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Letters

Artistic license?

Joseph J. Schildkraut finds four artists with severe depression, two more with mild depression, and two more who "probably" had mild depression; he finds a few more who drank too much. Then he generalizes from these 15 that depression and other problems are the source of art ("Creativity's melancholy canvas," SN: 5/7/94, p.302).

This would probably come as a surprise to Rockwell, Picasso, Klee, Miró, Wyeth, and numerous others. It would probably surprise the huge population with clinical depression who have not demonstrated artistic talents of any kind.

What Schildkraut has actually discovered is that there is a line of work available for those who find it difficult, undesirable, or impossible to work in "normal" jobs with regular hours or other problem features. Unable to use their creativity in more conventional ways, the 15 artists used it to produce paintings.

Any other generalization from 15 people to

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Cover: Adding germanium to silicon makes possible the fabrication of electronic devices that outperform traditional silicon technology. Such mixing also offers the possibility of integrating optics and electronics on a single chip. Here, a silicon wafer is being loaded into a special furnace for growing silicon-germanium crystals. (Photo: IBM Research)



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Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. It gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis on young people. More recently, it has included in its mission increasing scientific literacy among members of underrepresented groups. Through its Youth Programs it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships, and publishes and distributes the *Directory of Student Science Training Programs for Precollege Students*.

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the huge number of artists or to the huge number of clinically depressed patients is not statistically valid and not very meaningful.

Ivan H. Mann III
Birmingham, Ala.

Schildkraut generalizes not just from one study, but from accumulating evidence suggesting a link (not an inevitable cause-effect relation) between creativity and mood disorders. Establishing the proportion of great artists currently or formerly afflicted with these conditions is, of course, a tall order. For more on this issue, see Kay R. Jamison's book *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (Free Press, 1993). Incidentally, Schildkraut has documented lifelong depression in Joan Miró, the 20th-century Spanish artist whom you mention.

— B. Bower

Keck's multiple mirrors

Perhaps it's because the Keck isn't a single-mirror telescope that it has such extraordinary capabilities for performing astronomical feats ("Keck Telescope looks at the Big Bang,"

SN: 5/28/94, p.349). The Keck Telescope's primary mirror is made up of many hexagonal, computer-controlled mirrors acting together to provide the light-gathering ability of one 10-meter instrument.

James Bricken
Felton, Calif.

Double-duty cover?!

The caption "Cold-Blooded Killer?" on the cover of your May 14 issue, which shows the head of the dinosaur *Carnotaurus*, would serve equally well as a cover illustrating the article on cigarettes in the same issue. The only change needed is to replace the question mark with an exclamation point!

Kenneth C. McCulloch
The Pas, Manitoba
Canada

CORRECTION

"The Fatal Fling" (SN: 6/25/94, p.408) refers to the Northridge earthquake on Jan. 23, 1994. The quake actually occurred on Jan. 17.