

ART BLOG ART BLOG

Fall, 2013

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Interview with Jamian Juliano-Villani by Gene Beery
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"21st Century solitude," 2012, Joshua Abelow

21st Century solitude

21st Century
solitude
is not like
the
solitude
of yesteryear -

21st Century
solitude is bigger
has a much clearer picture quality
and is also
significantly
more
durable

Courtesy of the artist

"Drowning Man II," 1981, Richard Bosman



Courtesy of the artist and Brooke Alexander, Inc., New York

"Outer Space," 1968, Alice Mackler



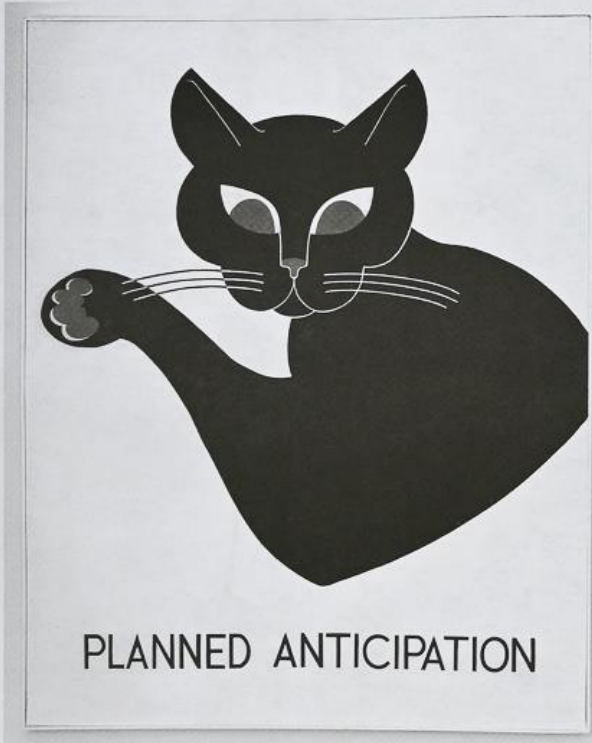
