a spouse or close family member.

The discovery and promotion of self-taught artists by trained artists, art professionals and dedicated collectors also has a long history in America. Early in the twentieth century in Ogunquit, Maine, modernist artists Robert Laurent, Marsden Hartley and Yasuo Kuniyoshi collected early American portraits, hooked rugs, and decoys. In 1930, artist Charles Shannon discovered Bill Traylor in Montgomery, Alabama. In the late 1940s, psychologist Dr. Tarmo Pasto, and in 1968, artist Jim Nutt discovered and advanced the art of Auburn, California resident Martin Ramirez. Similarly, in the late 1970s, the Gainesville artist and teacher Lennie Kesl befriended and encouraged Mumma, and provided him with supplies. Belief in the importance of Mumma's legacy continues in the unflagging dedication of collector-advocate Josh Feldstein, who for years has worked tirelessly, through exhibitions and publications, to promote Mumma's work.

Mr. Eddy Lives, the first in-depth study of Mumma's life and art, includes discoveries shown for the first time. This book's historical and biographical essays, a collector's personal statement, and the inclusion of colorful images of Mumma's work, gracefully complement this compelling publication.

Lee Kogan

Former Director of Folk Art Institute and Curator of Special Projects

American Folk Art Museum, New York

1 "Self & Subject," Lee Kogan. Folk Art, Summer, 2005, Summer, 2005, p.29.

2 Brilliant, Richard. Portraiture,Cambridge Mass.,Harvard University, 1991, p.82.

Eddy Mumma, 1908–1986

Anne E. Gilroy

Eddy Mumma, 1908–1986

Anne E. Gilroy

FIG 1 | Former Gainesville residence of Eddy Mumma, thirty-five years after his death. *(Photo by Charlotte Kesl, 2015)*

Dear Mr. Eddy,

Sincerely yours,

FIG 2 | Letter to Eddy Mumma from Josh and Judy Feldstein, April, 1986

Author's Note: *Throughout the text, the artist is often referred to not by surname or first-and-last names, but as Eddy—a respectful nod to his own preference for identity evidenced by the signature on his paintings.*

In October of 1986, in Gainesville, Florida, the screen door of a small, white clapboard house opened and a woman stepped out onto the porch. She may have been holding a broom. She wore work clothes. She was forty years old, slender, quiet by nature, and likely confused as to whether she was sad or not. An empty dumpster had been delivered and sat in the driveway.[1]

Carroll Gunsaulies paused on the porch, taking a breath of air and a break from the challenging task at hand: clearing the house of the shambles left by the late occupant's seventeen years of frenetic art-making, as well as the detritus from his lengthy illness. Inside the house, cardboard, canvas, and boards—most painted with a wildly colorful portrait image—were skewered to the walls ceiling-to-floor and corner-to-corner, nails sometimes piercing right through images. The lamps, doors, and refrigerator were painted. The stove was painted. Adding to the chaos of hundreds of paintings and the disarray of art supplies was rubbish from the long-time neglect of housekeeping. Roaches had established themselves as permanent residents in the house, leaving ample evidence—and the residual odor—of their occupation.[2]

The resident of the house had been Gunsaulies' father, Eddy Gallimore Mumma, from whom she had been estranged for years.[3] Eddy Mumma had passed away just days before, at seventy-eight years of age. To imagine him an artist of merit was more than she could manage at that overwhelming moment.

In a neighborhood a few miles away, a young man stepped out onto a different porch. The October day was inviting for a bicycle ride with his toddler son. At thirty-one, Josh Feldstein had plenty to think about, yet Eddy Mumma was on his mind that day.

Feldstein did not know the reclusive Mumma—but not for lack of trying. An eager new art collector, he had heard about Mumma and had occasionally passed by Mumma's house with the hope of meeting the painter. He had sometimes climbed the few steps to the porch and knocked on the screen door. Six months earlier, he had left a letter for Mumma—carefully handwritten by his wife, whose penmanship he felt was much better than his own—wedged in the door. The letter remained there for days, wilting a bit from the Florida humidity. One day Feldstein simply gave up and retrieved it. He had not returned since.[4]

Only once had Mumma responded to Feldstein's knocking, opening the door for mere minutes before growling at him to go away. But what Feldstein saw in that brief peek into the house fueled his desire to see more: an elderly man in a wheelchair with a towel covering both amputated legs, and behind him hundreds of vivid paintings layered on the walls *(fig. 3)*. The glimpse inside confirmed what Feldstein had heard from his friend, Lennie Kesl. Kesl had excitedly described the kaleidoscope of colors inside Mumma's house, the repeating images that were similar but always singular: a figure boldly painted in half or three-quarter portrait view with distinctive facial features and disproportionately large hands. Hundreds of eyes looked down from the walls of a house that was home to only one man but seemed occupied by multitudes.[5] Kesl and Feldstein were two of the very few souls who knew the extraordinary secret of that modest little house.

DISCOVERY :: Circa 1976

It was about a decade earlier, at a community college in Gainesville, that a tidbit of information passed from a student to his art professor.[6] The student rented a cottage from a reclusive landlord with a seemingly obsessive focus on painting. The recluse was Eddy Mumma, then in his late sixties. To the art student, the paintings Mumma was making seemed powerful and extraordinary, and he eagerly described them to his art instructor, Lennie Kesl.[7] Kesl was all ears.

Lennie Kesl, an artist and professor, had an insatiable passion for collecting art—and artists. His knowledge of art history and artists' lives was expansive. He appreciated and studied the biographies of both trained artists and self-taught artists with equal verve and esteem. Upon hearing about Mumma's paintings, nothing short of seeing the art for himself would suffice for Kesl.

No one knows how many times Kesl knocked on Mumma's door before his quest met with success. But Kesl was a man not easily deterred, and one day the door opened and the ordinarily secluded Mumma invited him inside. Kesl stepped into a space vibrating with images—painted canvases hung askew and overlapping on every wall. Kesl saw distinctive versions of images familiar to him—renditions of Gainsborough, Canaletto, Van Gogh. He recognized Degas, Holbein, and Frans Hals in the work. He saw animals, cars, and nudes. And he saw hints of a wholly original figure and the iconic face that would come to dominate the work of Eddy Mumma in the following years. Kesl immediately realized that the cloistered man in the little wooden house was making art that was far from ordinary. Kesl understood that Mumma was immersed in an impassioned and self-directed undertaking of significance.[8]

Lennie Kesl became Eddy Mumma's ardent admirer and supporter—and his friend. He invariably referred to Eddy Mumma as "My dear friend, Mr. Eddy," bestowing on the older man a traditional Southern honorific by prefacing a first name with the title "Mister." The moniker, "Mr. Eddy," had staying power.[9]

Kesl may have gained entry with perseverance, but he sustained his welcome in part by virtue of a trade arrangement. Eddy's prolific output created an ongoing need for art supplies. Kesl, famously frugal, gleaned discarded art supplies from the college, reclaiming partial tubes of paint, abandoned canvas boards, brushes left behind by students. He prepared painting boards, and bought frames and additional supplies for his friend.[10] Eddy eagerly accepted the deliveries—and pointed to paintings on his walls that Kesl was allowed to climb up and retrieve in trade.[11]

Paintings trickled steadily from Eddy's walls to Kesl's over the following years – the sole significant accumulation of the work outside of the artist's own home. No records existed at Kesl's death in 2012 to support the total number of Eddy Mumma paintings he had owned; over time he had traded, given away, or sold many of them. Family recollections range widely from sixty to several hundred. The "Mr. Eddy's" were in good company on walls that boasted Kesl's collection of both trained and self-taught artists including Joseph Cornell, David Smith, Kivetoruk Moses, Clementine Hunter, Purvis Young, and James Castle. But in 1984, when Josh Feldstein met Kesl and saw the collection for the first time, it was the Eddy Mumma paintings that stood out. "Seeing the first Eddy Mumma painting was like being slapped, struck in the face," he recalls, "They were so powerful." Feldstein was "ecstatic" when Kesl gave him one of them—and he was hooked. He wanted more of Eddy Mumma and, like Kesl, he felt there should be greater recognition of the artist. Ambitious on behalf of Eddy, the two friends eagerly discussed bringing Eddy Mumma to the attention of the art world.[12]

Eddy wasn't interested. He harbored no ambition for artistic recognition or gain. He turned away visitors. He closed the door on an art dealer, Judith Alexander, who had made the six-hour drive from Atlanta at the invitation of Kesl, not allowing her into the house.[13] He refused Kesl's offers to arrange art exhibits. Eddy wanted simply to paint and to live with his paintings, declaring, "They belong right here, where I can see them."[14] In his lifetime, Eddy Mumma did not exhibit[15] or sell his paintings.[16]

FIG 3 | Eddy Mumma in his Gainesville home, January, 1978. *(Photo by Betty Thompson)*

FIG 4 | A fraction of the artwork rescued in 1986, installed in the *Mr. Eddy Lives!* exhibition at the American Visionary Art Museum, 2015–16. *(Photo by the author)*

RESCUE :: 1986

It was a stroke of luck that sent Feldstein on a route past Eddy Mumma's house at the exact moment Gunsaulies stood on the porch that October day in 1986. Feldstein saw the unfamiliar car and person. He saw the dumpster.

Carroll Gunsaulies quietly watched the stranger and the small child on the bicycle approach. She responded politely when he inquired, and informed Feldstein that Eddy had passed away. Feldstein had to work to stay composed. He had been on the porch before, eager to meet and talk with Eddy and to see the art inside. The hope of knowing the artist was now lost. With his arms full of a squirming child and his heart racing, he tentatively inquired about the paintings. Gunsaulies glanced at the dumpster. Then she nodded towards the door—in there, she indicated. Emotionally conflicted after the death of her father, and understandably overwhelmed by the sheer scale of what he had produced, her look seemed to say: I can't take them, I can't. It's too much.

In that moment, Feldstein made the decision that prevented about eight hundred paintings from being discarded. With enormous conviction outweighing limited resources, he offered to buy all the work. Gunsaulies agreed. She and her husband and two children selected their favorite paintings to keep. They arranged for the remainder to be retrieved from the house by Feldstein. [17]

Over the next days, Feldstein and a friend pried paintings off the walls, sorted the stacks of canvases that were piled on the floor, and carried box after box of work out of the little house. A small portion of the work was damaged beyond saving—wet paintings had adhered to other wet paintings, ruining both. Some paintings had been stored outside in a shed, where the Florida humidity favored mold and mildew over art. Much of the otherwise intact work was dirty with foul-smelling insect residue, and in need of cleaning.[18]

"It took a significant amount of fortitude and determination to act on the belief that the collection was worthy of rescue," notes Leslie Umberger, Curator of Folk and Self-taught Art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. She says "Mumma's paintings have a disarming intensity. Works of art with such vitality invariably demand that we take a closer look. It's power such as this that often accounts for the work being saved from the scrapheap—it takes command of the right person at precisely the right moment."[19]

That decisive moment in 1986 ensured the story of Eddy Mumma could someday be told.

ROOTS :: Late 1800s

Eddy's story was not formed in the Southern town in Florida where he spent his final years, but in the heartland of the North—Ohio. Eddy Gallimore Mumma was born July 14, 1908, in West Milton, a small town just north of Dayton. He was the fifth son of Elmer Ellsworth Mumma and Irttie Malinda Gallimore. Eddy's ancestor, Peter Mumma, had arrived in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1748, part of the wave of immigrant German pioneer settlers of the 18th century. Descendants of Peter Mumma pushed further west along the new National Road, establishing a branch of the family near Springfield, Ohio. By the time of Eddy's birth, the Mumma clan had been in the U.S. for five generations.[20]

Eddy's mother, Irttie Gallimore, was the only child of a seamstress and a laborer whose forbears hailed from Virginia and North Carolina before moving to Ohio.[21] Irttie was born in 1875 in the Village of Middle Point, Ohio, and raised in the same hamlet and the same conservative manner in which her parents were raised. In 1890, just over four hundred souls of mostly Protestant faith comprised

FIG 5 | 1908 Christian Science Manuals by Mary Baker Eddy.

FIG 6 | Photograph inscribed: Birthplace of Eddy G. Mumma, July 14, 1908. *(Photo courtesy of Linda and Paul Gunsaulies)*

the village in that sprawling quilted landscape of farm fields stitched together by roads and fences.[22] Young Irttie could only imagine what lay at the disappearing end of the railroad track her eye could follow to the horizon.

