The Puppetry of Janie Geiser
Exhibition Curator and Designer: Walton Harris
Consultant: Janie Geiser
Catalog Editor: Judy Anderson
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The quotes and comments by Janie Geiser which appear throughout this catalog were compiled from conversations and interviews with the artist from October through December 1989.

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1404 Spring St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30309
(404) 873-3391/873-3089
STORIES, DREAMS AND VOICES

The Puppetry of Janie Geiser

Center for Puppetry Arts Museum
January 12 - June 9, 1990
An important goal of the Center's mission is to produce and present new works in puppetry by artists whom we have identified as leaders in the field. One such artist is Janie Geiser. Since 1981 Ms. Geiser and the other members of The Jottay Theatre have been affiliate artists at the Center, premiering eleven original works for adult audiences. The company has been nationally and internationally praised for their contribution to the art of puppetry. Following their third Citation of Excellence from UNIMA-USA we felt it was an appropriate time to review the extraordinary body of work that is the puppetry of Janie Geiser. An understanding of Ms. Geiser’s evolutionary process can be gained by tracing her history as a visual artist, puppeteer, designer and puppetmaker, director and author. This exploration parallels the developments and advancements which have occurred nationally in the field of puppetry.

Special thanks must be given to Walton Harris for his invaluable insight throughout the curation and design processes of the exhibition, to Judy Anderson for compiling this catalog, and to Walton Press, Inc. and The Merchant Bank of Atlanta for their support in producing the catalog. Finally, our greatest thanks and appreciation must be expressed to Janie Geiser for her continued excellence in the art of puppetry and for sharing her artistry with us all.

Kerry McCarthy
Museum Director

Vincent Anthony
Executive Director
A Note from the Curator

It has been a coincidence of my life to have known Janie Geiser for the span of her art exploration. We often talked together about art from the early days, when her drawings were pen and ink and high density pattern. We talked on, through paint and the second dimension, right on into the third. I watched (and took notes) as Janie Geiser's work proliferated. Small drawings become memos for larger moments. Dolls and stickpuppets soon had scripts and storyboards, brought in on the sleep of dreams. She worked long and hard into the night, night after night. As her work grew, so did her small audiences. We now find anxious crowds awaiting her work in cities all over this world.

It has been a pleasure to pour over the accumulated materials of her life; to appreciate the time and craft of her labor. It has been invigorating to pull together an exhibit for this museum, regretting only that there is not room enough to show it all. In this catalog we provide the bare essentials and a few choice references to Janie Geiser's dream world revealed, the often-placed small detail of her work, reproduced here in deepest tribute and respect.

Walton Harris
Stories, Dreams and Voices
The Puppetry of Janie Geiser

During the last ten years there has been a resurgence of puppetry as a dramatic, sophisticated art form. This movement has been led by a small, but growing, number of artists creating and producing new work on the adult level. Artists such as Peter Schumann, Bruce Schwartz, Julie Taymor, Paul Zaloom, Eric Bass, Theodora Skipitares, Roman Paska, Jon Ludwig, and others have moved the art form far beyond the popular perception of puppetry solely as children's entertainment. Their work has given puppetry recognition as a serious form of theatre. Included in these ranks is Janie Geiser whose body of work in puppetry, created with her company The Jottay Theatre, has been recognized nationally and internationally as an innovative fusion of visual art, puppetry, music and text. In work that is simultaneously beautiful and stark, blackly funny, deeply moving and unforgettable The Jottay Theatre brings to life the many voices populating the landscapes of unknown stories and fantastic dreams.

A Louisiana native who earned an art degree from the University of Georgia (1973), Ms. Geiser founded The Jottay Theatre in 1981 with Atlanta composer Chip Epsten. As Artistic Director of the company she is the creative force behind the group, designing the puppets and sets, directing, and performing with the ensemble. Even Ms. Geiser's first puppetry production, Little Eddie (1981) foretold the emergence of an important contemporary artist. Using the fairly traditional presentation style of a puppet booth with hand and rod puppets, Little Eddie revealed the unmistakable visual imagery which would become the trademark of The Jottay Theatre. Here also was the intimate blending of playful sounds and dissonant chords created by Chip Epsten which brings a distinct tone and mood to each play's environment. Here were the angular, stylized figures able to express volumes with their spare movement.
While in college Ms. Geiser had made several puppets as art objects but had not thought of them in a theatrical context. After graduation she came to Atlanta and began exhibiting her paintings and drawings in alternative galleries, such as Nexus Contemporary Arts Center, then known as the Forrest Avenue Consortium. At that time there was an exciting interdisciplinary art movement developing, with artists in various media collaborating in the creation of works combining objects, dance, music and text. Ms. Geiser began to venture into theater by designing costumes and sets for The Dance Unit (Atlanta). It was during one of these projects that she met Chip Epsten, a composer who was running the Music Alliance and experimenting with music as an integral element of theater. In Ms. Geiser's drawings, paintings, books and constructions she had been exploring narrative ideas suggested by her dreams and visions of the world around her. After seeing a performance by California puppeteer Bruce Schwartz at the Center for Puppetry Arts she began to realize the possibilities that puppetry offered as a vehicle for expressing the narrative qualities inherent in her visual art. Encouraged by the Center's Executive Director Vincent Anthony, she created *Little Eddie*, her first work in puppetry, collaborating with Mr. Epsten and working with the more experienced puppeteers at the Center.

