

Irene Koronas

the handwritten

is anyone worried about the fate of handwriting? maybe it is just me, the worry wart. what difference does it make to the world at large whether we handwrite. the handwritten letters becomes more important to me as I watch people in coffee shops with their lap top computers or is it now called notebooks, computerized notebooks; those coffee sippers tapping on a keyboard, a generic print appearing on screen. perhaps their thoughts are being put into print but not their handwritten identity. it doesn't seem to matter much in this instant oatmeal society, this seedless lemon squeeze way of being, without the need to pen a poem or letter. we don't even seem to be able to take the time to brew our own coffee, let alone take the time to write by hand. I'm beginning to feel antiquated, a curmudgeon. what word would imply the same thing as curmudgeon, for a woman. the dictionary says it refers to an old man. well I'm not a man but do have man at the end of female or woman or women. girls I hear is an out of use term and lady is a no no. so I guess I'm stuck with man. some of my best friends are men. I feel like a curmudgeon every time I take out paper and pen in a public place. even people my age are sporting their competence by using a lap top. it is becoming more and more rare to see a person using the tools I use.

cursive is what we were taught during the 1950's pubic schooling. recently, I learned how to print my words. this was one of the indications that writing was losing favor. all my children used the printed form. THE PRINT FORM. how I love cursive. the definition for cursive; having the letters rounded and joined together. how cool is that. now that I'm rounded and joined together with the community as a whole, cursive suits me. the actual act of writing using a line to shape letters, prompts me to let you the reader know what a joy it is to be able to write long hand; I especially enjoy writing my name. IRENE KORONAS. when I mastered the letters during my lower grade education, I began to play with each letter, using BIG or little strokes, curlicues, dotting my i's with a big zero, ending my name with a swirl. those strokes brought me independence, a sophistication in the big peoples world. I practiced for hours writing my name in different styles, choosing the right style for the right occasion; I would slant my name to the left, to the right, straight up,

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a combination of both. I knew how important it was to get my signature just right for the grown-up world. even when we were taught to make the letter similar to a given school formula, most of the kids created their own style. we became so competent at cursive writing, we were able to write on paper without lines. some kids still had to use a ruler to keep their writing straight, but, I had the artist eye. I could write in a straight line.

learning to write was my first drawing lesson. I spent years and years learning how to draw; using perspective and anatomy to depict those houses and people in my neighborhood. it took years of drawing the nude models to find my own method. while in high school I was able to take life drawing lessons at the museum school in boston. that's when I witnessed my first naked model. he was young, tall, and very scruffy, meaning, I noticed he wasn't too clean. at first I hid behind my drawing board and would peek out, just enough time to make another mark on the paper. after a few weeks I was a pro, proud of being able to shade and contour his body. then I brought my drawings home to show my parents. my father took a fit. his fits are quiet and he only talked to my mother who then relayed what was said in front of me, to me. he was upset that I saw a nude man. girls did not look at young naked males, let alone stare at them while drawing them. putting my signature at the bottom of the drawing was especially pleasing, this meant I was a real artist. you know I never showed my parents my drawings again. instead I folded them up and hid them in the attic. my drawing progressed over the years from shading and contours to a simple line to indicate the body. I'm writing about cursive because I feel it is a loss to society. we are losing the act of writing by hand. it isn't about one method verses another method of writing. it is the loss of one way of drawing, to a machine way of writing ones thoughts. what a shame what a shame. the handwritten draws me to itself no matter where I am. it might be a scrap of paper on the sidewalk, I'll bend to look at the way it is written, guessing at who it was that dropped a precious message. in the museum's glassed in cases I look for letters, inscriptions on books. I've become a writing fanatic. show me your handwriting and I'll tell you who you are. dick tracy on the lookout for the writing bandits. my brother became a writing expert for the police department in virginia, he would investigate insurance fraud.