Irttie completed eighth grade in Middle Point—an uncommon accomplishment at the time[23]—and showed significant artistic ability as a student. Her teachers urged her family to allow her to study art in Paris, but the proposal met with disappointment; her elderly parents did not want their only child to go so far away.[24]

In 1897, Irttie, age twenty-two, seized the opportunity for a bigger world by marrying Elmer Mumma, a traveling salesman twelve years her senior.[25] Elmer took Irttie to live near his family outside the city of Springfield, Ohio, a hundred mile journey of several days by horse and cart from her childhood home.[26]

The young bride left more than her village behind. At some point she cast aside the conventional Protestant faith of her upbringing in favor of a radical new religion—the Church of Christ, Scientist, founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879 in New England. Disciples of the nascent church established the sect in Springfield in 1890, seven years before Irttie arrived in the area.[27] Rejecting materialism, granting opportunity and status to "disempowered classes, specifically women," and advancing the belief that strong faith was a more powerful agent of healing than conventional medicine, Christian Science experienced a rise characterized as "meteoric, spectacular and successful" at the turn of the 19th century.[28] The charismatic xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxx Mrs. Eddy had become one of the most powerful and influential women in America—as well as one of the most controversial figures. She was both the object of the adulation of her followers, and the target of scathing criticism of her "Boston mind-cure craze"[29] in national headlines and press.[30]

Irttie Mumma disagreed with the critics. In July of 1908, Irttie named her newborn son "Eddy"—a manifest tribute to Mary Baker Eddy. With that christening, Irttie bound her son firmly to a doctrine that would shape his life.

CHILDHOOD :: Early 1900s

Eddy was the last child in the Mumma's family of five sons: Roy, Ralph, Andrew, Theodore and Eddy. A photograph of "The Birthplace Of Eddy G. Mumma" shows a rural house with an overhang propped up by posts, and window coverings that are disheveled and drawn *(fig. 6)*. The impression of any sort of luxury is absent. The income or occupation of the head of the household, Elmer Mumma, is not known beyond his designation in the 1900 census as a salesman.[31] Elmer was "a dreamer who had a hard time making ends meet" by family accounts,[32] a man who was often restless, seeking employment, or both; the Mumma family appears to have been untethered in their early years at the turn of the century.[33]

By 1910, Elmer is listed in the census as a laborer in an automobile factory,[34] suggesting he worked in Cleveland, known then as the automobile capital of the country.[35] At the turn of the 19th century, the Winton Motor Carriage Company of Cleveland manufactured expensive, hand-built, custom cars. Many decades later, Eddy would make a series of paintings of automobiles of that era, one of which has the name "Winton" inscribed on it *(fig. 7)*.

Within thirteen years of marriage, Irttie's journey out of her village came full circle. In 1910, Irttie had five sons and lived only four doors away from her parents, back in the Village of Middle Point.[36] The young Eddy was a favored child in the hardscrabble family, adored by his mother, protected and spoiled by his older brothers. After her sons were grown, Irttie told a family member that Eddy had been raised with "four big brothers who made life easy for baby brother."[37]

FIG 7 | 1910 Winton Six *(left)* and Eddy Mumma's c.1970s painting *(right)*. *(Courtesy of Paul Gunsaulies)*

FIG 8 | Mumma family photograph, c.1920. Eddy is at lower right. *(Photo courtesy of Linda and Paul Gunsaulies)*

CLEVELAND :: Circa 1915–1923

By 1915, when Eddy was seven, the family had moved to the prosperous industrial city of Cleveland, on Lake Erie.[38] The fifth largest metropolis in the nation at the time, Cleveland offered both a rich cultural life of theatre, opera, and the arts, as well as the fellowship of a strong Christian Science community.[39]

The Cleveland Church of Christ, Scientist, had grown exponentially since being chartered in 1891; by 1933 there were seven churches and over 10,000 Christian Science practitioners in the Cleveland area.[40] Christian Science policy prohibits publication of membership, but there is little reason to doubt Irttie faithfully remained one of the many "middle-class women [who] were represented in the movement's membership to an extraordinary degree."[41]

The Cleveland Art Museum opened in 1916 and was a cultural mecca available to all city residents. Irttie's own art talent emerged in portraits of her parents and in-laws that would hold pride of place in the family down through generations.[43] Irttie's drawing of her father-in-law appears to have served as the referent for an uncharacteristic painting made years later by Eddy—an experiment in realistic portraiture unlike any other in his extant body of work.

The 1920 census notes that Eddy and the next youngest brother, Theodore, attended school in Cleveland while the three older boys, of working age, were variously employed as draftsman, laborer, and chauffeur—presumably bringing paychecks back to the home they all shared with their parents. Some degree of financial security is suggested in the handsome and well-attired family as they appear in two studio photographs from around this time.

RIDING THE RAILS :: Circa 1921–1926

Mumma family life must not have been entirely harmonious in the early 1920's. When Eddy was about to enter ninth grade, both he and his mother made decisions to leave the household, whether in collaboration or one as the result of the other is not known.[44] Irttie left her husband and home and took up residence with two women as a live-in housekeeper or caretaker. Eddy showed up at school on the first day of ninth grade only long enough to say he was moving and collect his records. With a prodigious confidence, a substantial physical presence—over six feet tall even as the smallest of the brothers—and an eighth-grade education, Eddy felt equipped to see the world. He hopped a freight train and rode the rails out of town.[45]

Eddy's years of travel are unrecorded. He was likely in the company of other teenage "hobos" for whom a romanticized idea of life on the rails beckoned, but often became a harsh reality of hunger, danger, and loneliness.[46] Family lore holds that he worked "odd jobs" wherever the rails took him.[47] Experiences that may have informed Eddy's later art are unknown, although years of boxcar travel are a testimony to both his curiosity and daring. Certainly his perspective broadened as his world expanded. Eddy reappears in records at about age eighteen in the 1926 Cleveland City Directory, residing with his father and three of his brothers.

Handsome and personable, Eddy used the assets at hand to earn a living in Cleveland—he secured work as a fashion model in a department store,

FIG 9 | Irttie Mumma's c.1900 drawing of her father-in-law *(left)*, and Eddy Mumma's c.1970s painting *(right)*. *(Courtesy of Linda and Paul Gunsaulies)*

FIG 10 | Eddy Mumma, 1936. *(Photo courtesy of Linda and Paul Gunsaulies)*

flaunting both physique and self-confidence modeling elegant suits in the aisles of the store.[48] The power of clothing and costume to bestow status and importance featured prominently in the flamboyantly attired, regal characters of his later portraits.

EDDY & THELMA :: 1935–1956

By 1936, Eddy, twenty-eight years old, had left Cleveland with his mother and moved south to Springfield.[49] No reason for their move is recorded, but a well-established Christian Science community and an extended Mumma clan in the area may have influenced the decision.[50] Despite the hardship of the Great Depression, Springfield still wore evidence of the affluence of its earlier boom years. Elegant ironwork fences laced the sidewalks in front of opulent homes. The prosperity and growth of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, was apparent in the imposing new edifice of white brick, stone, and columns erected on East High Street in 1922.[51]

When the handsome newcomer—and namesake of the founder of Christian Science—showed up at church services, 23-year old Thelma Louise Huebner took notice. Eddy was formally uneducated, but tall, attractive, and charming. Thelma, the college-educated daughter of a well-to-do family, was smitten. Years later she told of being "…so nervous talking to handsome Eddy that she talked about the hole in the coat closet roof."[52]

Thelma Huebner's childhood, in contrast to Eddy's early years, was one of privilege—an idyllic upbringing in the quintessentially American town of Springfield. Born in 1912, Thelma was the only child of Arthur and Stella Huebner. Her parents had met as childhood schoolmates and their families were small but tightknit. They were among the self-made families of Springfield whose prosperity came from their own hard work and skilled labor[53] during the city's years of extraordinary industrial growth in the early 1900s.[54]

Thelma's father, Arthur Huebner, compensated for a lack of education with a conviction in his own ability to succeed—a trait he shared with Eddy. Thelma's first cousin, Betty Zeller Thompson, states: "Uncle Arthur was a go-getter. He was a delivery boy, he kept watching the meat cutter, he became a butcher, and pretty soon he owned the grocery store." The affluence Arthur Huebner achieved as a partner with Braun Brothers Packing Company was significant enough to keep his family secure even during the years of the Great Depression.[55]

Thelma's mother, Stella Zeller Huebner, was somewhat fragile and dependent according to family recollections; she was content to cede decision-making to her husband and daughter, the two strong "leaders" in the family. The Huebners had broken from their long-standing family roots in the Lutheran Church to become members of Springfield's First Church of Christ, Scientist.[56]

The Huebner family found common ground with Irttie and Eddy in the convictions of Christian Science, including abstinence from "tobacco, alcohol, [and] drugs."[57] Irttie accompanied her son "every time Eddy came to court Thelma,"[58]and the families grew close. The courtship of Eddy and Thelma also fostered the beginning of a life-long friendship between Eddy and Thelma's first cousin, Betty Zeller Thompson (Betty's father was the stepbrother of Thelma's mother). In 1935, Betty was about ten years younger than the courting couple. Her teenage recollection of Eddy was of, "the most handsome man I have ever known… [with a] head of curly hair and sparkling blue eyes." Betty says Eddy brought laughter to the family gatherings: "I remember how much he was happy and it was good to be with him." She describes her cousin Thelma as taking command of any situation and meeting all challenges; she was more of "a leader" than Eddy. With her sharp intellect, spirited personality and determination, Thelma overrode any objections her parents had to Eddy's lack of traditional job skills. Arthur created a job for him as a salesman at Braun Brothers Packing. When Thelma married Eddy in 1936, her parents hosted the wedding at their home. Their wedding gift to the young couple was a new house.[59]

FIG 11 | *Left to right:* Thelma, Carroll and Eddy Mumma, c. mid-1940s. *(Photo courtesy of Linda and Paul Gunsaulies)*

FIG 12 | Eddy and his daughter, Carroll Lee Mumma, c. 1938. *(Photo courtesy of Linda and Paul Gunsaulies)*

FIG 13 | *Left to right:* Thelma, Eddy and Stella, with young Carroll, c. 1945. *(Photo courtesy of Linda and Paul Gunsaulies)*

The Christian Science church remained at the center of the newlyweds' life. In January of 1937, Thelma and Eddy were respectively elected First and Second Readers in the Springfield First Church of Christ, Scientist[60]—positions of leadership within the congregation. Readers are charged to "keep themselves unspotted from the world—uncontaminated with evil—that the mental atmosphere they exhale shall promote health and holiness."[61] Thelma and Eddy accepted the commitment to be exemplars of the Christian Science faith in their community.

Genial Eddy was a natural success as a salesman in his father-in-law's business—Betty said, "Eddy could talk to anybody!" Thelma left her job as a schoolteacher upon marrying and, in 1938, gave birth to their only child, Carroll Lee Mumma. Eddy embraced the comfortable lifestyle Thelma had known, and together they filled their home with antiques and the sounds of classical music.[62] They "would take off on a whim to see the opera"[63]—likely the New York Metropolitan Opera performing in Cleveland[64]—adding the dramatic visual vocabulary of costume and stage sets to the music they loved.

When Arthur Huebner died in late 1941, his estate provided amply for his widow, Stella, and for the Mummas, who invested the inheritance in property.[65] Springfield real estate records show purchases made by Eddy Mumma early in 1942 of multiple city properties and a rural farm. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, had changed the maximum age of eligibility for conscription into the military from thirty-five to forty-five years old—but farmers could apply for agricultural exemption.[66] At age thirty-four, Eddy faced ten added years of eligibility as well as the increased likelihood of being called up as the U.S. entered the war. Carroll writes, "Eddy was listed for the draft and bought the farm to escape going to war. He and Thelma had no previous farm experience, but learned by listening to other farmers." It would not be the only time in his life Eddy determined he would learn by observing what others had done and then trying it out for himself.