Courtesy of Kerry Schuss, New York

"Transsexual I," 2000, Derek Boshier



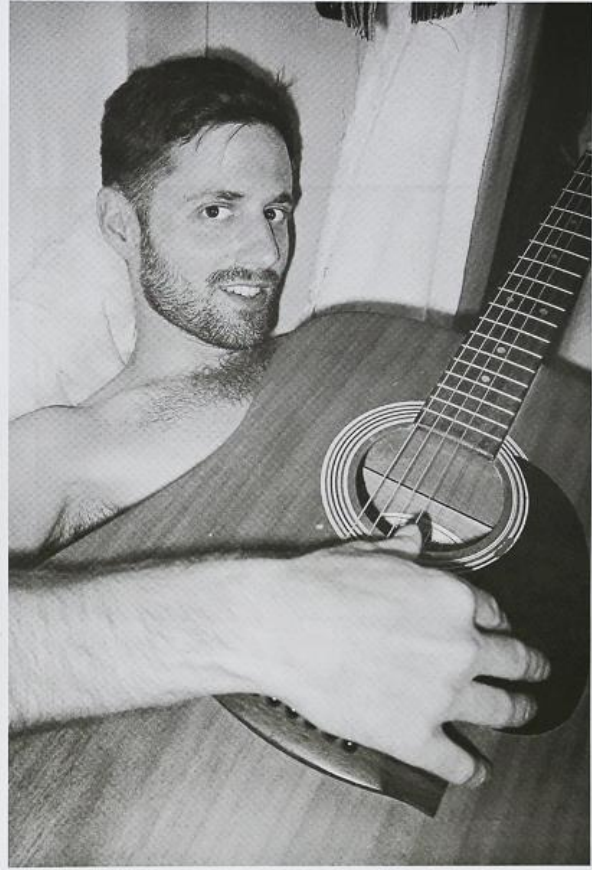
Courtesy of Night Gallery, Los Angeles

"Planned Anticipation," 1963, Vern Blosum



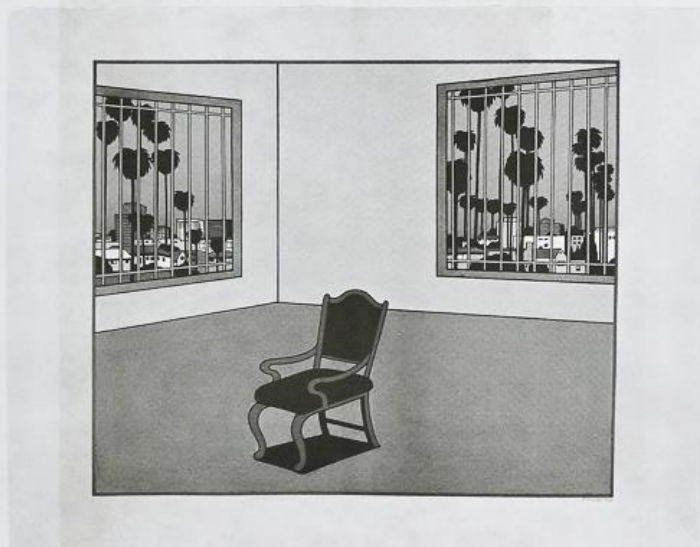
Courtesy of the artist and ESSEX STREET, New York

"Andy Below," 2013, Joshua Below



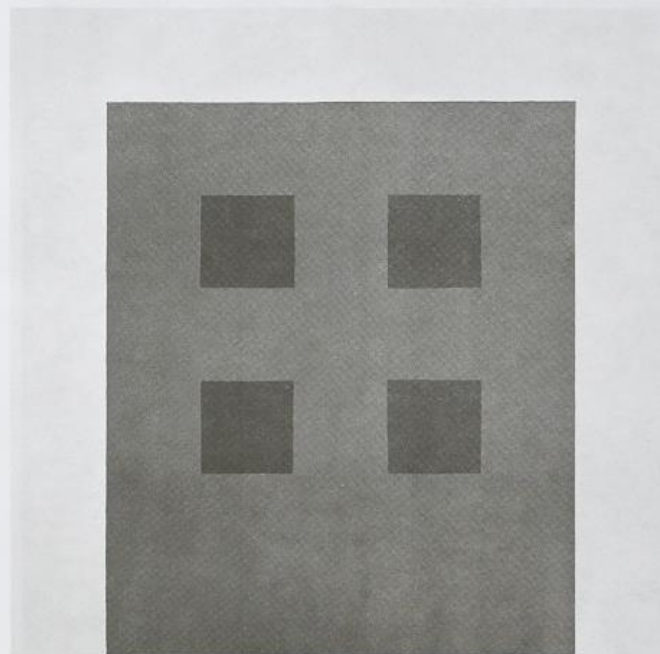
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 1982, Ken Price



Courtesy of The Drawing Center, New York

"Apartment House," 1981, Peter Halley



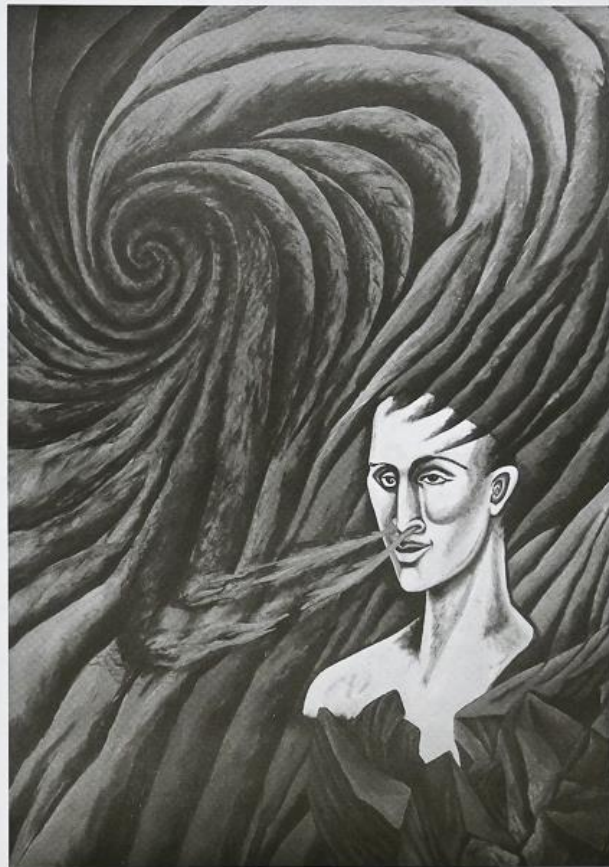
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 1993, Ull Hohn



