At the Freud Museum in London, the "Freudian slip" is explained by this example:

A man walking down the street runs into a friend. His conscious reaction is to say: "Oh, hi, I'm so glad to see you."

But he actually has mixed feelings about his friend—unconsciously, he is also sad to see him.

So despite his conscious intentions, his remark comes out: "Oh, hi, I'm so glad to see you."

If we imagine the Unconscious to be "structured like a language" (Lacan), then it seems the Unconscious often speaks the language of irony, slapstick and farce, a spontaneous gesture of creative wickedness that stands behind conscious creation and sticks out its tongue.

We've dubbed this action "Slad;" as in "to Slad," "to make a Slad" or the question, "What was the meaning of that Slad?" Slad has its beginnings in Freud's "Mistake Book" (The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, 1901) where, to name these mistakes, slips, accidents and mis-speaking, he coins the German, Fehlschlag, a kind of oxymoron with the double sense of "faulty achievement" or "faulty accomplishment." His English translator then skewed the neologism by coming up with the almost-Greek term parapraxis, carrying the idea of "incorrect practice."

But there's a further shade of meaning that might be forcing its way through. Given the example from the Freud Museum, it would appear that a Slad is not so much a faulty or incorrect action, as an action that is even more revealing, more truthful, than the doer consciously intended.

Freud himself touched on this when he concluded The Psychopathology of Everyday Life with the thought that almost all mistakes and chance "can be traced back to incompletely suppressed psychical material which, although pushed away by consciousness, has nevertheless not been robbed of all capacity for expressing itself."

This push by the mind to express itself—all of itself—somehow, some way, regardless of "social and moral restrictions" could be taken as a form of natural poetry...an inherent artistry against all odds, regardless of whether the product is a "Slad" or a work of "art."

The work shown here emphasizes this engagement of the Unconscious as a darkly comic taskmaster, and considers the possibility of "the accident" as a metaphor for art—that odd state of mind which allows accidents to happen and have meaning.
ROCHELLE FEINSTEIN's "Someone Else's Past" and "Something for Everyone" examine the quirky path of meaning as it turns to become its opposite. Try as one might to hide it, the personal becomes impersonal and affection can be read as boorish demand when, for instance, the phrase "Love, Paul" turns the signature of a love letter's closing into a childish insistence for that particular emotion.

The viewer stumbles into seeing what isn't really there in JEANNE DUNNING'S "Long Hole" where it's "now you don't see it, now you do." Here, the familiar becomes all too familiar and the image of a curled hand doesn't stand a chance against a more anal reading of the piece, which asserts itself almost against the conscious wishes of artist and viewer.

The appearance of uncontrolled images and unclaimed, exaggerated sex fantasies might also be central to the work of LISA YUSKAVAGE. "Helga" is a portrait-like rendition of a Wyeth-esque beauty who gets stuck with a questionable sexual subtext; the high-level technique can't help but paint a low-level conception. There are mixed messages in these images which seem to have overpowered the censor and made their presence felt.

JEAN BLACKBURN'S piece is riddled with cross-purposes, as well. Obsessively drilled and poked into, what once had been a table with place settings is transformed into something disturbingly different, the familiar literally deconstructed until its function, if any, is unknowable. The piece is like a conversation: intimate, rolling over in ambiguities, and filled with holes.

Finally, the possible meanings of change and circumstance are somewhat happier in "Musical Comedy Medley still" by THOMAS TROSCH, who offers up a series of uninhibited happy accidents and gladly found language from the poetry of Broadway musical comedy. It's Lorenz Hart, not Freud, who could be celebrated here. Then again, it was Hart who wrote: "If it hurts, that's love."

And last: to stretch it further, condensed in the single event of the Slad are many themes of Modern and Postmodern thought: memory as fiction, conscious thinking as merely one mode of mind, the central place of the subjective; the blurred boundaries between "normal"/erotic and serious/absurd, the insistence on meaning, the importance of the random and inessential...and, perhaps, the equivalent nature of mind and art.

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