Since 1981 she has produced eleven original works with The Jottay Theatre, each one a unique exploration of subjects such as the realm of dreams and the subconscious, the misuse of power, nuclear fear and the effect individual choices have on the lives of others. The company has received an OBIE (Off-Broadway) Award and three Citations of Excellence from Union Internationale de la Marionnette-USA, the international puppetry organization. They have toured performances to New York City, Philadelphia, Cincinnati and Los Angeles and performed at international puppetry festivals in East Germany and
Poland. The company has gained a reputation for creating work that transcends the traditional boundaries separating art forms through their distinctly personal approach to puppet theater.

Ms. Geiser cites as influential those artists who tend toward austerity and simplicity in form and who display a sense of play and wit, such as Marc Chagall and Alexander Calder (his toys rather than his mobiles). Ms. Geiser is also drawn to artists such as Frida Kahlo whose work reveals the darkness lurking beneath the normality of life, and folk artists such as Nellie Mae Rowe. In her work Ms. Geiser creates entire worlds and environments in which scale, time and space are used with remarkable effect and clarity. Performances such as Sleep... (1981) and Looking for Penguin Film (1983) used a variety of stylized figures and sets to illustrate humorously abstract and fanciful ideas. Blue Night (1984) was performed in miniature dioramas with 10” rod puppets which drew viewers into the eerie world of life after a devastating war. As Eileen Blumenthal said in The Village Voice “Janie Geiser’s...puppets play against landscapes half or 10 times their scale. They appear in different, simultaneous perspectives, like characters being filmed by two cameras with different lenses. And, as their most basic and most impressive stunt, they seem to change back and forth between animate and inanimate matter before our eyes.”

The narrative quality of the work has strengthened over the years through a close collaboration among the seven members of The Jottay Theatre who bring to the process strong backgrounds as independent artists working in a variety of media. The company focuses on developing original scripts or adapting stories which are suited to the group's mix of hand, rod and shadow puppets, actors and musicians. The process begins with a visual concept and is developed in rehearsal to create a balance of visual imagery, text,
music and movement. While the beauty of the plays may provoke a personal response, the stories are also meant to lead the viewer from that inner response back to conditions in the outer world. For instance, in *Hangman* (1985) incidents of surreal comic violence narrated in the dead-pan voice of a twelve-year-old reminds us of the risks and dangers children face in our society. In *The House* (1989), co-written by Ms. Geiser and Jottay member Neill Bogan, our sympathetic concern for Vi and her struggles forces us to look more closely at our own commitment (or lack thereof) to issues of global concern. Jottay's ability to expand the particular details of a story to illuminate larger issues without pandering or bombast is one of its unique strengths.

With no formal training in theater, each piece became a lab in which Ms. Geiser could try out new ideas. "I've learned about collaboration, puppetry techniques and rehearsal by experimenting along the way in the development of each work," she explains. "With puppet theater you're not only arranging the action of the puppets on stage, you're also blocking the movements of the performers behind the puppets. It's a very intimate relationship and you learn honesty and trust. Also the reaction of the audience to your art is instantaneous: anything can happen during performance and this makes it exciting, fun and scary all at once. As a visual artist you usually work in solitude and no one sees the mistakes you make along the way. Theater is totally different."

When asked what compels her to create puppet theater Ms. Geiser responds simply. "We're all looking for answers to life and the world and why we're here. We all need food, clothing, shelter and meaning to survive. I don't think of art as the most important thing in the world but I do think art is valuable in providing meaning in our lives."
The Performances
J.ot, the narrator, sits on the edge of the puppet stage and invites the audience to witness the strange tale of *Little Eddie*, a boy who would be king. Little Eddie sleeps, dreaming of rising on his uncle's shoulders to become king by his own proclamation. Enamored of his power, he becomes a ruthless tyrant until J.ot topples Little Eddie from his uncle's shoulders. A black comedy, *Little Eddie* was performed with richly colored hand and rod puppets. Jottay Theatre member Chip Epsten's composition of sound effects, performed primarily on toy instruments, was simultaneously lighthearted and mysterious.

