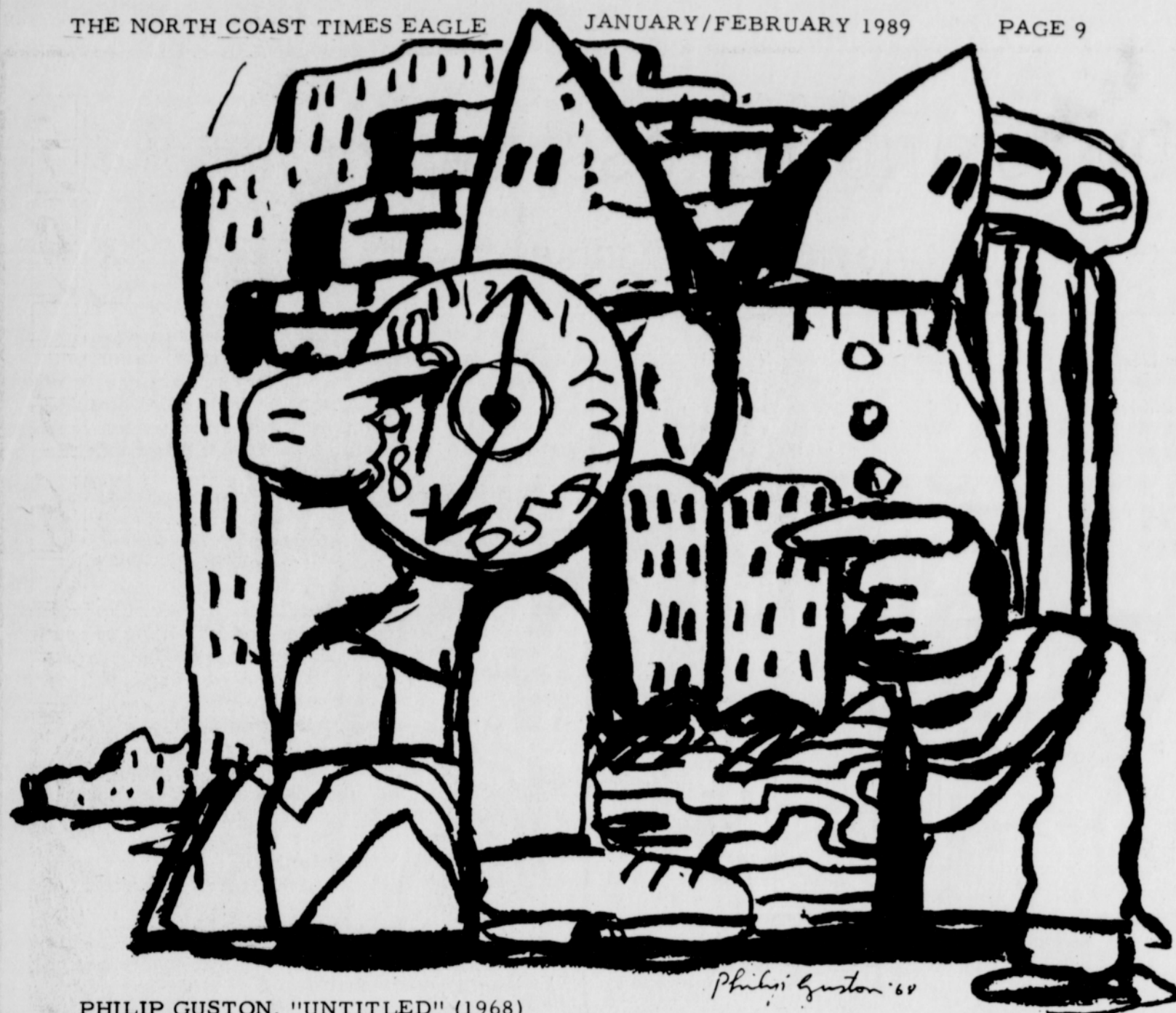




PHILIP GUSTON, "UNTITLED" (1968)

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Well, I did it again, bringing in that infant Purity across the land welcoming Innocence with gin in New York, waiting up to help Chicago, Denver, L. A., Fairbanks, Honolulu — and now the high school bands are alienating Dallas, and girls in gold and tangerine have lost all touch with Pasadena, and young men with muscles and missing teeth are dreaming of personal fouls, and it's all beginning again, just like those other Januaries in instant replay.