With Thelma's close involvement in everything from planning to plowing, Eddy took on farm life. They made a success of raising cattle and crops. In 1946, they purchased a larger farm with a grand stone home for themselves and a smaller house into which Stella moved. They added a fish hatchery to the farming. Prosperity from the properties and farm afforded them some luxury and, in 1948, Eddy and Thelma took their daughter and both mothers—Stella and Irttie—on a trip to Bermuda.[67] They were centered on family, with few outside friends in their life.[68]

TRAGEDY :: 1956

In May of 1956, tragedy struck. At age forty-four, Thelma died from untreated breast cancer. Her cousin Betty reported that Thelma had been aware of symptoms, but had not sought medical help.[69]

The Christian Science tenet holds "that sin, sickness, and death, being illusions created by false belief, can be conquered by a person's divine mind."[70] Because "replacing 'wrong' thoughts with 'right' thoughts is the medicine and curative of Christian Science,"[71] this is likely the path Eddy and Thelma followed rather than seeking conventional medical help for her illness. A crisis of faith may have been precipitated in Eddy upon Thelma's death; in the coming years he did not seem to hold as firmly to the Christian Science path as he once had.[72]

Thelma's husband, daughter, and mother grieved intensely. Instead of standing as valedictorian of her high school class, Carroll attended her mother's funeral the week of graduation. She left for Ohio's Miami University in the fall, and avoided trips home to visit the farm, where her mother's absence would have been felt acutely. Stella's sorrow at the death of her daughter was amplified by her granddaughter's absence. And Eddy was bereaved and confused without Thelma. With the death of his wife, he lost his best friend, partner on the farm, and business collaborator.

The two houses on the farm went silent without Thelma and Carroll. Deepening the shadow over the farm was a financial calamity that changed the very identity of Springfield. In late 1956, the industrial leader of the city, Crowell-Collier publishers, unexpectedly closed its doors, putting hundreds of workers out of work and impacting nearly every business and household in Springfield. The Mummas relied on rental income —now an uncertain source of revenue. A gloom fell over the city—and over the farm—from which it would never fully recover.[73]

In sorrow, distress, and uncertainty about their future, Eddy and Stella turned to one another. Later that year, Stella quietly announced to her family that she and Eddy had married.[74] Eddy's next years as Stella's husband were complicated.

EDDY & STELLA :: 1957–1966

Eddy, forty-eight, and Stella, seventy-one, left the farm and moved back into Springfield; Eddy took up managing the rental properties there. With their combined resources, their financial security was fortified. They traveled, taking Carroll along on tropical vacations to Mexico in 1957 and the Virgin Islands in 1961.[75] An undated snapshot from around this time shows all three of them at a dinner that suggests a New Year's Eve party or a cruise *(fig. 14)*.

Carroll graduated from college and returned to Springfield to teach.[76] There, the quiet and serious young teacher met convivial and extroverted Paul Gunsaulies. Paul was caring and kind—the breadwinner and eldest child of a large family. In 1965, Paul and Carroll eloped. As surf rock tunes dominated radio airwaves, they packed the car and headed south for a new life in Daytona Beach, Florida. A visit to Paul's older sister in a Florida university city detoured them. Gainesville, not Daytona Beach, became their new home. [77]

In Springfield, Eddy's life was increasingly fraught with difficulties. His mother, Irttie, had passed away two years after Thelma. Both his father and brother, Theodore, had died; his other brothers were not living near Springfield. Eddy's weight increased and it is likely he was experiencing some effects of diabetes. The rental property business floundered without Thelma's sharp oversight. Married for nearly ten years by 1966, Eddy and Stella argued and were in discord often.[78]

Already at a low point, Eddy, in his late-fifties, began to drink at the invitation of the tenants he visited as he made the rounds to collect rent each weekend—a radical departure from his years of abstinence as a Christian Scientist.[79] The constellation of difficulties had a grip on his health and wellbeing. Family members relate that he was institutionalized for a period of time in the mid-1960s, although the specifics are no longer known.[80]

Stella, at age eighty-one in 1966, began to exhibit behavior associated with dementia—she was sometimes discovered wandering Springfield, uncertain where she lived, confused, and frightened. The local police would notify her brother, Lloyd Zeller (Betty's father), who retrieved Stella to safety, sometimes getting her home only to discover Eddy in bed, sleeping off an afternoon of rent collecting.[81]

Betty and her parents, the Zellers, were the only close relatives of Eddy and Stella remaining in Springfield. Burdened with the caretaking of other family members, they began to falter under the increasing responsibility of Eddy and Stella. The family knew something needed to change. They called Carroll for help.[82]

GAINESVILLE :: 1967–1986

Family life for Carroll may have been shattered at the loss of her mother and the marriage of her father and grandmother, but her sense of family commitment stayed strong. When their son was born in 1966, Carroll and Paul gave him the middle name Eddy, after her father. And when the call came from her uncle in Ohio saying Eddy and Stella needed care, Carroll and Paul responded.[83]

FIG 14 | *Left to right:* Carroll, Stella, and Eddy Mumma, c. 1960. *(Photo courtesy of Linda and Paul Gunsaulies)*

In 1967, the Ohio farm and most of the properties were sold. Eddy and Stella were moved to Florida. Three modest houses near Carroll's family were purchased, one for Eddy to move into and two he would manage for rental income. Betty describes Eddy's eight-hundred-square-foot house in contrast to the luxury of his Ohio farmhouse: "I was absolutely cut back by the smallness of it. I had never seen a house that small…so tiny."[84] Stella was moved directly into a Gainesville nursing home, where she passed away four years later at age eighty-seven.

In 1967, Gainesville was a rural Southern town evolving into a university city in the midst of radical social change. Racial integration, opposition to the war in Vietnam, and massive cultural upheaval were the social issues in the background of the personal issues affecting Eddy. He arrived in Florida with significant health problems: weight gain, eyesight severely impacted by cataracts, and diabetes—as well as the toll of some years of alcohol misuse. A diabetic condition such as his would have caused or exacerbated high blood pressure. Neuropathy—

the lack of circulation to his feet and legs as a consequence of the diabetes—fostered painful infection in his feet and seriously compromised his mobility.[85] The misery of illness might have crushed a less resistant soul, but Eddy was stoic, "uncomplaining in the face of adversity," according to recollections by Carroll. His willingness to accept medical attention, including cataract surgery, reflects a shift from absolute fidelity to the Christian Science faith. Paul Eddy Gunsaulies, Eddy's grandson, confirms that his grandfather "read his religious material" but did not attend Christian Science meetings or services during his years in Florida.

While Carroll accepted that her father would live near her family in Gainesville, she maintained an inexorable emotional distance from him. Paul Eddy confirms: "My mother and my grandfather were estranged for my entire childhood…it was taboo to talk about with her." She provided for her father indirectly by supporting her husband's commitment to Eddy's care—Paul Gunsaulies became the caretaker to Eddy, driving him to medical appointments and to visit Stella in the nursing home until her death in 1971. He repaired and maintained Eddy's small house. He ran errands for food and medicine and delivered them to his father-in-law, often with his young son in tow. Paul Eddy remembers his father's soft spot for indulging Eddy: "We would sometimes bring Grandpa a milkshake because he loved them, but with his diabetes he wasn't supposed to have them."

ART LESSON :: 1969

Sometime in 1969, Eddy decided to paint.[86] He made no claim in subsequent years to any inspirational moment, divine or otherwise. His days had become increasingly

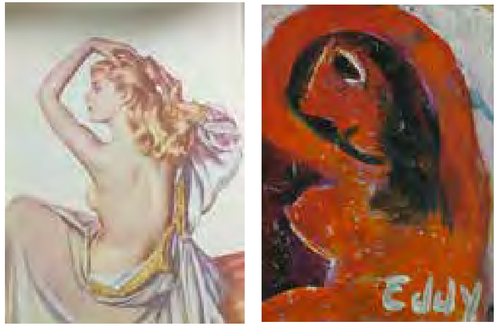

FIG 0 | Typical art instruction books from 1970s

defined by imposed limitations, in stark contrast to a lifetime lived so large—a small house in an unfamiliar town, a solitary daily existence, a debilitating illness. As the outside world became inaccessible, he reached inward to create a world of his own making. At age sixty-one, Eddy Mumma took up paints and boards and made his first marks. The pursuit would grip him for the remaining seventeen years of his life.

FIG 0 | Eddie Mumma painting, c. 1970. (*Courtesy of Paul Gunsaulies)*

There are hints of the forces that perhaps bore on Eddy's decision. Carroll writes that it was her suggestion that her father should "get out of the house" and enroll in an art class. Lennie Kesl claimed Eddy said his interest in painting was prompted by the restoration of his eyesight and ability to see color after cataract surgery.[87] A 1969 story in the *Christian Science Monitor* may have played a part: Jesse James Aaron (1887–1979), an artist who was the subject of recent attention for his "genuine folk art," was featured in the *Monitor*.[88] Aaron was a Gainesville artist who had taken up woodcarving the year before, at the age of eighty.[89] Eddy, who read the *Christian Science Monitor* routinely[90] would have noted the story with interest.

Eddy's formal instruction in art apparently lasted one day. Family lore says that on the first day of an art class for seniors, Eddy felt insulted by the instructor's criticism that he was sloppy in his technique—and so he never returned to the class.[91] His friendship with Thelma's cousin Betty had stayed strong, and Betty made it a point to spend time with him on her annual winter trips to Florida; during one visit, Eddy told her it had been arduous for him to take the bus to class with his compromised mobility. Eddy pushed forward without art instruction. He applied himself to learning to paint the way he had learned to farm—with a confidence that if he modeled on the success of others, and if he tried hard enough, he would eventually succeed.

Eddy's good nature was compromised as his health deteriorated over time. The gentle, teasing grandfather[92] with the gruff "W.C. Field's voice"[93] was sometimes disoriented or unable to engage with his grandson.[94] The health consequences from the diabetes increased to the point that drastic action was the only recourse; in 1970 Eddy's left leg was amputated above the knee.[95] His mental health also suffered at times; he exhibited symptoms of possible loss of cognitive function or dementia related to diabetes.[96] Paul Eddy asserts Eddy did not have interest in or access to alcohol during his years in Florida, but he did experience episodes of confusion: "My Dad always [kidded that] Grandpa was talking to the spooks. He would talk

FIG 0 | Typical art instruction books from 1970s

to himself and even make hand gestures in the air. To my sister, it might have seemed like he spoke to the paintings. Some days he was worse than others and my Dad would ask him if he'd taken his insulin or needed to eat."

A large man, Eddy struggled to put his weight on his prosthetic leg; he elected to use a wheelchair, confining him further to his house and porch. Paul routinely checked in on his father-in-law, delivering more and more art supplies along with food and medicine. Eddy didn't demand optimal supplies—he was more interested in quantity than quality. He used inexpensive materials: acrylic paint, cheap canvas-covered boards, Masonite, primed or unprimed matte board. Paul Eddy remembers frequent trips with his father to a large chain store to buy art supplies and often select beginner art instruction manuals from the *Grumbacher Library Series* or the *Walter Foster Artist's Library Series*.[97]

Betty and her husband, a builder, brought scrap boards and house paint to Eddy when they drove from Springfield to Gainesville. She remembers Eddy being gleeful as he told her, "I found out I could use house paint! It works just as well as art paint!" Her recollection is substantiated by the thin layers of white or tinted green paint (of a shade common to wall colors of the 1970's) on the grounds of a number of his paintings.

Eddy did not date his paintings. A timeline of the evolution of the work can be inferred by observable changes in both style and signature, as well as by family accounts. Paul Eddy recalls Eddy "copying all those books at the beginning" and asserts, "The iconic figure was absolutely later." Snapshots of Eddy's living room, taken by Betty in January of 1978, reveal a clear distinction between the paintings that appear at that time and the majority of the extant work; the contrast points to a reasonable division of the work into two broad groupings: c.1969-1977 and c.1978-1986.

Small canvases of about 8x10 inches in an uncertain, exploratory hand suggest the genesis of Eddy's work. One very small landscape painting is signed simply "Ed" in the upper left corner and is likely an antecedent to paintings that boast the bolder "Eddy" signature; Paul Eddy remembers it as one of the earliest. Brush strokes on the small canvas boards are timid and insinuate small finger and wrist movement with the brush, as if produced on a tabletop and not yet on an artist's easel; Eddy is known to have eventually installed an easel in his living room. In the "Ed" painting, parsimonious daubs of red representing birds support Paul Eddy's assertion that red pigment was used sparingly in the early paintings: "…red paint was by far the most expensive, so that didn't get purchased very often" he recalls.