**Janie Geiser** — *Little Eddie* is one of my favorite shows, probably because it was my first true puppetry piece. The story came from a small book I had made for my own amusement. I developed the show while working as a puppeteer in the Center's children's shows so I was just beginning to learn the techniques of performing. I was fortunate to be able to enlist the Center's other puppeteers, Alan Sugar and Scott Burk, to work with me on the show and perform the first version in the Center's first experimental workshop, Artists on Parade. It was very satisfying to be able to physically realize something I had envisioned and have it match pretty closely with my original vision.

"The name J.ot came from a young art student of mine who signed a drawing he did for me with "to J." but had reversed the letters, so it was
Jottay.” Later when we were trying to name the company, we were looking for something that came from the work we were doing. We played around with endings and came up with Jottay, which a lot of people think is a French word.”

A dance and puppetry piece, *Siamese Twins* explored the connections people have in their lives. Two dancers each manipulate a separate puppet figure attached to their chests. The work metaphorically demonstrated the push and pull of relationships. *Siamese Twins* was a collaboration of Ms. Geiser with dancer Cathy Simmons and composer Chip Epsten.

J.G. — “I had met Cathy while working on *Red Angels*, a Dance Unit project, and we began talking of creating a work together. I had made a book with moving parts about twins because I had become fascinated with the idea of twins, especially Siamese twins and the intimacy of that relationship. The book appealed to both Cathy and I as a piece we could create together that would combine objects and dance. Chip had worked with me on the sound design for *Little Eddie*. We wanted his involvement in the project as a composer to expand on the use of sounds and create a more fully realized score.”
Sleep... 1981

Sleep... a shadow puppet play, illustrates the poem of the same name by Atlantan Terrill Shepard Soules.

With no one asleep,
there would be a human strength blackout
So we sleep in huge shifts, turning
in our sleep with the planet
— excerpt from the poem

Sleep... was awarded a Citation of Excellence from Union Internationale de la Marionnette-USA, the international puppetry organization, the first of three such awards for The Jottay Theatre.

J.G. — “Sleep... developed out of a desire to do shadow puppets, from a technical desire to learn an aspect of the art form. I was reading poetry to find possible ideas for a piece when my friend Terrill Soules gave me his poem ‘Sleep...’ to read. It just clicked with the shadow ideas I was having. I worked on storyboards (visual scripts) and some specifics of what the poem would be as a puppet show and when Terrill felt that I understood his intentions for the poem he gave me carte blanche. It’s a very different show than most of our work. There’s nothing political, it’s just about beauty and time, just a show that is gentle.

“The technique of shadow puppets is beautifully fluid: you can depict complex concepts with a moment, like a snapshot. The image on the screen from the audience’s perspective has a clarity and simplicity that is very compelling, even filmic. Ever since Sleep... shadow puppets have been a consistent element in the shows we create.”
Derived from the nightmarish beauty, sardonic wit and outrageous imagination of illustrator and author Edward Gorey, AlleGorey brought to life twelve of his poems, stories and limericks. Winner of a Citation of Excellence from UNIMA-USA, the show featured over 100 puppets, actors and a live orchestra. Pictured are figures from The Doubtful Guest, the story of a guest who comes to visit and stays and stays and stays.

J.G. — “The Center asked me to design the puppets and sets for this production which was directed by Kent Stephens, then guest director at the Alliance Theatre (Atlanta), and adapted by him and actress Megan McFarland. Gorey's stories are great fun and visually there was a relationship between his style of drawing and my own. It was a challenge to decide on the style of puppets to use for the various stories. We ended up using every kind of puppet imaginable - small hand puppets, shadows, flat figures, rod puppets, these giant cat legs - with some of the figures being very realistic and others very abstract. Practically all of the puppeteers in the show worked on building the figures and out of necessity we even created some unusual mechanisms, such as a swivel joint on the rod puppets which allowed them to have a great deal of subtle head movement.”
"In Kay Hagan's text for *The Glass Dream*, a young girl (Mirri) is haunted in waking life nearly to the point of psychosis by her stunningly vivid dreams of threatening, mechanical birds and shards of glass. In this shimmering, frightening child-world, she seeks, with the help of her brother, to learn what the dreams can tell her about herself. While the extraordinary beauty of the birds and the purity of Mirri's fright depict the luring appeal of madness, her quest for self-discovery diffuses the terror of her dreams and substitutes the compromised, alloyed real world for the more intensely charged, more destructive world of dreams."

