Bernard Childs, *Boquerón,* 1968, oil and graphite 18 x 21.5 inches

Movement: A Reminiscence of Len Lye

Judith Childs

Our friendship with Len and Ann Lye, began in Boquerón, a fishing village in Puerto Rico, where, on two or three week winter vacations, we all stayed at the Villa del Mar, a cobbled together little inn with a simple very popular outdoor bar and restaurant on a barge.

One morning after breakfast (probably in the late 1960s) we began talking together when I heard Len wonder what to do about a button that had come loose. I offered to help with needle and thread from my modest travel sewing kit. Right then we decided to go off together to a deserted quite wild beach area on the other side of the magnificent bay.

Before starting out, Len asked us to wait. I watched him watching the sky. 'Got it', he said, and we then drove off. Back in New York where we first saw his kinetic sculptures, I realized Len had been absorbing the movement of the white clouds against the bright blue sky.

Movement was also very much a part of Bernard's work so the two artists had lots to talk about when we were able to get together. In the summer of 1975, Ann and Len stopped to visit us while we were in our Paris apartment and studio. They were en route to the International Animated Film Festival in Annecy where Len was being honored.

A splendid exhibition of sea shells in the *Jardin des Plantes de Paris* attracted us. We were the only visitors. A popularized version of Verdi's 'Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves' from the opera, *Nabucco* was playing. We began to dance. We danced and danced among all those sea shells, huge and tiny from around the world, watched with approval by the museum guards who were all from the West Indies. None of us four ever forgot that afternoon. It was the story Bernard told Max Gimblett five years later at the wake for Len in his New York studio in 1980. Max, the New Zealand

American artist and writer, recorded that conversation in his article 'In the Presence' published by *Art New Zealand* for its cover story about Len the same year. [1]

Judith Childs is the wife of Bernard Childs and the manager of his artistic estate.

NOTES

[1] Matt Gimblett, *Art New Zealand* 17 (June 1980) <https://www.art-newzealand.com/Issues11to20/Lye03.htm> [accessed 21 October 2018]