Eddy's early methodology of study seems to be based on copying images from a variety of sources. He made multiple paintings of a given subject, shifting to a different topic when he acquired a new art instruction book.[98] Eddy produced repeated images of subjects including cowboys, cars, animals, and the female figure; each of those topics is featured as the subject of one in the series of "how to" art manuals his family bought for him. Some editions of the Walter Foster art instruction series featured reproductions of classical art, likely accounting for one source of Eddy's early art history referents; the book reproduces paintings of Gainsborough, Canaletto, Da Vinci, Millet, and others that appear in Eddy's work. Kesl remarked in an interview that "Mr. Eddy had books on art…including one with a Van Gogh portrait with his ear cut off"[99]—Eddy painted his version of the Van Gogh self-portrait at least twice. Eddy's predilection for image references is not limited to copies of work he made at the early stages of painting. Much of the bold, more mature work also suggests distinct classical art history referents (see essay by Nancy Thebaut in this catalogue). Eddy's family members assert

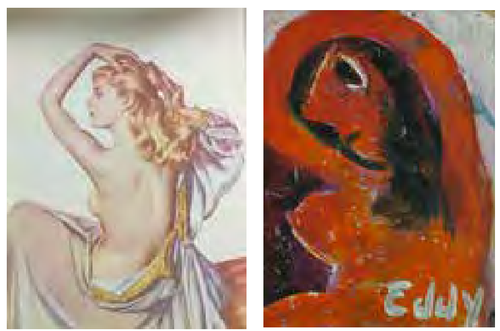

FIG 0 | Typical art instruction books from 1970s

he also used magazines as source material;[100] his daughter, Carroll, subscribed to *National Geographic Magazine*[101] and some of Eddy's paintings suggest he referenced photographs such as the Great Sphinx, the Afghan Girl, King Tut, Henry VIII and other images featured in those pages.[102] *(Plates xx, xx, xx)* Eddy made each image his own from the start, building an innovative visual vocabulary from his earliest efforts to his last.

Eddy's newly completed paintings were constantly added to his walls, either overlapping previous work or in place of older paintings, which were then boxed up and, according to Paul Eddy, "sometimes ended up in the shed." He remembers his father trying to add work to the walls: "It was always amusing when Grandpa would tell my Dad he wanted something hung and my Dad would jokingly ask "*Where*?" Years later, when Feldstein first entered the little house, it was the staggering number of paintings blanketing the walls that most astounded him: "I was screaming on the inside," he recalls, "I don't have the words to describe how astonishing it was inside that house."

The three-quarter or half-portrait with the direct gaze and prominent oversized hands that would eventually become Eddy's most iconic image does not appear in the 1978 photos. Close examination of the photos reveals hands proportionate to bodies and eyes rendered oval, not yet commanding the face with the oversize, circular form and direct stare. One aspect of the distinctive features he would later paint almost exclusively appears in the single-line rendering of the nose and eyebrows—a characteristic that remained consistent in Eddy's portraits over time.

FRIENDSHIP :: 975–1986

Lennie Kesl is the person credited with discovering the art of Eddy Mumma.[103] No date is on record to pinpoint when Kesl met Mumma, but Eddy's tenant, Henry Hordeman, first enrolled in 1975 in the two-year college where Kesl taught; arguably within the next year or so Kesl had learned of the landlord who made extraordinary paintings. Kesl befriended Eddy, and at face value the two might have seemed an unlikely pair: a high-spirited professional artist, musician, and outgoing raconteur—and an uneducated, reclusive, elderly man who painted in seclusion. Kesl's daughter, Charlotte Kesl, says, "I've often wondered how Mr. Eddy, a man who preferred solitude, allowed Dad, who tended to jump around the room with energy, into his world." More powerful than their differences was the trait they shared—a serious and consuming commitment to making art. Kesl recognized in Eddy the creative force and the sincerity of intent he most esteemed in a fellow artist.

Kesl was an accomplished artist—he had studied at the L'Atelier Fernand Leger in Paris, earned a 1957 Masters degree from Michigan State University, and held appointments at the University of Florida and Santa Fe College—and he was zealous in his support of the endeavor of art. Charlotte Kesl says, "Dad spoke to everyone with respect and dignity about their art and I believe Mr. Eddy must have responded to that."

Along with encouragement, Kesl routinely bestowed small gifts—random art supplies, cotton rag board, images torn from magazines, postcards with art reproductions, used art books—upon his many artist friends. Mumma was not likely to have been an exception. It was Kesl's habit to scatter these small breadcrumbs of inspiration without the encumbrance of instruction or critique – it was a part of his ritual of visiting and checking in on artists.[104] There is little doubt he brought books and imagery along with the art supplies he is known to have delivered to Eddy.

Kesl may have been propelled by friendship—but he was also motivated as a collector. He was happy to accept tangible reward from Mumma in return for his deliveries. Kesl's wife, Nancy Mitchell Kesl, remembers, "At times, I would be in the car as Lennie carried prepared canvases, Masonite boards, and paints up to the front door of Mr. Eddy's small clapboard house. He would be there a few minutes and emerge with several of Mr. Eddy's paintings."[105]

A question arises about the influence Kesl might have had on Eddy Mumma. Feldstein states, "Lennie Kesl's esteem for Eddy's untrained and powerful innate ability bordered on envy. He knew how rare it was. He was in awe of it." Feldstein asserts that Kesl understood his role in Eddy's intensely personal process was to support and encourage, not to instruct. Nancy Kesl notes that Lennie sought to affirm Eddy's efforts by "showing him the work of artists such as Van Gogh, Manet, Modigliani, Gauguin and Velasquez, saying, 'These are your brothers!'" In

fig 0 | Artist Lennie Kesl (1926–2012) and sculptor Jessie Aaron (1897–1979), c. mid-1970s. *(Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Diana Kesl)*

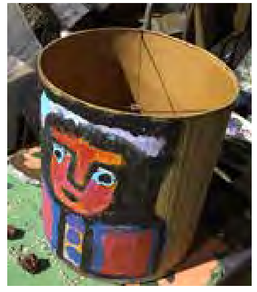

fig 0 | Lampshades from home of Eddie Mumma, collection of William S. Arnett. *(Photo by author)*

an interview in Southern Folk Art Magazine, Kesl noted the importance of personal revelation in Eddy's work, saying, "You could never forge a Mumma because he was so unique in *discovering* the things he did. Even without a signature, his work is distinctive."[106] Although it cannot be known with certainty, the overriding feeling among those who knew Kesl is that he would have respected and protected the integrity of Eddy's unschooled creativity.

POWER AND GLORY :: 1980s

At some point, seemingly in the early 1980s, Eddy's artistic strength exploded. He attacked larger canvases, rolling his wheelchair right up to the easel in the center of his living room. His need for supplies escalated. Driven by impatience in awaiting supplies—or simply because an empty surface required an image—he covered both front and back of many surfaces and sometimes went even further, painting and including the frame as a part of the art. Upon being questioned by Kesl for his reasons for placing images both front and back, Eddy simply asserted, "[because] you are supposed to."[107] He painted on glass over top of framed photos or prints, on cardboard, on matte board, on canvas, on boards that Kesl prepared for him.[108] A yearbook cover looked like a good surface—and it was promptly painted. Eddy painted the doors, appliances, and lampshades. Paintings were stacked along the floor in such rapid succession that wet work pressed up against other wet work, effectively obliterating two images.[109]

Eddy painted vigorously during this period in his arc of development, deploying vivid colors for the flamboyant costumes of his subjects. Thick swabs of paint and mighty strokes slashed the canvas and defined the classic eyes, nose, and mouth of his subject. Some paintings gained dimension by virtue of heavy impasto or textured layers as Eddy returned again and again to change or completely repaint images. The ghostly relief of other figures and even his bold "Eddy" signature can be discerned beneath newer images painted over previous ones. The frugal Kesl noted the lavish use of pigments, saying Eddy would "apply paint like he was a millionaire."[110] Eddy may have revisited images with the idea of improving them, or he may have simply been so engaged in the process itself that the outcome of his previous efforts had no lasting value for him.

Eddy relied on Kesl to supplement the supply chain, specifying the exact pigments he required,[111] including plenty of the coveted red pigments as evidenced by the lavish use of red in his portraits. At some point Eddy acquired a metallic gold acrylic pigment and brilliantly executed a handful of paintings bedazzled with the gold: the Great Sphinx, a swan, an interpretation of a Van Gogh self-portrait, and a number of magnificent royal figures. *(Plates xx, xx, xx)* Even without the lustrous gold paint Eddy was a near alchemist with his humble acrylic pigments, placing colors next to one another to spectacular and dazzling effect.

An astonishing cast of characters took shape under Eddy's hand. Kings and chiefs and titans established residence in Eddy's world, commanding the space with their power and glory. They are regal in costume, flaunting hats and feathers and buttons and stripes. Some are mysterious or frightening. All are intense and singular, even while sharing characteristics of an odd anatomy. Protruding eyes emphatically punctuate the portraits. Disproportionate five-stroke hands whirl around the picture frame like erratic windmills. The characters spilled from Eddy's imagination and overflowed his house.

fig 0 | Untitled, 16 x 12 inches, collection of Rick Nulty.

Eddy's signature also grew more ascendant, sometimes rendered in multiple colors or placed into the composition as an important element rather than a proprietary afterthought. Aspects of his bold signature reflect the shapes within the figures: the double lower case 'd' mirrors

the eyes in the figures, the curving shapes of the upper case 'E' are repeated in descending lines of buttons. The iconic figure and bold declaration of authorship, barely glimpsed on his walls in 1978, gained dominance as Eddy's work reached a zenith of power and presence.

As his work grew in strength, his body weakened. Eddy's diabetes continued to escalate beyond control and, in 1984, his second leg needed to be amputated.[112] Kesl, familiar with the chronology of Eddy's work, claimed the larger paintings—those in the range of 30x24 inches or 48x24 inches—were made at this time, in direct contrast to Eddy's diminishing stature: "The smaller he got, physically, the larger Mumma's art got, scale-wise."[113] Feldstein, singularly familiar with the entire body of Eddy's work, also notes the larger paintings that stand out from the majority of Eddy's work: "Most of the hundreds of paintings are 12x9, 16x12, or 20x16 inches, common canvas board sizes. Even when he used Masonite, it was cut to those standard sizes. However, there are some spectacular larger paintings in the 48x24 inch range, usually on board, and there are odd-sized paintings, mostly vertical, done on irregular matte board scraps. Eddy even managed one very large stretched canvas painting of boats that is 42x72 inches horizontally on stretched canvas."[114] It is not known how much of a factor Eddy's eyesight was in the increased scale of his paintings; the diabetic retinopathy associated with his condition causes deterioration of vision over time. Eddy may have compensated for loss of acuity with boldness of stroke and scale.

FIG 0 | Last known photograph of Eddy Mumma, c. mid-1980s. *(Photo courtesy of Linda and Paul Gunsaulies)*

After the second amputation, in 1984, Eddy entered a nursing home for a brief time. Forbidden to paint, he was miserable. Paul brought him home. The double amputee was confined to a wheelchair, his limbs concealed by a cover across his lap. The man who was once characterized by an immense physical presence, large personality, and great pride, was stripped of both stature and dignity. Eddy became more stridently reclusive. It is said he never left the little house again.

Eddy continued to paint daily up to the final day of his life in 1986, when he died in his sleep on a couch near his easel, surrounded by his work.[115]

POSTSCRIPT :: 1986–

It is estimated that Eddy Mumma produced over one thousand paintings. He had given a few to family members, and as many as several hundred paintings were acquired over time by Lennie Kesl.[116] At the time of Eddy's death, an estimated eight hundred paintings remained in his small house, layered on the walls, stacked around the house, piled in boxes or crates. The family kept some and Josh Feldstein acquired the remaining work in a moment of serendipity so dramatic as to seem fictional. Feldstein and his then-wife, Judy Breiner, did their best to sort through the piles of sometimes moldy, foul-smelling work to determine which could be cleaned of mildew or insect residue, and saved. For a period of time, the Feldsteins had a virtual village of "Mr. Eddys" occupying their house, hung or propped in all available spaces. They invited friends over to marvel at the array of characters. They gave some of them names: *Mona Lisa, Man with the Golden Sword, The Bride.* Judy recalls, "We had favorites, but we loved them all."[117]

In 1987, Feldstein traded about four hundred of the paintings to William S. Arnett of Atlanta, Georgia,[118] an ardent and informed collector of the work of self-taught artists. Acknowledging the authority of Eddy's iconic figure, Arnett states, "I loved the way Mr. Eddy reinvented Frans Hals and 17th century Dutch painting. I won't say he was better, but he held his own."[119] In turn, Arnett traded or sold some of the work, and Mumma's art made its way to a wider sphere of appreciation.