Anthony DeCurtis, *Art Papers*

J.G. — "I think the critics were kind to this show, perhaps because it was such a visual and aural spectacle. There were large variations in scale within the piece from a small hand puppet booth to various sized birds to a life-size rod puppet of Mirri to a giant shadow puppet sequence. It was a large cast of eight puppeteers, and five musicians played these wonderful junk instruments — chimes from conduit pipe, large homemade drums, motor casings — which Chip Epsten had made. The idea for the show came from one of my dreams and included a number of other ideas and images, perhaps too many because in the end it was unresolved. I was designing, directing and performing the show and was simply overextended. That was difficult, though I like the puppets and the design very much and Chip's score for the show is just remarkable."
Looking for Penguin Film 1983

Mild mannered Mr. Grey’s hum-drum life is suddenly changed through his encounter with an unusual camera. Three penguins sneak into his apartment with their box camera which uses penguins for film. They shoot a picture of Mr. Grey slumbering in front of his TV: the photograph reveals his dream of taking off in a flying saucer. The penguins beat a hasty retreat when Mr. Grey awakens. He discovers the fantastic nature of the revealing film and takes to the street to photograph the unseen life around him. Throughout the play the penguins are trying to retrieve their camera and when they finally succeed, Mr. Grey retreats again to his TV and lonely apartment. The penguins take one last picture of Mr. Grey and release him forever into his fanciful dream.

J.G. — “Penguin Film actually came from a dream I had of a camera that used penguin film to take pictures of what was inside people’s heads. At the time I was also completely absorbed with the films of Charlie Chaplin and silent movies. I wanted to play around with that kind of comedy and movement. That’s where the black and white imagery comes from and the penguin walk, too — it’s completely Charlie Chaplin. This show also provided a balance for The Glass Dream, which was being developed at the same time, and helped us keep a sense of humor and play. Penguin Film was lighthearted and fun whereas The Glass Dream was dark and foreboding.”
Blue Night is the story of two lovers who are reunited after a devastating future war... The set is a row of tenements with three one-by-two foot cutaways. Pictured are a city street, a living room and a bedroom... in the cutaways we see a man and a woman meet in the street, slowly recognizing each other. We see the couple in the living room greeting a woman friend. She turns to the audience and pulls her face open in two halves to reveal a diseased face beneath. When she turns to face her friends they lean back at the same angle in cartoonish shock.

“As they sleep, the wall draws away behind the couple and we see them dreaming the same dream... All the while a sinister black-capped man with a large beak follows them, watching over like Big Brother as they sleep. When (these) puppets move it is with the tentative, spiny delicacy of long-legged arthropods. As one comes into the room, we see her hand reach for the light switch. Click—the light goes on. It’s a delightful, mock-human moment. But when she touches the cheek of the friend with the ruined face, it’s eerie: a combination of human tenderness and inanimate denial.” Laura Jacobs, Philadelphia Welcomat

Blue Night and Other Works was awarded a Citation of Excellence from UNIMA-USA. The show included performances of Blue Night, Hangman and The Third Bank of the River.
J.G. — “With Blue Night I wanted to create theater that was as open ended as looking at a painting. It was clear that there was a narrative but everybody had different ideas of what it was about. When we performed it in New York a lot of people believed it was about AIDS although the show was created before the AIDS epidemic was recognized. It was based on a dream I’d had about living in a big city after a nuclear war and the fallout plague was killing everyone. As I worked on the show other ideas were added, like the doctor character and the lovers’ dream sequence. The image of the doctor came from a book about the plague in the 17th century. I read that the doctors treating plague patients wore masks filled with sweet herbs to counteract the smell of the disease. Nuclear disaster is a dark subject and I wanted to have a sense of hope at the end. The lovers’ shadow puppet dream sequence was created by my friend Teri Epsten Stewart, and based on one of her dreams. It was a way to illustrate the lovers’ last hope, their only escape from the desolation. The music by Chip Epsten and the design of the puppets (rod marionettes) were very important in creating the environment and mood. The music was hypnotic and repetitive, mirroring the circular nature of the show. This was also the only show we have performed with a tape recorded soundtrack. Each scene began and ended with the puppets in a tableau and their movement was very minimal. This was all intended to give the sense of a painting come to life.”
Hangman is based on a series of stories and drawings by a twelve-year-old describing a child's view of fear in urban life by presenting the experiences of Hangman (depicted as a rabbit/man) and his son. Hangman rules the streets, indiscriminately hanging people, a habit he passes to his son at whose hands Hangman eventually meets his end. A macabre, yet oddly humorous tale, Hangman was performed with flat, cartoon-like rod marionettes based on the child's drawings. The puppeteers operated the figures from above and were seen throughout the show.

