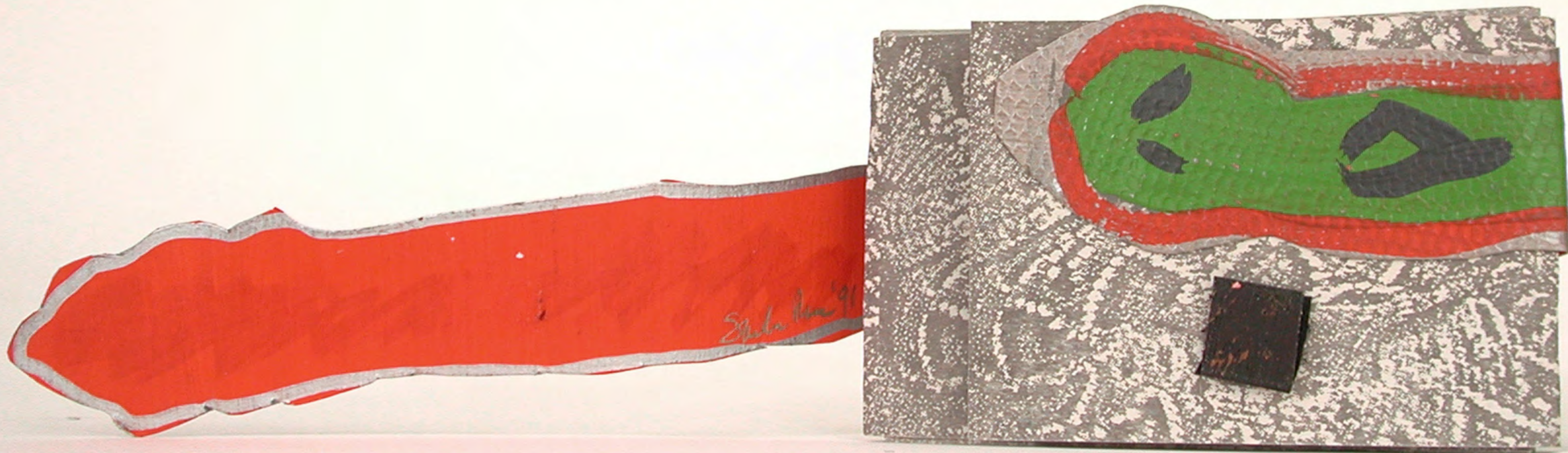
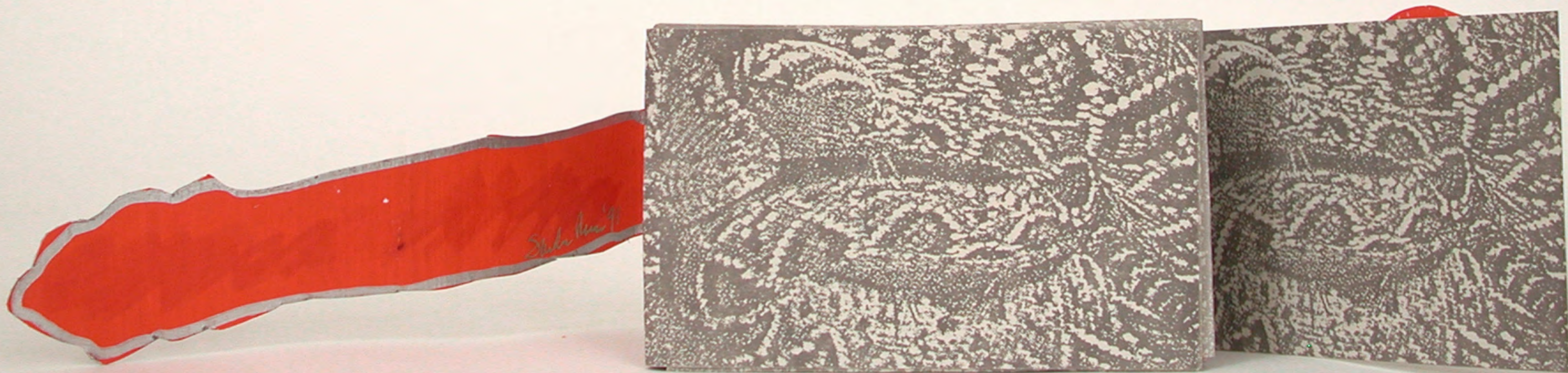
