

The Salesman

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Now the book is called Stories from the Nerve Bible
and what I mean by the Nerve Bible is the body.
And parts of the body appear and disappear throughout the book,
adding up to a kind of self-portrait
although not a very naturalistic one.
And I used the word Bible in the title of this book
because the first really strange stories I remember hearing
were Bible stories.
And these stories were completely amazing:
about parting oceans, and talking snakes.
And people really seemed to believe these stories.
And I'm talking about adults.
Adults, who mainly just did the most mundane things imaginable:
mowing their lawns and throwing potluck parties;
they all believed in these wild stories.
And they would sit around and discuss them
in the most matter-of-fact way.
So, in a way
I was introduced to a special local form of surrealism at an early age
and so there was always a question in my mind
about what's actually true
and what is just another art form.

Now I've always been interested
in trying to define what makes up the late twentieth century American
for example and so, as an artist,
I've always thought my main job was to be a spy,
to use my eyes and ears,
and find some of the answers.
For example,
I like to hang around the banks of phones in airports,
one of my favorite listening posts
and eavesdrop on conversations.
Now I usually travel on the same schedule as salesmen
and after lunch these guys call into the main office
and I just stand there at the phones, listening in
and taking notes for my portrait of the American salesmen.

{Oh Frank? Listen, Frank.
You know, I hate to say this about Brad.
I mean we both know he's got a heck of a job.
Ya, ya.
Oh you're so right.
But you know, we both know that Brad just isn't pulling his weight.
You know what I mean?
And I'm not saying this just because we're both up for the same Safeway account.}

So this book is really a collection of voices and stories
as well as portraits of people that I've met along the way.