J.G. — “Sue Bresler (an Atlanta teacher and XPT artist) brought the stories into one of the Center's XPT sessions and I was just captivated by them. The subject of the stories was unusual and I liked the idea of doing something from a child's perspective. It was one of those projects that people came in and out of, but it really took off when Kevin Miller (another XPT artist) began working on the concept with us. We based the design of the puppets and sets on the child's storyboards. I think it's a wonderful show and I felt that we were able to stay true to the child's original voice.”

'XPT, the Center's Xperimental Puppetry Theatre, is a lab workshop in which artists and individuals interested in puppet theater collaborate in the creation of new work for adult audiences.
"The Third Bank of the River is a parable bound to touch anyone who’s ever had, lost, hated or loved a father. The text, adapted by Neill Bogan from Joao Guimaraes Rosa’s short story, tells of a farmer who lives with his family on the bank of a wide river. Inexplicably, he orders a boat built to carry only one, says goodbye and launches into the current — where he stays, paddling in the same place, year after year while his family and neighbors try to figure out why: ‘Everyone was appalled. . . ’ The narrator’s hope to be set adrift in a boat when he dies, his body ‘lost inside the river’ beautifully speaks of a son’s urge to join his father -possibly only symbolically, after death. It’s a beautiful piece.” Steve Murray, Southline

J.G. — “In Third Bank I wanted to integrate people and puppets more and work with scale in a way that relates to the meaning of the piece. Originally Third Bank was going to be a tabletop show. I was trying to figure out how we could get the movement of a boat, the magic of a boat on the water. I kept having this image of a person in a boat so we worked out the mechanics of having a masked actor wear the boat and create the illusion of the boat’s movement. That changed the scale of the entire piece. The other characters developed in relation to the human scale father to whom they all had to react. Everything else became smaller which made the father’s presence larger than life. The
narrator, played by Neill Bogan, told the story from the son's point of view and watched the story he was telling being enacted by the puppets. This created the sense of the story being a memory of an unforgettable time in the son's life.

"Neill had given me the story to read because he felt it could be a good piece for Jottay. As soon as I read it I started seeing pictures. Neill wrote the final script after we had gone through a process of paring down the language to the bare minimum and thinking of what could be shown instead of spoken. If there was a sentence that was really beautiful we wanted to keep that language in the text. But a scene like the boy bringing food to the father on the river bank could be expressed visually. In puppet theater, it's important to get the spoken text down to its essence; then it's up to the puppeteer and the actor to bring out the emotion of the scene with movement instead of words."

**Burning In The Dark** 1987

"*Burning In The Dark* traces the life of Marie Curie from her birth in Poland to her discovery of radium in Paris and her death, ironically from leukemia, a result of excessive exposure to the radium.

"The story is told through delicate rod... puppets, all designed and crafted by Ms. Geiser. The black and white projections, written narration as well as art work that corresponds to the story line, appear on a screen over the small box set. Three puppeteers in black stand behind the box and add set pieces and manipulate Ms. Geiser's figures which are about 15 inches tall."
An obvious motif is the window. A window of the future through which we see both the positive and negative of what her discovery will mean in time.” Paula Crouch, *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*

\*J.G. — “Burning In The Dark* continued the thread going through my work about living with the reality of nuclear capabilities. I had been reading about that age of ‘innocence’ that preceded the nuclear age. I kept coming across the name of Marie Curie and, reading more about her, it seemed that her life was a metaphor for that period. She was never involved in war research but it’s clear from her notebooks that she and her husband refused to see the negative aspects of their research, which they considered pure science.

“This show began as a collaboration with Minnesota composer Randall Davidson, who I had worked with at the Actors Theater of St. Paul on *Trakker’s Tel*, another post-nuclear war play. I had conceived the basic story in a series of drawings based on Marie Curie’s life and Randall had composed musical themes for each section. The performance was developed in rehearsal with puppeteers Therese Aun and Annie Peterle. There was no spoken text; there had to be a very tight orchestration between the puppets, projections and music in order for the audience to follow the story. These elements came together to create a sense of danger lurking beneath the surface.”
"The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol was adapted from a novella by John Berger for the stage by Paul Zimet, artistic director of The Talking Band (New York City). The play reveals the life of the title character, a French peasant woman, from 1900 to 1967 when she is murdered. It is based on the simple irony of Lucie’s life... The smaller she seems, the larger her ability to be. The more she is unfairly reviled, the clearer her capacity to justly love and hate becomes... Coupled with the visual elements, the work becomes genuinely absorbing. The puppet designs of Janie Geiser have a strange power to amplify the issues of the play. Tiny sheep, trees, stick figures and buildings at once take us out of illusion and pull us deeper into the emotional matrix of the work." Steven Hart, The Villager

Ms. Geiser received a Bessie Award for Outstanding Design for her work in this production.