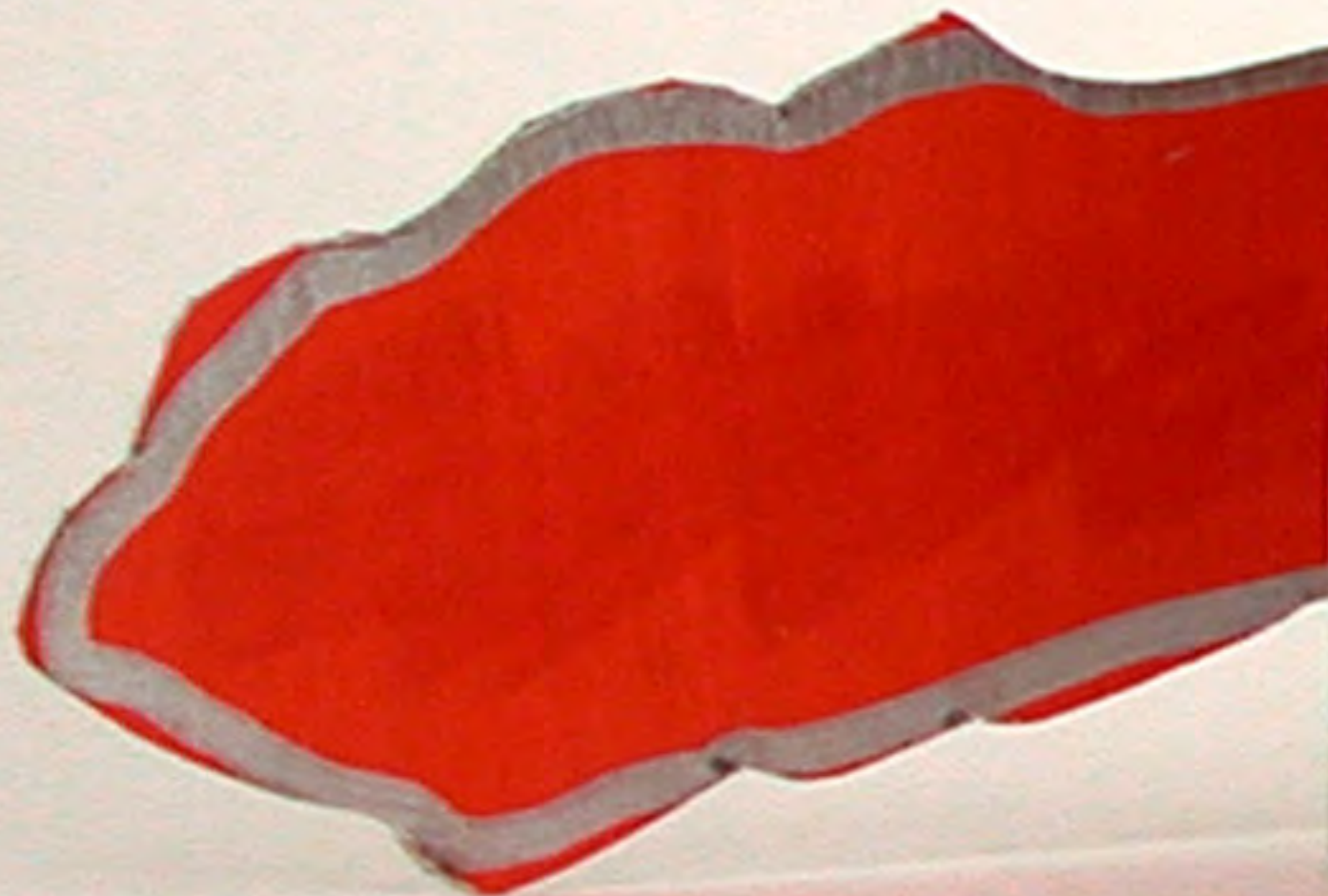