the last art show I saw at the carpenter center at harvard university was yellow cellophane wrapped candy strewn on the floor like a huge carpet. I loved the display because of the idea of it. I soon learned that a lot of artist have the idea and the museum implements the idea. the artist need never touch the project, need never put their hands to the display. for me this is a loss. I lose the sense of actuality in the definition of what art can be or is or what it has become. yes I am tapping right now on the key board to this computer. I am making revisions from the handwritten, the original ideas being on paper. yes we might save paper by only working on the computer, but what about the other stuff from this contraption. don't get me wrong I'm grateful for machines. I'm grateful for anyway that a writer gets to write, but for the sake of being within this essay I'm lauding a hands on approach.

my aunt, my mother's sister. my father came to america alone and no other family members from his family ever came here to live. so my father was very lonely. so my family consisted of my mother's relatives. my aunt, my mother's sister owned her own business, a bindery. I worked for her from the age of 13 up to about 40. at 15 I learned how important, how priceless a signature could be. my aunt would get me or one of the other girls working for her, to sign her name to checks and papers. when I asked her why she didn't sign her own name, she'd tell me that if anyone asked her if that was her signature she would be able to say inequitably, no. there was no other explanation needed. I surmised that there was some hanky panky going on with the books, the records she kept for her taxes, or some such thing. I began to notice whether people ever actually wrote anything other than signing their name to something. some of people I hung out in my teen years, the workers, the girls, didn't really know how to write, or at least did not want to write anything about anything, other than to sign a check. I never saw any of them write words.

my father had to teach himself to write in english. he came to america with the equivalent of a third grade education. he'd read the encyclopedia's my mother bought from the local grocery store. imagine having to learn everything from scratch, on your own, not your native tongue. father was a gambler. he keep lists of numbers. figures.

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figurations. how many wins a dog or a horse would figure onto the list. we kids knew if my father won that night if he brought home some little goodie from the track for us to eat. if he was empty handed we knew it was a no go, and usually it was a no go.

my mother loved word games, cross word puzzles. at the age of ninety three she still does the cross word puzzles. my now dead aunt would call her-up every day to ask her to unscramble a word. within a minute my mother would call her back with the correct unscrambled word. my aunt always said the same thing, how did you do that so fast. my mother's hand shakes and her signature is wobbly. I try to copy her name, just to see what it feels like to be very old. she makes out a grocery list for me and I mean to save it for a later time when I might want to recognize her writing in her old age, but I never get to keeping the list. maybe tomorrow when she hands me that shaky list of things to buy her, ice cream, pizza, honey nut cereal, I'll remember to stash it in a box full of letter from friends. I know her history is in those hand written words. now my mother helps teach my granddaughter how to write in greek. how cool is that.

I've taken to drawing short lines //////////////// line after line in pencil or ink, across the white drawing paper, 20 by 30 inches all lined by hand, just to see the differences each line makes, each line an individual mark. this art work seen as a whole, one may not detect the differences of each mark marked. it all looks pretty much the same but its not. the handwritten is an art form; is becoming a tool for artists. artists are rescuing the handwritten by incorporating their own writing in their works. I've seen writing on pottery, on paper, canvas, books and books of handwritten stuff. it's not a new thing for artists to use lettering but it is new in that it is being used to show the artists signature as the whole part of the writing. the line and the direction the line takes _____ the line and the direction the line takes _____>>

cuneiform is what we know as the beginning of writing. the marks on tablets, carved into stone. the persian cuneiform is the same letter in multiform for every letter in the alphabet. it appears like a straight y closed at the top. for the letter a there are 4 y's, 3 straight up and 1 laying across the top of the 3. the letter o is a y slanted to the left. in the

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beginning of your dictionary, that is the beginning of each alphabetic letter like a, there is a diagram of the historical progression of each letter, from the phoenicians to the modern. the first phoenician z looked like I, in its early inception and the greeks used the I and z like the phoenicians. the romans dropped the I and just took on the z as z.

I wanted to show you the reader my handwritten piece. on the computer it is more difficult for me to submit pages of handwriting. so I use, times new roman print and hope you find your own handwriting as wonderful as I find my own handwriting, and try to imagine this essay in handwritten form.

at night I rest on my bed with a legal yellow pad of paper waiting for words to join each other. in the morning I take white, or yellow, or pink typing paper to the coffee shop and I write what I see around me. all those young people stuck on screens looking at type face.