J.G. — “I met Paul Zimet while working on another project in New York and he was interested in the work I was doing with puppets. He called me when The Talking Band started working on Lucie Cabrol because they thought it would probably have some puppets in it. It was an odd coincidence that he asked me to design the puppets because a few days before he called I had just finished reading Berger’s book and the story was really on my mind. They liked the puppets I designed so much that they asked me to design the entire set. It was a good project for me because I could just play around with visual ideas; I wasn’t directing or involved with producing the show. In fact the style of this show affected the approach I later took with the design of The Fish.”
The House is the story of Vi, a woman who becomes obsessed with events in the Persian Gulf. She believes that she can avert disaster there by correctly picturing the movement of the ships, planes and missiles in her mind. As these pictures become real to her — depicted with shadow puppets and flat figures of ships, planes and maps — they draw her attention away from the other realities of life: her family and their needs, her friend and his demands. She tries to expand her thinking to include the local bus routes. We see her concentration unravel and witness her anguish when a plane is shot down over the Gulf. She is ostracized by the very people whose lives she is trying to save. At the end she is working harder than ever, but completely alone.

J.G. — "Neill Bogan and I had been talking for some time about writing an original work together. In talking about things that interested us we found that we both shared an image of a suburban street, people mowing their lawns and daily
life, as well as this idea of a woman who somehow, for various reasons, doesn’t fit into that life anymore. We wanted her to be a compelling and sympathetic character. We focused on this woman’s separation from normal life as a scenario to connect her choice to a larger issue. So Vi became a character whose obsession with a monumental task isolates her from normal life. In her own way she is very sane and works very hard, but her effectiveness is questionable and her diligence is disturbing.

“The puppetry style of the show is a continuation of the technique that began in Blue Night and was further refined in Burning In The Dark. Vi and the other figures were larger rod marionettes than previous ones. They could move more but still in a very stylized manner so that the puppeteer had to make every gesture succinct. The staging included a number of set changes — from interior to exterior, an entire street scene — rather than a continuous backdrop or box set. The narrator was unseen off the stage and I felt this enhanced the feeling of being inside the character’s thoughts. Chip Epsten’s music was very integral in blending the action and the narration into an emotional whole.”
“In *The Fish*, based on a short story by Russell Banks, a marvelous shimmering fish appears one day in a village pond somewhere in Southeast Asia. Local Buddhists deem the creature holy, and it becomes a major attraction with the pilgrims arriving from as far away as Bangkok and Saigon. Even the area’s Catholic Colonel, after he has spectacularly failed to destroy the troublesome fish, joins the flow. He cashes in on the growing fervor by taxing pond water that the faithful carry off in vials, buckets and tank trucks. Before long, religious zeal and commerce accomplish what the Colonel’s grenades could not. The pond is depleted and the fish dies.” Eileen Blumenthal, *The Village Voice*

*The House* and *The Fish*, performed under the title *Stories From Here*, were recognized with an OBIE (Off-Broadway) Award and received a third UNIMA-USA Citation of Excellence for The Jottay Theatre.

J.G. — “Visually *The Fish* is very different from past Jottay shows. Everything was made from natural wood with red being the only other dominant color. The set was very spare. The fish itself was the focus of attention. The pond was created with two ladders and the fish ‘swam’ between these. Its movements created the illusion of depth, the water’s surface and the shores. I like using this kind of simplicity to explore complex, often dark subjects such as the effect of greed and the abuse of power. It seemed that people seeing the show were upset by the ending. It often took them a while to react to the ending, as if they didn’t want to accept the finality of the fish’s death.”
The Objects

Unless noted, all objects from the collection of the artist and all performances by The Jottay Theatre.