Some of the paintings found their way into galleries or online auctions and, as of this writing, are available. Some of the work was acquired by the concert hall enterprise, House of Blues,[120] and was installed alongside the work of other self-taught artists in music performance venues.[121] Feldstein sold some of the paintings and gave away many.

Most importantly, the significance of Mumma's art as reflecting an abiding and original vision has been clearly asserted by the presence of his work in a number of esteemed museum collections. Umberger, who has specialized in the work of self-taught artists since the 1990s agrees: "In the end, Mumma left a powerful body of work that seems to embody the redirection of an immense character—as his physical presence faded, his art came increasingly alive. As a once-guiding religious faith flagged, his sense of self flourished. Within his bold array, Mumma ultimately immortalized himself."

Over a period of seventeen years, Eddy Mumma channeled and articulated a fantastic private world he entered through the portal of his easel. Thirty years after his death, the publication of this catalogue is an invitation to visit that world.

1 Josh Feldstein, (b1954–), in discussion and interviews with the author, Gainesville, Florida, 2014-2016.

2 Ibid.

3 Paul Eddy Gunsaulies (b1966–), grandson of Eddy Mumma, in email correspondence and discussion with the author, 2015-2016.

4 Feldstein.

5 Ibid.

6 Santa Fe College records indicate Henry Hordeman, tenant of Eddy Mumma, was first enrolled in fall term of 1975.

7 Feldstein.

8 Leonard (Lennie) Kesl (1926-2012), in discussions with the author over their 27-year friendship from 1989 until his death in 2012.

9 Paul Eddy Gunsaulies, in email correspondence with the author, notes that no family, friends or tenants referred to his grandfather, Eddy Mumma, as "Mr. Eddy." Paul asserts the name originated with and was used by Kesl and eventually by those who knew Kesl and adopted the use of "Mr. Eddy" from him.

10 Linda Knopf, "Lennie Kesl Recalls Eddy (Mr. Eddy) Gallimore Mumma," Southern Folk Art Magazine, June 2009, accessed February 19, 2016, http://southernfolkartmagazine.com/EddyMumma/lennykesl.htm

11 Nancy Mitchell Kesl, (b1949 –), wife of Lennie Kesl, in correspondence with the author, 2014.

12 Feldstein.

13 Ibid.

14 Carroll Lee Mumma Gunsaulies, (1938-2004), daughter of Eddy Mumma, from biographical summary of her father provided to the author by her daughter, Linda Gunsaulies.

15 Nancee Clark, professor at Santa Fe College 1980-1986, in email correspondence with the author, January, 2015, states: "Kesl installed about a dozen small Eddy Mumma portraits in an exhibit case in the art department of the college in the early 1980s. They were seen mostly by students and staff."

16 Lennie Kesl acquired paintings from Eddy over time, in trade for supplies and sometimes for small amounts of money, technically constituting a sale, but not meeting the more traditional definition of commerce. Kesl said in an interview: "He seemed to trust me and let me buy paintings by him and didn't seem to mind that he got very little money." Linda Knopf, Southern Folk Art Magazine, June 2009.

17 Feldstein.

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19 Leslie Umberger, Curator of Folk and Self-taught Art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., in email correspondence with the author, 2015.

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23 Tyack, D, & Cuban, L. (1995) Tinkering toward utopia: A century of public school reform. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p.69-70

24 Linda Gunsaulies (b1975 –) granddaughter of Eddy Mumma, in email correspondence with the author, 2014.

25 Elmer Mumma was the biological father of one son before marrying and fathering five sons with his wife, Irttie Gallimore Mumma. Mumma Surname Database, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.mumma.org/dna/MummaDNA67summary.html#Bell

26 United States Federal Census of1900, accessed February 20, 2015, https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Federal_Census

27 Benjamin Pierce, A Standard History of Springfield and Clark County, Ohio, Vol 1, The American Historical Society, Chicago and New York, 1922, P145

28 Stuart E. Knee, Christian Science in the Age of Mary Baker Eddy, Greenwood Press, Connecticut. 1994, p63 and p117.

29 "Mental Healing in Boston, U.S.A." The London Times, May, 1885.

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31 United States Federal Census of 1900.

32 Linda Gunsaulies.

33 Records including U.S. Census, birth certificates of the five Mumma boys, and family records variously identify the family's residence as Miami County (West Milton), Montgomery County (Dayton), Van Wert County (Middlepoint),

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35 "Winton Motor Carriage Co.," Cleveland Historical, accessed September 25, 2015, http://clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/267.

36 United States Federal Census,1910.

37 Betty Zeller Thompson (b1922–), first cousin of Thelma Mumma and cousin by marriage to Eddy Mumma, interviews with the author, Indian Rocks Beach, Florida, March 30-31, 2015 and Springfield, Ohio, June 29-30, 2015.

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39 Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University and the Western Reserve Historical Society, accessed Feb 19.2016, http://ech.case.edu/cgi/searchcontent.pl

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Making Art History his Own: The Paintings of Eddy Mumma

Nancy Thebaut

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Although he received no formal training, Eddy Mumma created worlds of colorful characters that reveal an apparent interest in art history: a number of his paintings openly cite—and to various degrees transform—iconic works of Western European art. In each of his 'art history' paintings, Mumma does not attempt an exact copy of the original work, but rather reproduces primary structural elements only to intensify the color palette and rid the canvas of any sense of naturalism. With a nod to his predecessors, Mumma makes each subject his own through a largely unwavering style, the prominent "Eddy" signature, and visible traces of his painterly process. And while these paintings constitute less than half of Mumma's oeuvre, they offer valuable insights into Mumma's influences and artistic development.

The sources of Mumma's art historical reference points vary. Although Mumma never saw most (if not all) of the famed artworks from which he drew inspiration, he likely did have access to their photographic reproductions in several places. For instance, his family often bought rudimentary 'how-to' art manuals for the artist; both *The Grumbacher Art Library* and the Walter Foster series frequently included images of well-known paintings for the aspiring artist to copy. As a consistent Christian Science Monitor reader, Mumma would have also seen reproductions of art in the magazine's frequent exhibition reviews. Furthermore, Josh Feldstein recalls finding in Mumma's house an art history survey textbook, possibly an edition of H.W. Janson's *History of Art*. Feldstein procured the book and, although now lost, he remembers that it was smattered with paint, and so likely well used. But regardless of the title or type of publication in which Mumma saw reproductions of Western European art, his paintings make clear that he held a strong interest in and had some knowledge—however cursory—of art history.

To account for an artist's development is a difficult and fraught task, particularly when not a single painting bears the date of its creation. Three photographs taken of Eddy Mumma in his Gainesville, Florida home in 1978 offer partial evidence of when he had—and had not yet—painted certain subjects. Covering every wall, these photographed paintings depict cars, flowers, birds, felines, houses, and sailboats alongside a few figural portraits. Some may loosely emulate paintings from Western art history, but most do not. Stylistically speaking, they all seem more tentative, i.e. less self-assured, than the majority of Mumma's work; there is not yet evidence of what will become his characteristically broad, quick brushstrokes and bold combinations of colors. More importantly, almost none of these pre-1978 paintings depict the formally similar facial 'type' of the hundreds of half-length portraits for which Mumma is now known. From 1978 until his death in 1986, Mumma seems to have moved towards an exclusive focus on half-length portraits whose costumes and colors could be easily manipulated, with the effect that their referents became decreasingly legible, suggesting a loose timeline of Mumma's own artistic maturity.

A close reading of a number of Mumma's individual works discloses his general interest in the art historical canon before he apparently shifted his attention to primarily sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European court portraits of flamboyantly costumed men and, on occasion, women. From these, Mumma appropriated and transformed a formal vocabulary that he ultimately made his own.

Eddy Mumma, *untitled [Gleaners],* n.d.
Jean-François Millet, *The Gleaners* (1857)

Mumma's interpretation of *The Gleaners* (fig. 1b), painted in 1857 by Jean-François Millet, offers what is likely an early example of his 'art history' paintings. Elements of the original painting that Mumma has preserved are what make its referent almost immediately recognizable, i.e., the three women who pick up stray grains of wheat following a harvest. Millet's painting, which measures 33 x 44 inches, was originally quite controversial for its monumentalizing depiction of labor. Mumma has transformed *The Gleaners* by depicting it on a much smaller scale of only 10 x 14 inches, brightening its color palette, and completely altering the scene behind the female figures (fig. 1a). Thick, black brushstrokes outline the women's faces, rendering them almost abstract but still more visible than the downturned faces in Millet's painting. The central figure stares out at the viewer: her bandana has been pushed back to reveal her eyes and perhaps mouth. Mumma's decision to paint at least part of

FIG 1a | Eddy Mumma, untitled, n.d.

FIG 1b | Jean-François Millet, *The Gleaners* (1857)

Eddy Mumma, *untitled [Gleaners],* n.d.
Jean-François Millet, *The Gleaners* (1857)

these figures' faces is in keeping with his proclivity to paint most of his subjects with wide-opened eyes that stare directly out at the viewer. Whereas Millet obfuscated the women's faces, clothed them in an earthy palette and so aligned them with the land, Mumma's colorful gleaners look up and stand out against a vivid orange field.

Eddy Mumma, *untitled [Van Gogh I],* n.d.
Eddy Mumma, *untitled [Van Gogh II],* n.d.
Vincent Van Gogh, *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear* (1889)

Mumma created two paintings based on the self-portrait by Vincent Van Gogh, *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear* (1889) (fig. 2c), both of which clearly reveal that he did not paint from memory or his imagination alone. In Mumma's renditions, the subject is positioned before a picket fence, wears a two-toned hat, and is partially covered with bandages painted with single, saturated brushstrokes that make his paintings immediately recognizable as images of the wounded Van Gogh.

In what appears stylistically to be the earlier of the two paintings, curving lines run down the length of the figure's bulging face as if to imitate the repeating vertical brushstrokes in Van Gogh's canvas (fig. 2a). The nose, eyebrows, and mouth have been reduced to sparsely painted black lines and dots, which provide some sense of graphic order to the intermingling yellow, red, and orange dabs of paint that cover the face. Mumma plays with color throughout the piece: the coat boasts a vivid green hue painted atop a cooler green, allowing the complementary red to peek through. This bold pairing of colors amidst the painting's kaleidoscopic background has the illusionary effect of pushing the figure out into the space of the viewer.

Mumma's other version of Van Gogh's portrait incorporates a gold pigment that appears only in a few Mumma paintings of more mature style, suggesting it was painted after his first "Van Gogh" portrait. Indeed, other aspects of this painting make it more characteristic of Mumma's later portraits than its counterpart; the facial forms are similar to those that appear in his later work, (i.e. a more rectangular face, the shape of the nose and eyebrows, and the upturned, comb-like hands) and Van Gogh's hat partly resembles a crown with its golden border, a detail that is reminiscent of Mumma's portraits of royal figures inspired by early modern European portraiture. Formal differences between these two

FIG 2a | Eddy Mumma, untitled [Van Gogh] , n.d.

FIG 2b | Eddy Mumma, untitled [Judy's Van Gogh], n.d.

FIG 2c | Vincent Van Gogh, *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear* (1889)

Eddy Mumma, untitled *[Van Gogh I],* n.d.

Eddy Mumma, untitled *[Van Gogh II],* n.d.
Vincent Van Gogh, *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear* (1889)

FIG 3a | Eddy Mumma, untitled, n.d.

FIG 3b | Amedeo Modigliani, *Female Nude* (1916)

works offer visual evidence that Mumma returned to the same iconic painting if only to transform it anew. Collectively, Mumma pays tribute to his predecessor and also outdoes him: Mumma's palette is more extreme, his anti-naturalism more vehement, and yet his indebtedness to Van Gogh's work remains undeniable.

