

NoLab is available from Owl Canyon Press and from Amazon.
(From Kindle and Nook beginning November 15, 2019.)

Praise for *NoLab*:

"*NoLab* has it all: Art, Life, Death, and Love. In that order."
— Ryan McGinness, artist

"I read the entire novel on my cell phone on the train from New York to Richmond (two cities prominent in the plot), so absorbed in the story that when I looked up, day had turned to night and three hundred miles had flashed by under my feet. With a plot that spins across continents, bedrooms, dive bars, off-grid enclaves, and the Web, *NoLab* is an art world thriller in a fast and furious 230 pages. Three artists, whose collaboration 'The Church of the Holy Spiral' had spiraled into mail fraud, take on a mysterious new project that lands them in aesthetic and political terra incognita, and their two former professors are hired on the q.t. to find them. Roth's legendary wit as both artist and teacher—unforgettable to the legions of students, colleagues, critics, collectors, and curators who have encountered him in the real world—are sublimated into a roll call of heroines and rogues who voice the tech-slang of our globally mediated moment. Dialogue is so spot-on you mouth-read the lines. Hacking, poker, surveillance drones, genetic mutation, pharmaceuticals, and a cross-country race against time—and Roth's characters still manage to fall in love, spoof an art theory lecture, deliver a passionate art manifesto, update the old painting vs. sculpture duel, and extoll the glory of Formica. Fictional persons (along with illnesses, buildings, and governments) mingle Pynchon-style with real ones well-known to anyone on Twitter. What begins as brilliant shtick tips into drama and finally shock, and the reader discovers she suddenly cares for these characters. It is as if this tale was waiting to be told, (to quote Kafka) rolling in ecstasy at Roth's feet. The story echoes the slipping of trust and truth in our national life. Roth makes us laugh, but he touches a nerve."

—Elizabeth King, artist

"*NoLab* is a brilliantly inventive comic novel custom-built for an age that pays homage to Warhol's radical claim that art is what you can get away with. Can artists get away with eliminating art works altogether? Does terrorism count as performance art? What if a pill could reproduce the experience of viewing Picasso's *Guernica*? Will we still need *Guernica*? Richard Roth is a rare triple threat: an internationally-known artist, former chair of a prominent department of painting, and—now—an incisive, droll, ingenious novelist. *NoLab* unfolds through the bizarre adventures of characters who live on the cutting edge of art and ideas."

—David B. Morris, author of *The Culture of Pain & Civil War Duet*

An excerpt from *NoLab* (the first few pages):

You may have heard of me, Ray Lawson. I'm the artist who got arrested

eighteen years ago for practicing medicine without a license. I was led away in handcuffs, spent the night in jail, and was subjected to a humiliating court case. The charges never stuck, but my associate, Dr. Albert Moore, did suffer serious consequences. The media were relentless, over the top, and deliberately misleading. I became a bit player in someone else's movie.

What I actually did was quite simple—I created drugs that elicited specific user experiences. Each pill was a miniature work of art designed to alter perception.

The art objects we so carefully construct are created to provide viewers with experiences. The nature and quality of the experience may be endlessly debated, but it is ultimately the experience that counts. In any case, I simply eliminated the middleman. Why do we need those cumbersome chunks of stone or paint-encrusted canvases if we can get right to the experience without all the effort?

Being a product of the 60s, I imagine, had a lot to do with the mindset that led me to create drugs that would activate specific neurological receptors. No massive welded steel structure required, no multimillion dollar film production, just one little pill, in your bloodstream and inside your head. So neat, so minimal, so efficient.

I include here Gene Fleming's Times review of *Nitro*, my first exhibition of pharmaceuticals.

Raymond Lawson's work is a frontal assault on art as we know it. What is one to make of this spare exhibition? Just eight vitrines, each housing a minuscule geometric form, like a jewel or some rare particle from deep space—a cylinder, one-quarter inch in diameter, yellow-green with an exquisite dry matte surface in one—a half-inch red and white capsule in another. Each work, pill actually, takes its title from the name of a roller coaster: Viper, Corkscrew, Vortex, Tidal Wave, Cyclone, Predator, Mean Streak, and Nitro. At first glance, they are simply minimal artworks in miniature, but Lawson is up to more mischief than that. These little forms are not as harmless as they appear. They are psychopharmaceuticals, made to be ingested, and designed to create unique experiences in the user. Each piece is available as an edition of two, and the buyer must obtain a prescription from the neurologist who collaborated with Lawson on this project. Presumably, the collector who purchases an edition ingests one pill and can exhibit the other or hold it as an investment. Lawson's pill-works are said to utilize stimulants, psychedelics, tranquilizers, and empathogens. The various experiences include euphoria, hallucinations, an altered sense of time, and a momentary lapse of memory that according to the catalog copy induces "a state of mind-boggling nowness." I know not whether the claims made for this work are true, and the beauty is, it doesn't matter. Nitro would make Duchamp smile. Ray Lawson has stirred up a whole mess of conundrums and, with great wit and style, comments wickedly on the true religion of our time—pharmaceuticals. This viewer is hooked and I haven't truly experienced the work. I remain drug-free. Pity, no samples for critics.

- Gene Fleming, *The Times*, March 22, 1998