Little Eddie (1981)
Conceived/design/directed by Janie Geiser
Music/Sounds by Chip Epsten

Two Sketches
Puppeteer manipulating J.ot, Puppet mechanics
h. 12”

Little Eddie
rod puppet, h. 13⅜”
fabric, wood putty

J.ot
rod puppet, h. 21”
fabric, clay

Uncle Keenan
hand puppet, h. 26”
fabric, clay

J.ot’s Chair
set piece, h. 11¾”
fabric, wood, cardboard

Two Saws
rod puppets, h. 11½”, 2½”
ilustration board, ink, paint

Attack Dogs
rod puppet, h. 5¾”
illustration board, ink, paint

Attack Dog
rod puppet, h. 7¾”
illustration board, ink, paint

Siamese Twins (1981)
Conceived/choreographed/ performed by Cathy Simmons and Janie Geiser
Design by Janie Geiser
Music by Chip Epsten

Red Twin
rod puppet, h. 19⅜”
fabric, wood

Blue Twin
rod puppet, h. 19⅜”
fabric, wood

Siamese Twins
Book, h. 11”, c. 1979
fabric, paper
collection of Michael Goodman

Sleep... (1981)
Illustrating the poem by Terrill Shepard Soules
Adapted/design/directed by Janie Geiser
Music by Chip Epsten

Model in Naples (Asleep)
shadow puppet, h. 16⅜”
cardboard, paint

Model in Naples (Asleep)
shadow puppet, h. 10½”
acetate, ink

Bomb
shadow puppet, H. 3”
cardboard, paint

New Orleans Banker (Asleep)
shadow puppet, h. 13¾”
cardboard, paint

New Orleans Banker (Asleep)
shadow puppet, h. 13¼”
acetate, ink

Plane
shadow puppet, h. 3½”
cardboard, paint

Sleeping Australian Accountant
shadow puppet, h. 1½”
acetate, ink

The Lovers in Bed
shadow puppet, h. 32¼”
cardboard, paint

Large Letter
shadow puppet, h. 4¾”
acetate, ink

Lovers
shadow puppet, h. 11”
cardboard, paint

Big Sleeper
shadow puppet, h. 13¼”
cardboard

Javanese Grocer
shadow puppet, h. 5¾”
acetate, ink

Spear Thrower
shadow puppet, h. 11¼”
cardboard, paint

AlleGorey (1982)
Based on the writings of Edward Gorey
Conceived/adapted by Janie Geiser, Megan McFarland,
Kent Stephens
Directed by Kent Stephens
Music by David Smadbeck
Puppets/set by Janie Geiser

Maid
rod puppet, h. 15¾”
ilustration board, ink, paint
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts

Mother
rod puppet, h. 14”
ilustration board, ink, paint
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts
Uncle
rod puppet, h. 14"
illustration board, ink, paint
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts

Father
rod puppet, h. 15"
illustration board, ink, paint
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts

Boy
rod puppet, h. 9½"
illustration board, ink, paint
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts

L is for Leo
rod puppet, h. 19" wood, paint
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts

P is for Prue
rod puppet, h. 19¾" wood, paint
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts

I is for Ida
rod puppet, h. 21" wood, paint
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts

F is for Fanny
rod puppet, h. 22" wood, paint
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts

Z is for Zillah
rod puppet, h. 21" wood, paint
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts

The Glass Dream (1983)
Conceived by Janie Geiser
and Chip Epsten
Text by Kay Hagan
Designed/Directed by Janie Geiser
Music by Chip Epsten

Small Booth
set piece, h. 80" wood, glass, paint, canvas
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts

Mirri
hand and rod puppet, h. 18½" sculpey, paint, fabric

Mechanical Bird
rod puppet, h. 16" wood, plaster, sculpey, glass

Looking for Penguin Film (1983)
Conceived/designed/directed by Janie Geiser
1984 version directed by Kent Stephens

Mr. Grey
hand puppet, h. 20½" fabric, wood

Passerby
hand puppet, h. 18" fabric, wood

Shopkeeper
hand puppet, h. 18¾" fabric, wood

Dog
rod puppet, h. 9½" fabric, wood

Two Penguins
rod puppets, h. 9½", 8" wood, paint

Shop Fronts
photographic reproduction from shadow/projection
collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts

Blue Night (1984)
Conceived/designed/directed by Janie Geiser
Shadow sequence conceived/directed by Teri Epsten Stewart
Music by Chip Epsten

Man
rod marionette, h. 10½" wood, gouache paint, paper

Woman
rod marionette, h. 10½" wood, gouache paint

Doctor
flat rod marionette, h. 10¼" wood, gouache paint

Angel
rod marionette, h. 10½" wood, gouache paint

Set
h. 42½" illustration board, paint

Hangman (1985)
Story and Storyboards by an Atlanta youth
Adapted for puppets by Sue Bresler, Karen Chance, Janie Geiser, Ella McGrail, and Kevin Miller
Music by Chip Epsten
Originally developed in XPT