Eddy Mumma, *untitled,* n.d.
Amedeo Modigliani, *Female Nude* (1916)

EDDY MUMMA MADE MANY PAINTINGS of female nudes. Of these, some present the figure in a coy, almost flirtatious disposition. But in this case, Mumma has painted a nude woman (fig 3a) that looks remarkably like the same subject in Amedeo Modigliani's *Female Nude* painted in 1916 (fig. 3b). Mumma has loosely emulated the way that Modigliani's figure rests her left cheek on her left shoulder as well as her rich black hair, outstretched left arm, and visible pubic hair (which was considered 'indecent' and subsequently censored when exhibited in 1917). Individual brush marks are particularly visible in both figures' hair. There are several ways Mumma diverges from the original painting: his figure's eyes are bright green and open, lending the impression that the subject is confronting the gaze of her viewer, not unlike his attempt to provide 'faces' to the subjects in his version of *The Gleaners.*

Both painters signed their works, but Mumma's name is particularly prominent and highlights how the positioning of his signature could play formally with the rest of the painting. Here, the "dd" is adjacent to the figure's breasts, and their rounded forms appear to be only smaller versions of their bodily counterparts. The "Y," which is placed immediately below the "dd" also shares the same shape as the figure's pubic area. The beginning "E" of "Eddy" is less easily found in the female's form; it could loosely allude to the delineation of her eyebrows and nose, or perhaps the undulating line of hair that covers her forehead. The boundaries between text and image blur as Mumma alludes to the female form in his own signature.

Eddy Mumma, *untitled [Mona Lisa],* n.d.
Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa (*c.1503-19)
One of the earliest and perhaps most famous paintings Mumma emulated was Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, painted in the early sixteenth century (fig. 4b) and likely featured in any art history book owned by Mumma. In his version, Mumma has preserved elements of the famed portrait of the wife of a wealthy Florentine cloth merchant and so retained its legible relationship to the original (fig. 4a): the female figure's gathered sleeves (albeit rendered abstractly), crossed hands, partially bare chest, and the suggestion of a landscape or horizon line. Aspects that he has altered significantly include the addition of a blue and white hat, transformation of the elaborate natural scene behind Da Vinci's sitter, and Mumma's own familiar interpretation of the figure's hands, which are disproportionately large and appear to be floating in space. Mumma's

FIG 4a | Eddy Mumma, *untitled* [Mona Lisa], n.d.

FIG 4b | Leonardo da Vinci, *The Mona Lisa* (c.1503-19)

graphic signature fits neatly into the small space adjacent to the figure's hat at left, suggesting the form of one of the trees in the background of the original painting as well as making his own authorship of this piece clear.

This was in all likelihood not one of Mumma's early attempts to emulate some of the most famous works of art history. He was likely drawn to 'copy' the DaVinci original not for its fame, but powerful format: a half-length portrait that brings the sitter squarely into view. More than half of Mumma's extant works are half-length portraits of a figure whose costumes change but whose facial contours remain nearly constant. This visual 'formula,' as it were, is put to work here: the eyebrows and nose are painted in a single, uninterrupted black line, and the mouth is comprised of a short dab of paint that completely undermines the elusive smile for which Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* became known.

Eddy Mumma, *untitled [Cavalier],* n.d.
Frans Hals, *The Laughing Cavalier* (1624)
At some unknown point, Mumma discovered the work of seventeenth-century Northern European painters like Frans Hals and Hans Holbein, whose portraits of wealthy, elaborately dressed men exerted a strong influence on the large majority of his work. A handful of these paintings have a distinctive art historical source to which they look for inspiration, but at some point Mumma's paintings of these well dressed, colorful men digressed from those single points of reference.

Like his rendition of Millet's *The Gleaners* or Van Gogh's *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear*, Mumma's painting (fig. 6a) of Frans Hals' *The Laughing Cavalier* (1624) (fig. 6b) still lies comfortably close to its art historical referent. The large white collar, black hat, and moustache remain; it even appears that Mumma's red, white, and green stripes atop a black grid mimic the embroidered doublet worn by the flamboyant sitter. Because Mumma does not depict the bent left arm of the sitter in his painting, he both strips the painting of a sense of depth and renders the relationship to Hals' painting less obvious, particularly given the number of mustachioed, collar-wearing dandies in seventeenth-century European portraits. But because this painting is so iconic, Mumma likely saw a reproduction of it and was prompted to create his version.

As in his other 'art history' paintings, Mumma's most significant transformation of Hals' painting can be found in his use of color. Although Mumma's palette is in this instance remarkably muted, he has preserved the white of the collar and chemise. Mumma does however strip subtle details and forms from this and other art historical works he emulates; he converts a spry smile, wincing eyes, or an elaborated embroidered pattern into elementary forms with the quick stroke of a paint brush that seems to never vary in size. In so doing, he invites the viewer to contemplate the sitter not through the study of his face, but rather his costume.

EDDY MUMMA, PORTRAIT ARTIST
For Mumma, the interpretation of specific portraits appears to have led to increasing artistic independence: his referents become less identifiable and less important as he makes these works his very own from start to finish. But the formal vocabulary of seventeenth-century portraits of wealthy male figures remains, if only in part: Mumma appropriates these paintings' attention to costume, in particular, to dress an otherwise formally similar subject in a variety of ways. Although Mumma paints primarily portraits, his approach is unusual in the history of painted portraiture: a wide variety of costumes and colors enable Mumma to use simple shapes, if not a set visual formula, in the depiction of each figure's face.

Eddy Mumma, *untitled [Henry VIII],* n.d.
Eddy Mumma, *untitled*, n.d.
Hans Holbein the Younger, *Portrait of Henry VIII*, (c.1534-1536)
While a few of Mumma's paintings were likely influenced by the work of Hans Holbein the Younger, references to any precise painting by the artist are vague. Instead, Mumma's portraits emulate a 'type,' i.e., the stout male figures with jowly faces and ornate

FIG 6a | Eddy Mumma, untitled [Cavalier], n.d.

FIG 6b | Frans Hals, *The Laughing Cavalier* (1624)

FIG 7c | Hans Holbein the Younger, *Portrait of Henry VIII,* (c.1534-1536)

clothing that frequently appear in Holbein's individual and group portraits. In what might be a nod to Holbein's painting(s) of Henry VIII (fig. 7c), Mumma paints a bearded figure with parted lips and an intense, outward stare surrounded by dots of yellow paint (fig. 7a). This painting bears the shape of the hat that Henry VIII wears in Holbein's portraits, but otherwise it is only the face and elaborate costume that point to a possible Holbein origin, marking an increasing distance between Mumma's own paintings and those of the past. At some point in his development, it seems that art historical paintings still serve Mumma as sources of inspiration, but his work diverts from the logic of emulation.

Eddy Mumma, *untitled*, n.d.
This large painting powerfully exemplifies the blending of Mumma's own formal vocabulary with the costumes of early modern, (16th and 17th century) portraits (fig.8). Mumma has painted an elaborate feathered hat, high collar, perhaps gloves, and belted costume on a hefty figure. Given the resemblance of this clothing to that worn by wealthy male figures in the paintings of Hals, Holbein, and even Diego Velázquez, this figure is likely male, although his face is—like that of most of Mumma's figures—androgynous.

In characteristic Mumma style, the eyebrows and nose are connected via a single line, the mouth is expressionless, the eyes are two large circles of paint bearing two smaller dots of black, and a stroke of white paint lies below each eyebrow form. The hands have assumed the importance seen in classic Mumma paintings—the figure holds dominant comb-like hands upward and tilts them slightly to the left in an ambiguous gesture.

Mumma's use of color in this work is particularly nuanced, whether painted in single brush strokes side by side or in smoother swaths directly atop one another. The feather, figure's face, sleeves, belt, and hat are all areas in which Mumma's formally distinct juxtapositions of colors achieve dramatic effects. Fields of color also vary in transparency; whereas the white skirt and black vertical lines on the figure's torso are painted thickly, the blue of the figure's hat does not completely conceal the shape of the top of the figure's head, thus making clear that Mumma literally 'dressed up' the figure with this hat only after first painting the entirety of his head.

Unusually, Mumma has elected to show more of the figure's body than is typical in other portraits. Although his legs and feet are not visible, a button-studded white garment beneath the purple and gold belt buckle suggest that the figure is standing. Ample room has been allocated for the signature: it is neatly surrounded on all sides by a field of white, whereas the figure's massive form is off-center and cut off by the right side of the picture plane. In the absence of any contextual clues within the signed, white field, this massive painting refuses to be identified as a copy of a specific early modern painting.

Eddy Mumma, *untitled* (Double-sided), n.d.
Mumma frequently painted on both sides of a single support, possibly as a means to make the most of his available surfaces. One of these two-sided paintings presents two of the early modern European-inspired portrait paintings in which flamboyant costumes figure prominently. On one side, a figure wears a large orange hat that loosely bears the shape of some head garments worn by women in early modern European painting, including in those by seventeenth-century Dutch artists (fig. 9a). The face is slightly rounder than that of the feathered hat-wearing figure discussed above; this may be a subtle means for Mumma to indicate a difference in gender. The figure's hands are again commanding and comb-like, but here they point inward and direct our eyes to the square purple buttons that extend down the white garment.

On the other side of the canvas is a figure that wears the frilled collar seen in several of Mumma's other portraits (fig. 9b). Like its counterpart, the figure's head is here slightly cocked to one side, albeit in the opposite direction, as he stares out at the viewer. His hands do not draw the viewer's eyes towards the row of blue buttons, but rather point slightly upward in yet another ambiguous gesture. He wears either a blue veil or has blue hair, and he is surrounded by streaks of light blue and white. Costume and color remain preeminent in this pair. Mumma appears to have inverted the color scheme of the portrait on the verso: although the female figure wears a purple cloak and a chemise with purple buttons, her counterpart's buttons are outlined in purple, as are his sleeves and collar.

FIG 7a | Eddy Mumma, untitled [Henry VIII], n.d.

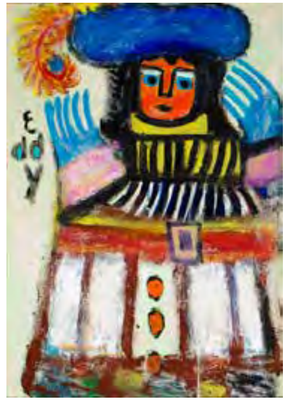


FIG 8 | Eddy Mumma, untitled, n.d.

Given that it is precisely the same shade of purple and that it was noticeably painted atop pre-existing costume elements, it is possible that the male portrait was painted first, only to be retouched with purple upon the painting of the female portrait.

AN EXPANSIVE INTEREST IN COSTUME
While the costumed figures in paintings by artists like Hals or Holbein appear to have provided the entry point for Mumma into varied formal means of dressing up or disguising his otherwise similarly painted subjects, a group of Mumma's paintings play with costume and do *not* borrow expressly from early modern European portraits – rather, they exhibit an interest in costumes outside of an explicitly Western European and art historical repertoire.

Eddy Mumma, *untitled*, n.d.
In this striking portrait, the figure's face and elaborate headdress fills the picture plane (fig. 11). Mumma's interest in hats and collars persists, but these are no longer the accoutrements of the courtly figures in a Holbein painting. The wide-faced figure wears a white, segmented collar—or is it a bowtie?—whose central compartment, perhaps a knot, is outlined in red. His face is covered in streaky swaths of yellow, red, and pink around the signature black lines that outline his eyebrows, nose, and mouth. Round, blue eyes blankly stare out at the viewer. The figure's black hair surrounds either side of his face, and the top half of the painting is filled with four feather-like forms. This feathered headdress is a formal extension of some of the crowns worn by Mumma's early modern European figures. The application of multiple colors on the figure's face creates the effect of a mask. It appears that the face was initially painted yellow, only to be quickly and not completely covered up by strokes of red and pink. This 'masking' coat of paint was likely added after the completion of the eyes, eyebrows, nose, and mouth, as traces of red and pink do not completely fill out the surrounding areas and in part overlap these facial forms.

Mumma's interest here has turned almost ethnographic: he paints a colorfully costumed figure but has focused his gaze on the face and elaborate headwear *not* of a Hals-like dandy, but rather an indigenous, possibly Native American person. This painting marks a temporary shift in subject matter and offers further evidence of Mumma's desire to dress up the same-faced figure in new-fangled ways.

[NICK ADD 1 PHOTO HERE: MUM 9]
Eddy Mumma, *untitled [Target Head]*, n.d.
Mumma's keen interest in the face and elaborately covered head persists in this intimate portrait (fig. 12). A crimson-colored figure wears an orange collar outlined in black that is cut off by the bottom of the painting's support. He seems to look downward, averting the viewer's gaze in uncharacteristic fashion for Mumma. It is instead the large target on the figure's head—an almost eye-like form—that commands attention. The thick, high-relief brushstrokes verge on the sculptural and demand closer inspection; they offer a rich, topographical trace of the artist's rapid painting process.