But I've had enough of turning to look back, the old post-morteming of defeat: people I loved but didn't touch, friends I haven't seen for years, strangers who smiled but didn't speak — failures, failures. No, I refuse to leave it at that, because somewhere, off camera, January is coming like Venus up from the murk of December, re-virginized, as innocent of loss as any dawn. Resolved: this year I'm going to break my losing streak, I'm going to stay alert, reach out, speak when not spoken to, read the minds of people in the streets. I'm going to practice every day, stay in training, and be moderate in all things. All things but love.

PHILIP APPLEMAN

SIGHS AND INHIBITIONS

Starting well after the beginning, one invests The compromise quite early with nullifying Codicils and postscripts that take the form Of ridiculous complaints about hats and gravy And the way trees are organized In the streets, complaints about the traffic, To more general reflections:

On the way life manages itself: though its beginning And end seem clear enough as givens, as does The quasi-permanent siesta of noon that our long day Is fabricated of, which stretches In all directions to the simplifying horizon. Still, You argue, there has to be something more solid Than all this:

Some angle or hinge Bulkier than stone and more resilient than the ideas That have helped to put it across, palmed it off On us, as it were, so it is it, not we, That is our lives, the surface over which we move Comfortably as across a globe that gives back Our intuiting of it as we desired it: Lost, out in the cold, But summonable, sometimes, when you want it. It still knows one's name, keeps track of birthdays, Yet is somehow foreign, the way one's first language Would be if one had grown up bilingual, and it is this other Block-letter language we must carry (and it Grows heavier), and place around to form the words No one is going to understand, let alone believe, And these account for our day, today.

I remember in the schoolyard throwing a small rock At some kid I hated, and then, when the blood began To ooze definitively, trying to hug the teacher, The boy, the world into ignoring what I'd done, To lie and thus escape through a simple Cancelling, not a confession, to wipe the slate clean So as to inhabit another world in which I bore no responsibility for my acts: life As a clear, living dream.

And I have not been spared this Dreadful state of affairs, no one has, so that When we think we think, or turn over in our sleep, Someone else's business is boldly attached to this, And there is no time for a reckoning. The carpet never stretches quite far enough, There is always a footfall on the stair.

JOHN ASHBERY

NEW YEAR'S FUN

New Year's is a time to make resolution
To do something better than you did last year
And to have fun at New Year's parties,
To stay at other people's houses and watch movies
— But I hope you don't get in a car wreck.

JAIME LINTON (8 YEARS OLD)

COCAINE

NARCOTIC CHILD
STILLBORN
ENTROPIC EMBRYO
HUSTLE FOR LIFE
SHAKE OFF DEATH
WRESTLE IN LIGHT
FIGHT THE NIGHT
AWAKE
ALREADY TWISTED
CHILLED
UNWILLING TO SEE
AT LEAST THE BUM
DIES WITH HIS BOTTLE
NARCOTIC CHILD
STILLBORN
ENTROPIC EMBRYO
CAUGHT IN THE SHADOW
OF A HIGH
DIED THE
NARCOTIC LIE....

ALPO

BROTHER GOAT'S DEMISE

The goat brother died
and in his last moments
he yielded a sad song.

Warmth that was his life,
faded before me and
disappeared into time.

The faultless snow lay thick
and slowed his burial,
so he lay frozen.

He stared with eyes that
see nothing,
and he haunted me.

A week passes and still
the frozen earth refuses my spade.
Brother goat now feeds
Brother coyote.

RACHEL WYNNE

A DREAM DEFERRED

Dr. Martin Luther King had a dream
of a nation inhabited by descendants
of all the world's peoples,
where black and white would collaborate
to produce a society of justice and peace,
love and true brotherhood.

Today, on the 60th anniversary
of Dr. King's birth, his dream
has been indefinitely deferred
by the pressing priorities
of building "defensive" weapons
for massive destruction and death
at the expense of every program
to protect the quality of life.

Dr. King's dream is deferred
for millions of impoverished Black Americans
who have won the legal right to eat
in the restaurant of their choice,
and to send their children
to any school offering a program
for which they qualify,
but can't exercise these rights
because they don't have the price of a meal,
much less the amount required
for tuition fees and books.

Dr. King's dream is deferred
for the growing underclass of millions
of long-time unemployed and homeless Americans
who nightly seek shelter
on the frigid city streets;
it is a dream deferred and denied
to millions of American youth
who are living out their fast paced lives
on a suicide course,
irrevocably convinced that their world
faces early, inevitable destruction
by nuclear arms.

When will we, black and white together,
begin to take our first, tentative steps
to insure that Dr. King's dream
will come true one day?

MARY JANE BREWSTER