Woman
rod marionette, h. 11½" cardboard, crayon, paint

Storekeeper
rod marionette, h. 11½" cardboard, crayon, paint
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cash Register</strong></th>
<th><strong>Boat</strong></th>
<th><strong>Marie Curie (early Paris years)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counter</strong></td>
<td>hand held puppet, h. 5&quot;</td>
<td>rod marionette, h. 21½&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>paint, cardboard, papier mache</td>
<td>paint, hair, wood, fabric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Groceries</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mother</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chair</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rod puppet, h. 6½&quot;</td>
<td>rod puppet, h. 22&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cardboard, crayon, paint</td>
<td>paint, cardboard, wood, papier mache</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Set</strong></td>
<td><strong>Townsperson (Man)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Table</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h. 35½&quot;</td>
<td>rod puppet, h. 34½&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cardboard, crayon, paint</td>
<td>paint, cardboard</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Third Bank of the River (1986)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Townsperson (Woman)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Two scientific instruments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>House</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father</strong></td>
<td>set piece, h. 36&quot;</td>
<td>h. 49&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>paint, wood, hardware cloth</td>
<td>wood, paint, paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Son</strong></td>
<td><strong>Set</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 paintings designed for shadow projection</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h. 46&quot;</td>
<td>h. 3&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>painted canvas</td>
<td>gouache paint, paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boatmaker</strong></td>
<td><strong>Color Photograph</strong></td>
<td><strong>Burning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Figure on ladder</strong></td>
<td>photographic reproduction of projection scene</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>House Frame</strong></td>
<td>collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Iko scientific instruments</strong></td>
<td><strong>collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Stage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Burning photographic reproduction of projection scene</strong></td>
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<td>h. 49&quot;</td>
<td><strong>collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wood, paint, paper</td>
<td><strong>collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Figure on ladder</strong></td>
<td><strong>House Frame</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rod marionette, h. 21½&quot;</td>
<td>hand held puppet, h. 10¾&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>paint, hair, wood, fabric</td>
<td>wood</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chair</strong></td>
<td><strong>Table</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 paintings designed for shadow projection</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>set piece, h. 12½&quot;</td>
<td>h. 3&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wood, paint</td>
<td>gouache paint, paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two scientific instruments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Burning photographic reproduction of projection scene</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>set pieces, h. 3&quot;, 2½&quot;</td>
<td><strong>collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>metal, glass</td>
<td><strong>collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Stage</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 paintings designed for shadow projection</strong></td>
<td><strong>Burning photographic reproduction of projection scene</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Figure on ladder</strong></td>
<td><strong>House Frame</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>set piece</td>
<td>hand held puppet, h. 17&quot;, h. 18½&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wood, h. 42½&quot;</td>
<td>wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>collection of The Talking Band</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The House (1989)
Conceived/written by Neill Bogan and Janie Geiser
Music by Chip Epstein
Designed/Directed by Janie Geiser
Vi
rod marionette, h. 20¼" wood, cardboard, paint, papier mache

Neighbor with Lawnmower
rod puppet, h. 15¾" wood, paint, rubber

Moon
rod puppet, h. 5½" wood, paint

Boat
rod puppet, h. 4" wood, paint

Plane
rod puppet, h. 7" wood, paint

House
set piece, h. 27" wood

The Fish (1989)
Based on the short story The Fish by Russell Banks
Adapted for puppets/directed by Janie Geiser
Music by Chip Epstein

Fish
rod puppet, h. 10½" wood, metal chain

Colonel Tung
modified Kuruma Ningyo puppet h. 72", wood

Colonel's desk
set piece, h. 49½" wood

Miscellany

Video excerpts from performances

Audio tape by Chip Epstein
excerpts from The Joffaty Theatre performances collection of Chip Epstein

Blue Man
rod puppet, h. 15¾" wood, glass, paint

Woman on House
sculpture, h. 27¾", c. 1987 paint, clay collection of Judy Anderson

Red Dream
kinetic cloth covered box, h. 4¼", c. 1980 paper, cloth, cardboard collection of Kay Leigh Hagan

Mr. MP
finger puppet, h. 6", c. 1981 cloth, sequins, cardboard collection of Kay Leigh Hagan

Blue Blonde
rod puppet, h. 5¼", c. 1981 paper, ink collection of Kay Leigh Hagan

Poppy Head Woman
rod puppet, h. 9", c. 1982-83 poppy seed, paint, cloth collection of Kay Leigh Hagan

Two Color photographs
Janie Geiser's studio during the creation of Little Eddie h. 10", c. 1981 collection of Kay Leigh Hagan
The Center is a non-profit organization supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Henson Foundation, the Georgia Council for the Arts, the Fulton County Arts Council, the City of Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs, the Atlanta Public Schools, and contributions from individuals, corporations and foundations.

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