The darkest red that outlines the target is the same shade that covers the figure's face, and unlike in many of Mumma's other portraits, the areas surrounding the

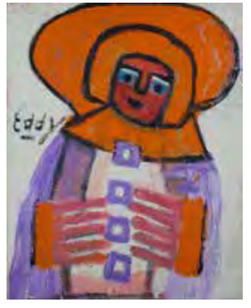


FIG 9a | Eddy Mumma, untitled, n.d.

FIG 9b | Eddy Mumma, untitled, n.d.

figure's eyes, nose, eyebrows, and mouth are a single color; this may suggest some kind of formal continuity with the target hat. But Mumma's iconography refuses to be read so easily, and this is moreover one of Mumma's most enigmatic and highly creative works. The hat-like target does not have a readily legible referent in the Western European art history canon, but it might in non-Western art. An occasional reader of National Geographic, Mumma may have seen photographs of African masks with a similar pattern of concentric circles.

Together, both paintings suggest that Mumma's interest in costume could extend, if only occasionally, beyond early modern Europe. Perhaps drawn from ethnographic photography rather than half-length painted portraits from the art history canon, these particularly intimate paintings testify to Mumma's geographically and temporally expansive interest in costume and the human face.

A distinctive and defining characteristic of Mumma's paintings is his visible interest in reproducing and transforming the work of others. For Mumma, art history served as a vehicle to find his own artistic voice and explore the potentially limitless ways of representing an otherwise similar figure. Mumma imbues this structurally constant face with new life each time (s)he is painted. The apparently wealthy, often effeminately dressed figure that is the subject of most of Mumma's paintings shares no obvious physical resemblance with the artist himself or his everyday soundings in twentieth-century northern Florida; it is as though Mumma created a colorful circle of wealthy and eccentric early modern characters in contrast to the somewhat bleak reality within the walls of his own modest home.

In their relationship to art history, Mumma's paintings are formally and materially rich, and they will no doubt be subjects of much future inquiry. Technical analyses of Mumma's paintings will likely reveal much about the artist's practice and materials of use. For instance, it is probable that additional paintings, whether by other artists or Mumma himself, exist beneath some of the paintings we see at present. A few works have thus far betrayed their substrate: on occasion, unusual protrusions underneath thinly laid paint point to these paintings' palimsestic quality. There is also evidence that Mumma painted over inexpensive reproductions of paintings already framed in wood or plastic and sold as decorative art. In this way, Mumma's work formally and at times *literally* builds on the work of others before him.

For the time being, we must insist on the ambiguity of Eddy Mumma's work, but not to our detriment: it is indeed what makes his paintings so compelling. They linger between portrait and type, art historical and imaginary, even jovial and frightening; they cannot be read in any kind of singular, simplistic way. Refusing to be pigeon-holed by the viewer and historian, each painting's play with color, gesture, and the past is irreducibly unique. What can be said with certainty, however, is that no matter their identity, the subjects of Mumma's paintings constitute a veritable community of characters that gave life, light, and significant company to their creator.

FIG 11 | Eddy Mumma, untitled, n.d.

FIG 12 | Eddy Mumma, untitled [Target], n.d.

The Lost Portrait

Discovered in 2015, a group portrait (fig 1) painted by Mumma brings together subjects typical of both his speculatively earlier (i.e., pre-1978) and later work. The group portrait and one other painting (fig. 2) were completely concealed for decades, each positioned on the verso of paintings that were inserted back to back in a frame painted by the artist. On the front of the original framed piece appeared a bust-length portrait of a haloed- or hat-wearing figure with his head tilted to the side (fig. X), and on the back of the frame was a figure with a wide pink hat, yellow hair, and elaborate collar (fig. X).

In January 2015, Josh Feldstein noticed how remarkably deep the frame was on what appeared to be a double-sided Mumma painting; almost one inch of space separated the two paintings within the frame. Lifting the nails that held the painting attached to the backside of the frame, he discovered *two* double-sided paintings had been sandwiched together.; another single haloed figure (fig. X) and a group portrait (fig. X).

The newly revealed group portrait brings together characteristic aspects of Mumma's oeuvre. The two figures resemble others that are historically inspired; they hold up distinctive hands and wear elaborate costumes. A small animal – perhaps a dog – squeezes into the space at right. The animal, which appears in some of Mumma's earliest work, is paired here with Hals-like human figures inspired by art history.

The dog is in many ways the most peculiar part of this piece. Like its human counterparts, the dog faces and makes direct eye contact with the viewer, but its body is in profile. Its four legs and tail narrowly squeeze into the space at right and the nose is buried in the mass of the figure's hair, as if a pet is attempting to climb and nuzzle the figure.

The relationship of the three figures is unusual in a Mumma painting; presenting these two characteristically costumed figures–which suggest a man and a woman–next to the dog somehow makes the piece quite intimate, as though we are looking at a portrait of a couple and their dog. The presence of the dog strips the other two figures of any historical distance they might otherwise have given their formal resemblance to courtly figures in Mumma's oeuvre. A surviving photograph of Mumma and his wife, Thelma, with a dog that stands on its hind legs (see fig. xx, page 13) *may* have inspired this group portrait, however formally different they seem.

–Nancy Thebaut

FIG 00 | Visible recto A..

FIG 00 | Visible recto B.

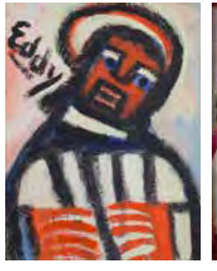


FIG 00 | Revealed verso A..

FIG 00 | Revealed verso B.

The Paintings
c.1978-1986

Author's Note

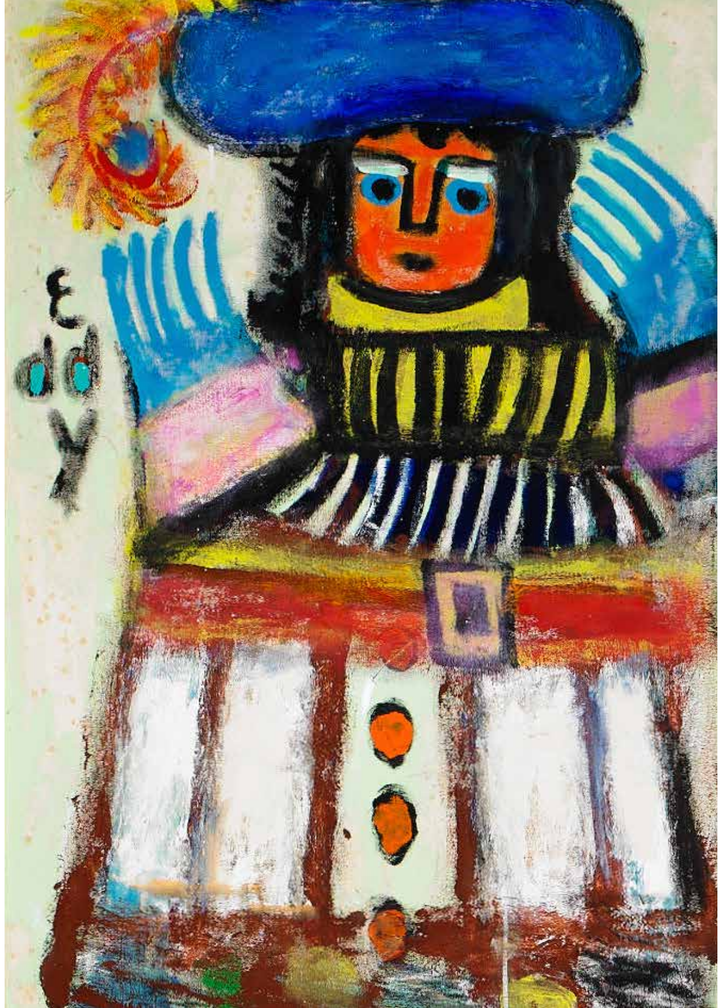
None of Eddy Mumma's paintings are dated. Until further study ascertains the dating of his work more definitively, an inferred timeline of Eddy Mumma's work—c. pre-1978 and c. post-1978—can be reasonably conjectured based on three factors: reliable information from Eddy's family, observable stylistic changes, and artwork which appears in photographs taken in early 1978. The plates in this book are broadly divided into two sections defined by that inference, with probable exceptions to the timeline duly noted.

Unless otherwise noted, the paintings included in this book are held in private collections.

no 1 | *28 x 22 inches*

NO 2 | *37 x 16.5 inches*

NO 3 | *48 x 33.25 inches (recto)*
Collection of American Folk Art Museum



NO 4 | *20 × 13.5 inches (recto)*

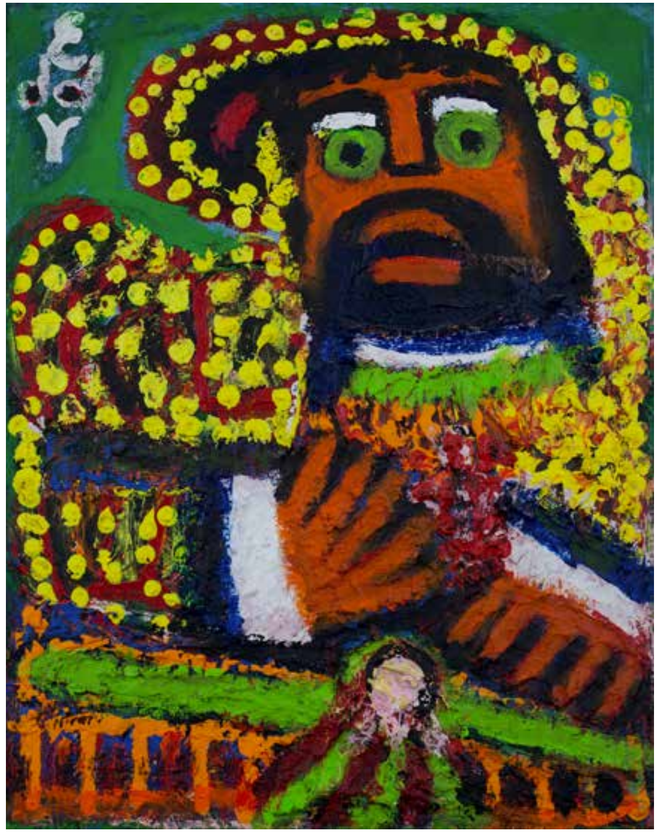
NO 5 | *20 x 16 inches*
Collection of Milwaukee Art Museum

NO 6 | *18 x 22 inches*
Collection of Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

NO 7 | *21.5 x 27.5 inches (recto)*

NO 8 | *20 x 16 inches*

NO 9 | *20 x 16 inches*



NO 10 | *16 x 12 inches (recto)*

NO 11 | *20 x 16 inches (recto)*

NO 12 | *16 x 20 inches*

NO 13 | *36 x 26 inches (recto)*
Collection of Harn Museum of Art

NO 14 | *16 x 12.75 inches*

NO 15 | *16 x 12 inches (recto)*

NO 16 | *14 x 10 inches*
Collection of Smithsonian American Art Museum

NO 17 | *16 x 12 inches*
Collection of Smithsonian American Art Museum

NO 18 | *14 x 11 inches*

NO 19 | *16 x 12 inches (recto)*
Collection of Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

NO 20 | *16 x 12 inches*
Collection of Milwaukee Art Museum

NO 21 | *16 x 12 inches (recto)*

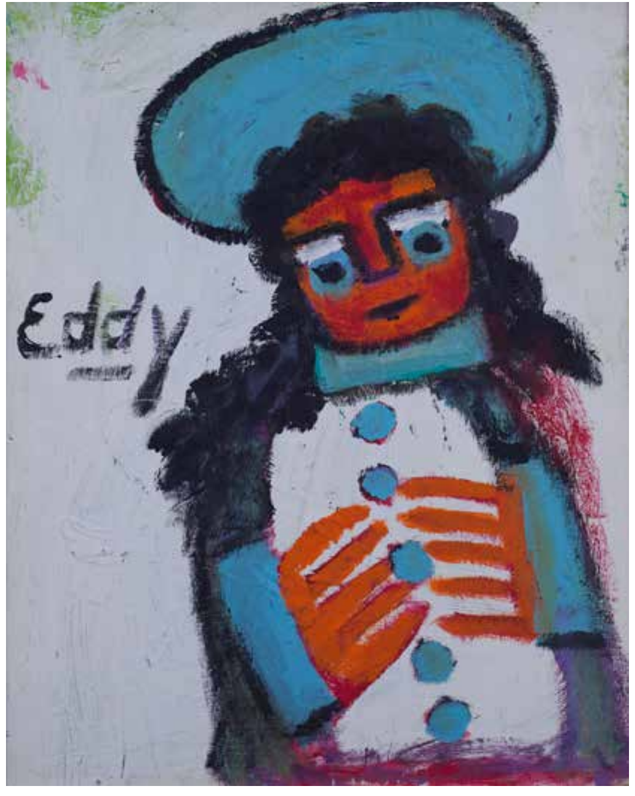
NO **22** | *24 x 18 inches*

NO **23** | *23 x 21 inches*
Collection of Kohler Art Museum

NO **24a** | *26.5 x 14.5 inches (verso)*
Collection of Smithsonian American Art Museum

