

For the Eyes Only

I'm a people watcher. Have been for years. Most people are, but I'm one of the ones who consider it an art form. No, I haven't been racking up convictions for peeping through the

windows at young girls, but I do watch for people who don't think that they are being watched. Or care.

Universities are a good place to start. University students are

focused on pouring information into the maw of their young and tender minds, and don't seem to care that they are entertaining others in the process. Like the older student leaving the child care center at the EMU on her bicycle in the rain with her daughter on the back holding an umbrella over them both. These are times when I would kill for an Instamatic.

The Chiles Center, the multimillion dollar addition to the business school, provides a fascinating study of the narrow band of the human comfort zone. Equipped with ergonomically designed seating, specifically designed to correct college student slump, the padded, raised front edge of the seats is too high, causing the legs of anyone under 5'10" to fall asleep 15 minutes into class. But your back is straight, by God!

The temperature in Chiles is controlled by a computer which tells everyone via LED readouts in every room that it is set for 70 degrees. The problem is that it only knows that 70 degrees lies somewhere between 60 and 80.

That means that the class en masse unzips their coats or takes off their sweaters, and then redoes the whole process 10 minutes later when the computer decides that is too warm and turns on the air conditioner. Layering is an important con-

cept. Amusing unless you have three classes a day there.

Cars are my latest discovery. Yes, I know they've been around for years, but did you know that *everyone* picks their nose when they're alone in the car at a stop light? I call it the Ostrich Syndrome — I'm in my car and no one can see me. You'd better hope that's not the case, or you'll never survive Los Angeles traffic. Do you brush your teeth while driving to school in the morning? Lots of people do. Or shave? Apply your makeup? Drink coffee? I do too. But the guy driving down I-5 with his coffee maker plugged into the cigarette lighter was a bit too addicted even by my standards. And people read — everything from the Wall Street Journal to Harlequin romances. Somehow that seems dangerous. One good love scene or market rally and into the guardrail you go.

People read — everything from the Wall Street Journal to Harlequin romances. Somehow that seems dangerous. One good love scene or market rally and into the guardrail you go.

Exams are a good time to people watch too. The law school or something like the CPA exam are the best. Here the pressure is really on and you can observe humanity's differing responses to stress. While waiting, some practice yoga, some sit silently with their head in their hands, and others talk incessantly to complete strangers. There are those joking with friends, frantically reviewing last minute details, smoking, pacing like caged tigers, or practicing Tai Chi under the stairs. And the procession to the restroom is endless.

Any major test, be it the bar or the CPA exam, will have its share of repeaters. These people have failed this particular test before, and by this time they are usually vegetables. They are the ones with an entire shoe box filled with 3 X 5 cards. They scare the hell out of the people there for the first time. They're afraid to talk to anyone because they might add something to short term memory, causing something that they've carefully stored there to fall out.

The world is larger than just the University, but there are people to be watched everywhere.

The homeless, in more cruel times called street people, are far less amusing, but even more watchable just because most people studiously avoid looking at them. The tall thin man curled

The opportunities are limitless. Colleges are perfect training grounds for people watchers. The best proof is that the CIA comes recruiting every year. Thirteenth and Kincaid is highly recommended for beginners. Tolerance is critical. Look, don't judge. This is humanity.

— L.S. LEUTHOLD

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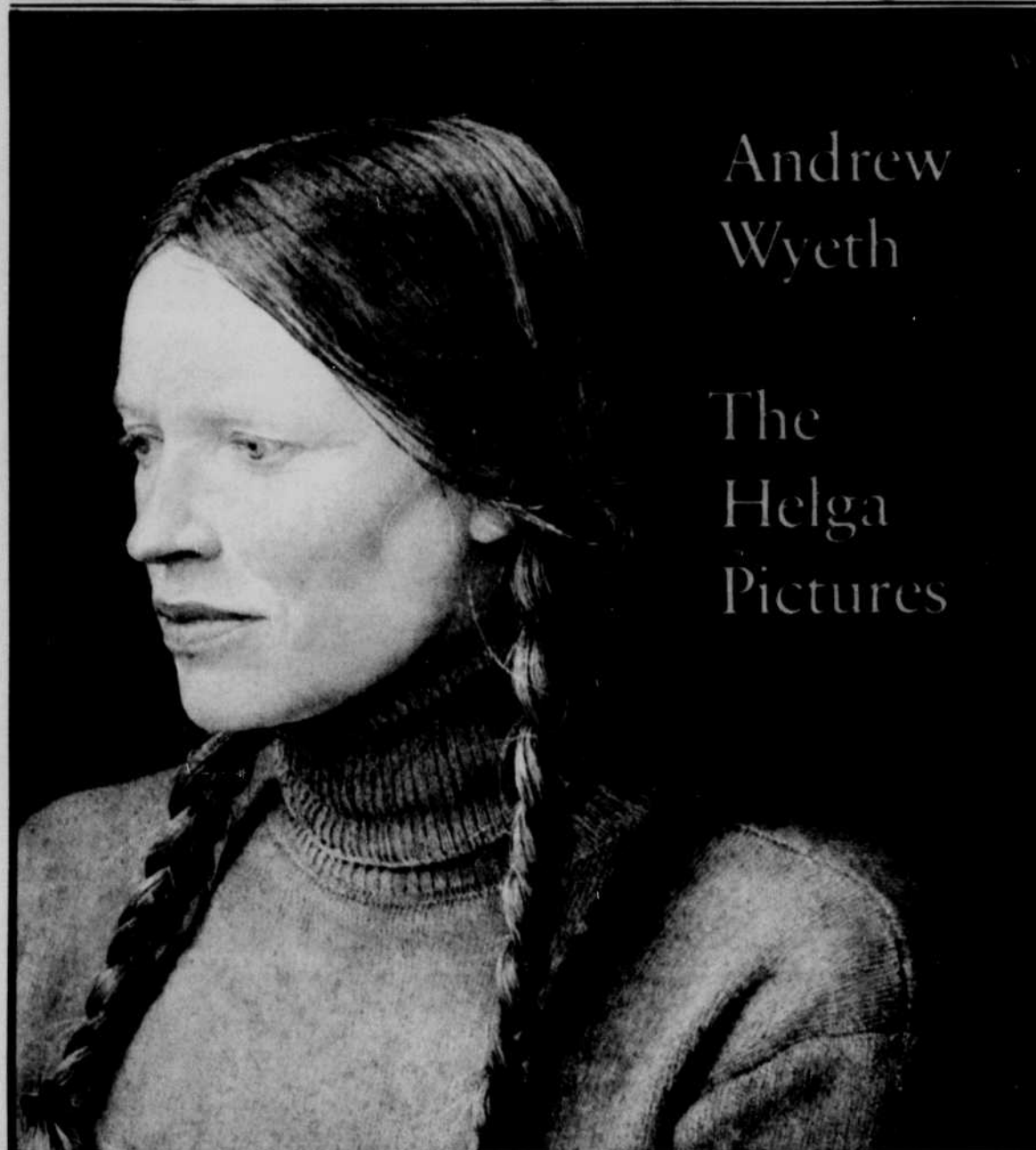
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