SNAKE

by Sandra Rowe

Copyright 1991
Riverside, CA

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Suddenly, a snake slithered
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He was 3 1/2 and I was 5. We were sitting in the backyard on two metal chairs eating peanut- butter sandwiches. Suddenly, a snake slithered out of the bushes!

My brother spied the snake!
He jumped up! His chair went
backwards and his sandwich
went up! He jumped, hopped,
all the way to Mama who was
watering the garden with a
hose.

She heard him yelling, dropped
the hose and got everything
wet including herself as the
hose slid and bucked on the
ground. My brother shimmied
up her body like he was
climbing a tree, all the while
yelling, SNAKE! SNAKE! SNAKE!

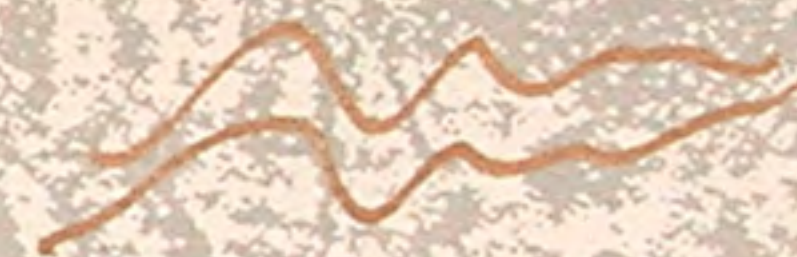
Mama put my brother inside the back screendoor. He was yelling and pointing at the snake. She then picked up that snake with a shovel and walked it to the gully way behind the house.

He finally stopped crying but his name was "Snake" after that.



GROWING UP

Me and Snake used to eavesdrop on my grandpa and his friends. They would talk about their "snakes" and women. I figured out what they were talking about because I was 12 and had read "God's Little Acre" (the good parts) at least 20 times.



We found some old "girlie" magazines in the garage behind a wood pile. We spent some time out there trying to pretend that we had big "snakes".

Sometimes between 12 and 13 my brother stopped being afraid of snakes. He even went to the library and brought home books about snakes.

At the same time, he got interested in fixing all kinds of things around the house. Snake fixed the toaster, the leaky plumbing under the sink and the washing machine. Mama bragged about him so much to her friends, that sometimes we all called him "Fixit Snake".

TEENAGE SNAKE

We were very interested in girls. Me and Snake used to stand on this one particular corner in town and watch the girls walk by. Sometimes we made references to our "snakes", to which one of us would make a comment that considerably "diminished" the bragging exaggeration of the other.

One of the finest women to walk by was the Widow Johnson. We could smell her coming. She always wore tight skirts, high heels and stockings with seams.

Mama had told us that Widow Johnson's husband died when he was staggering home drunk one night from the Elks Club. When he crossed the highway, a truck with a full load of oranges hit him. The truck then hit a tree. People still talk about how Mr. Johnson was laid out in the highway with oranges all around him. It smelled like rotten orange juice for days.

One Saturday evening me and Snake had our usual corner and we were "looking" and waiting. We smelled Widow Johnson coming. When she got close to Snake, she looked him in the eyes and asked him in a soft voice if he would "come by in a little while and fix my sink". "It's stopped up", she said. Snake said, "OK".

After some comments about our "snakes", Snake went home, got his tools and went over to the Widow's house.

Snake got home late. He woke me up and told me this story: He said that he knocked on Widow Johnson's door and she answered, all dressed in something fancy. She was smelling real good.

She took him to the bathroom door right next to the bedroom. As he was getting ready to go into the bathroom, she grabbed his arm and said that it was her that "needed fixin'", "not the damn sink".

Snake had come home changed!
I'm a real man now!", he said.

The next evening, we were standing in the same spot when we smelled the Widow Johnson. Snake was kind of nervous, but he was smiling.

She walked up to us, not smiling.
She didn't look at Snake but said
to me in a soft voice, "Hi, Sam".

After she passed by Snake looked
real funny and ran off down the
street.

We never stood there again. He
never mentioned the Widow Johnson
again.

NEXT YEAR

I was getting ready to go to College and Snake and me were sitting in the backyard in those same two metal chairs, talking about nothing. Suddenly, this rattlesnake comes out of the bushes. Snake got the shovel and chopped off the snake's head with one powerful stroke.

He looked at me with a question on his face and said, "I hear that rattlesnake meat is real tasty".

We started a fire, got some sticks, skinned and boned that snake, (best we could), cut it into pieces and barbecued it. It was tasty!

Snake was sitting back in the chair chewing on the last piece when something got caught in his throat! I hit him on his back but something was still caught. He fell out of the chair. I started yelling. Mama came out of the back screendoor and we both pounded on his back. By the time we got him to cough it up, he was almost dead!

Snake stayed in the hospital for awhile.

When he got home he didn't talk and just sort of sat and stared. But, every now and then, he would look you in the eye, point to his throat and whisper, "Snake!".

We all thought that we knew which "Snake" he was talking about.

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I'm a real ass now!", he said.

He was pretty sure that
he had it all fixed for the
time being.

He was still sure that
he would be able to fix it
if it didn't work.

He

He was still
sure that he
would be able
to fix it if it
didn't work.

He was still sure that
he would be able to fix it
if it didn't work.

He

Snake was
chewing on
something
I hit him
was still
the chair
Snake was
screaming
his back
to cough