NO **24b** | *26.5 x 14.5 inches (recto)*
Collection of Smithsonian American Art Museum

NO **25** | *43.5 x 24 inches (recto)*
Collection of American Visionary Art Museum



NO 26 | *30 x 24 inches*
Collection of American Folk Art Museum

NO 27 | *25 x 24 inches*
Collection of Intuit: Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art

NO 28 | *20 x 16 inches (recto)*
Collection of Fenimore Art Museum

NO 29 | *19.75 x 13.75 inches*
Collection of Intuit: Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art

NO 30 | *30 x 20 inches (recto)*
Collection of Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

NO 31 | *24 x 12 inches (recto)*
Collection of Intuit: Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art

NO 32 | *14 x 10 inches*
Collection of Ogden Museum of Southern Art

NO 33 | *16 x 12 inches (recto)*

NO 34 | *19 x 15.5 inches (recto)*
Collection of Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

NO 35 | *8 x 10 inches*

NO **36a** | *27 x 21 inches (recto)*
Collection of High Museum of Art

NO **36b** | *27 x 21 inches (verso)*
Collection of High Museum of Art

NO **37a** | *30 x 24 inches (recto)*
Collection of Kohler Art Museum

NO **37b** | *30 x 24 inches (verso)*
Collection of Kohler Art Museum

NO 38 | *10 x 30 inches*
Collection of Kohler Art Museum

NO **39a** | *24 x 24 inches (verso)*
Collection of Smithsonian American Art Museum

NO **39b** | *24 x 24 inches (recto)*
Collection of Smithsonian American Art Museum

NO **40a** | *25.5 x 21.5 inches (recto)*
Collection of Kohler Art Museum

NO **40b** | *25.5 x 21.5 inches (verso)*
Collection of Kohler Art Museum

NO **41** | *20 x 16 inches*

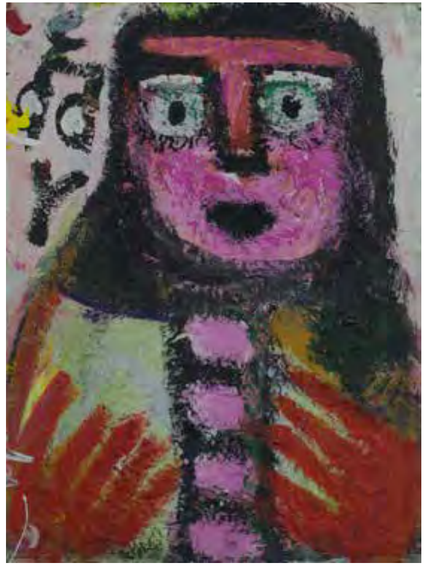
NO **42a** | *30 x 24 inches (verso)*
Collection of Ogden Museum of Southern Art

NO **42b** | *30 x 24 inches (recto)*
Collection of Ogden Museum of Southern Art

NO 43 | *14 x 11 inches (recto)*

NO 44 | *14 x 10 inches*
Collection of Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

NO 45 | *16 x 12 inches*
Collection of Judy Breiner & Abe Goldman



NO 46 | *15.75 x 11.75 inches*

NO 47 | *13 x 10 inches*

NO 48 | *16 x 12 inches*
Collection of Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

NO 49 | *20 x 12 inches*

NO 50 | *11.5 x 14.75 inches*

NO 51 | *11 x 14 inches*

NO 52 | *24 x 18 inches*
Collection of American Folk Art Museum

NO 53 | *16 x 14 inches*

NO 54 | *21 x 13.5 inches (recto)*
Collection of Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

NO 55 | *16 x 12 inches*

NO 56 | *16 x 12 inches*

NO 57 | *20 x 11.5 inches*

NO 58 | *20 x 12 inches (recto)*
Collection of The Historic Thomas Center

NO 59 | *9 x 9 inches (recto)*

NO 60 | *13.5 x 11.5 inches*

NO 61 | *16 x 12 inches*
Collection of Smithsonian American Art Museum

NO 62 | *16 x 12 inches*
Collection of Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

NO 63 | *18 x 14 inches*

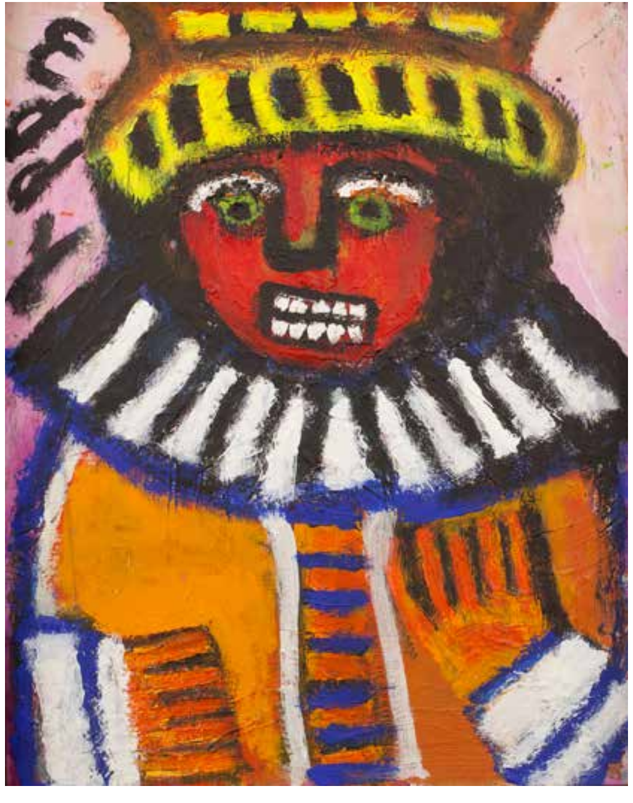
NO 64 | *12 x 9 inches*

NO 65 | *9 x 7 inches*

NO 66 | *20 x 16 inches*

NO 67 | *24 x 18 inches (recto)*
Collection of Intuit: Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art

NO 68 | *20 x 16 inches*
Collection of Mennello Museum of Art



NO 69 | *20 x 16 inches*
Collection of Kohler Art Museum

NO 70 | *24 x 20 inches (recto)*
Collection of
Smithsonian American Art Museum

NO 71 | *16 x 12 inches (recto)*

NO 72 | *16 x 12 inches*

The Early Paintings
c. 1969-1978

NO 76 | *12 x 9 inches*

NO 74 | *16 x 12 inches*

NO 75 | *18 x 36 inches (recto)*
Collection of High Museum of Art

NO 73 | *16 x 12 inches*
Collection of John Jerit

NO 77 | *28 x 22 inches (recto)*

NO 78 | *14 x 10 inches*

NO 79 | *14 x 11 inches*

NO 80 | *16 x 20 inches* ➔

NO 81 | *14 x 20 inches*

NO 82 | *12 x 9 inches*

NO 83 | *16 x 12 inches*

NO 84 | *16 x 12 inches*

NO 85 | *16 x 12 inches*

NO 86 | *12 x 16 inches (recto)*
Collection of Stephanie & Joe Anhus

NO 87 | *12 x 9 inches*

NO 88 | *12 x 9 inches*

NO 89 | *10 x 14 inches*

NO 90 | *12 x 9 inches (recto)*

NO **91** | *12 x 16 inches*
Collection of Paul Eddy Ginsaulies

NO **92** | *12 x 16 inches*

NO 93 | *10 x 14 inches*

NO 94 | *16 x 12 inches*

NO 95 | *45 x 72.5 inches (recto, detail)*

NO 96 | *47 x 23 inches (recto)*

NO 97 | *14 x 10 inches (recto)*
Collection of Judy Saslow

NO 98 | *12 x 16 inches (detail)* ➔

NO 99 | *14 x 10 inches*

NO 100 | *12 x 9 inches*

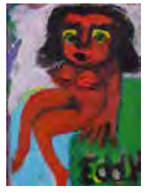
Interior View

In January of 1978, Betty Zeller Thompson, Eddy's first cousin by marriage, took three snapshots of Eddy at his Gaiensville home - the only such surviving interior photographs.

Eddy kept his walls updated with the most recent paintings, according to his family, and the photographs serve as a reliabel marker in time, dividing teh work he made before 1978 and paintings made subsequently, during the eight years between 1978 and his death in 1986. This inferred broad timeline of work suggest that the iconic portrait represented in most of the plates of this book was a product of Eddy's later years of painting.

Of approximately seventy-five paintings on the walls, xxxxx can be seen clearly enough to discern the images. Female nudes, animals and art history referents can be identified, some of which were painted mulitiple times in different versions.

















Afterword

It was thirty years ago in a fateful encounter with Eddy Mumma's family – exactly the kind of moment that defines a drama – that Eddy's paintings came unexpectedly into my life. For the past thirty years Eddy's paintings have brought a smile to my face every day. I've cared for them as best I could, and shared them with as many people as would pay attention. Eddy led me to an appreciation and passion for the creativity, whimsy and beauty of what a truly original artist can create on his own.

I want to make it clear that I do not feel I am the hero in this story. Looking back now with more wisdom than I had at a younger age, I feel frustration along with satisfaction at the rescue of the work. But, I regret having discarded some paintings that I was believed were damaged beyond saving, and I regret separating some of the paintings front from back. I am frustrated that I did not take photographs of Eddy's house before the paintings were removed. I also wish I had been more proactive in helping organize a show for Eddy with while Lennie was still alive and able to be involved. And, more times than I can count, I wish I had gotten more of Lennie's memories of Eddy committed to the record before his untimely death in 2013.

In the last few years there have been several fortunate events, including the opportunity to meet and collaborate with Anne Gilroy. We were both close friends of Lennie's, but we had never met. Like many who see the full scope and range of Eddy's work, she was swept away. Anne knew what Lennie had wanted for Eddy, and convinced me that we should have a show in Gainesville, both to honor the wishes of our mutual friend and to share Eddy's work with the community where he lived. In the next stroke of fate, Rebecca Hoffberger came to Gainesville from Baltimore to see the Eddy work and the exhibit. She, too, fell for Eddy and was enthusiastic about arranging another one-man show at the American Visionary Arts Museum. I am grateful she made it possible for others to experience the excitement of Eddy's remarkable world. Many people have now had the pleasure of seeing his work, including scholars and curators from other museums

Lennie would be so excited and so proud were he here today. The publication of this book, the two solo exhibitions in 2015, and the recognition of Eddy Mumma by major art institutions are truly the realization of a long-held dream and would not have happened without Lennie's insight, his inspiration and his devotion to Eddy.

This book is dedicated to Lennie Kesl, in recognition of his vision and his friendship.

Josh Feldstein
October, 2015

FIG Xa | *00 x 00 inches*
Collection of Joe & Stephanie Ankus

FIG Xb | *16 x 12 inches*
Collection of Fenimore Art Museum

Dedication

LEONARD EDWARD KESL *(1926 - 2012)*

It was the late Lennie Kesl who first recognized the importance of Eddy's art and whose dream it was to bring it to the world. Everyone on the creative team for this project knew how excited he would have been about the first two solo Mumma exhibits—the Historic Thomas Center in Gainesville and AVAM in Baltimore—and about the production of this catalogue. It felt as if he was part of it.

One day the designer called: "Hey! You better check online auctions. Do a search for Kesl." For sale was a vinyl record album by Lennie Kesl, and in his scrawling, distinctive hand the album jacket bore this message: *MR. Eddy Lives (god Love the Boy!)*.

It seemed Lennie wasn't about to miss the party. His unexpected message on the album jacket inspired the title of this catalogue, just as his vision inspired the efforts to bring Eddy Mumma to the world.

AEG
October, 2015