

## PAMELA CARROLL

*Bird Call*  
Oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in



COURTESY WINFIELD GALLERY

## DANA FRANK

# Telephone Not Intervened

Adventures at the  
7-Eleven Pay Phone

**O**n a Tuesday, I got an email from Someone Important in Washington, who I'd been working closely with on Honduran human rights for two years. He asked me to call him on Thursday at noon "from a crazy phone that is not intervened"—playing off the Spanish *teléfono no intervenido* (untapped phone). What? We'd barely ever talked on the phone, let alone on an untapped one. I immediately went into panic mode—had I screwed up somehow and blown the relationship, and now he was going to tell me that, and the call was for damage control? This was the only reason I could come up with. No, he reassured me in an otherwise still-cryptic follow-up email, I hadn't screwed up.

I thought about using some phone at the university, but that got too complicated—how could it be private enough, and also protect whoever's phone it was? I asked a friend if I could use her cell, but when I couldn't actually explain what the business of the call might be, that got murky too. So I spent a chunk of Wednesday driving around greater Santa Cruz with my niece Becky looking for a pay phone.

First I learned that pay phones are disappearing. Then I found two or three, but they were in loud places with lots of street noise. I went to the monster Safeway on the West Side and asked around inside—"Is there a pay phone here somewhere?" There I learned something else useful: if you wander around in a public place with a sense of urgency, asking people if they have seen a pay phone—and, in my case, if you look like a white middle-class woman in a mostly white town—a great many total strangers will offer you their cell phones. I had to politely decline them all, quickly, without explaining that I was looking for an untapped phone from which to make a semi-clandestine call having something to do with my largely confidential political life in Washington, D.C., as a Honduran freedom fighter. I also learned that there are no longer pay phones either inside or outside Safeways.

I decided on the phone in front of my neighborhood 7-Eleven off a small parking lot in a little strip of four or five businesses, set back a bit from Mission Street just before the commercial part of town peters out and Mission becomes the road north along the coast. If that phone was busy when I needed it the next day, I could still quickly drive three blocks back down Mission Street to another