Courtesy of Algis Greenspon, New York

Interview with Jamian Juliano-Villani by Dana Barry
"Breathing Fire," 1993, Mary Beth Edelson



Courtesy of the artist and The Suzanne Geiss Company, New York

"Midnight Snack," 2013, Jamian Juliano-Villani



Courtesy of the artist and Rawson Projects, Brooklyn

Interview with Jamian Juliano-Villani by Gene Beery

This interview is the result of a recorded phone call, which was then transcribed onto the computer. It took place between artist Jamian Juliano-Villani and artist Gene Beery during the month of September, 2013. Gene Beery lives in Sutter Creek, California and Jamian Juliano-Villani lives in Brooklyn, New York. I hope you enjoy their conversation.

Gene Beery: Can you hear me?

Jamian Juliano-Villani: Yeah, I can hear you. Can you hear me?

GB: Okay, yeah, great. Alright, well, how did the show go?

JJV: I had a good show. Now, I keep on waking up in the middle of the night like, oh shit, I need to paint the face, but that nightmare should stop by next Tuesday.

GB: Well, let me start asking questions - you can say short yes or no if you want or if you have a question that you want me to ask just say so. First of all, where are you from?

JJV: I'm from New Jersey.

GB: New Jersey?

JJV: Yeah, New Jersey.

GB: So you're a local?

JJV: Uh, no, I get lost all the time in New York. I still use my phone for the subway, but you can tell from the way I talk that I'm from New Jersey.

GB: You don't sound like a "Joisy."

JJV: I chipped a tooth so my accent may be a little altered. I just lost a tooth, like, in the front and I think it looks cool and I can't afford to get it fixed.

GB: Yeah, I have a bunch of those too. I'm gonna get some gold teeth eventually.

JJV: I'm a girl - I'm only gonna be cute once. I'm just gonna get fatter, older, uglier, and dumber so I might as well have all my teeth now.

GB: Who's your favorite artist?

JJV: Mike Kelley. Do you know Mike Kelley?

GB: He's from Southern California?

JJV: He's dead - he died last year around age fifty. He did shit in California. He taught at Cal Arts. I think you would like his work a lot. He did it all.

GB: He's a big name, a big guy too.

JJV: Big, fennel, fucked up, smart - the ultimate artist. He did what the fuck he wanted, however the fuck he wanted.

GB: You gotta have a little bank roll to do that I think.

JJV: Yeah, well you need some money to do the shit he was doing. I don't really like painters that much.

GB: Well, let me ask you this - who is your least favorite artist?

JJV: That list is way too long. I think I only have six favorites and a ton falls in the least favorite category. If I remember names or pictures they're good and everything else is like the same shit.

GB: That's a lot of shit.

JJV: Yeah, that's why this is such a bad career choice for me. I just think art is fuckin' bullshit. There's so much pretension around it, especially in New York.

GB: Yeah.

JJV: I think you and I both come from a similar place.

GB: You get bitter as you get older.

JJV: No, I mean I'm already bitter and I'm still goin' through puberty over here, not a good sign (laughs).

GB: Oh, yeah?

JJV: Yeah, I'm 26. I'm a fuckin' baby.

GB: You're 26?

JJV: Yep.

GB: You're just a kid, yeah.

JJV: That's why I'm like, why am I so fuckin' hateful?

GB: You're pretty accomplished for that age. You seem to work in about 4 or 5 different styles. Is that true?

JJV: I went to school and did sculpture. I think sculpture is probably the most "real" because you can walk around it as opposed to a fucking thing on the wall. In terms of painting, I think I work in different styles because whatever I want to paint needs to be addressed differently.

GB: Where'd you go to school?

JJV: Rutgers - big state university.

GB: Did you get a degree?

JJV: Yeah. I got a BFA in visual art and also did a minor in theory and criticism. Two degrees. I'm so grateful I went there. Not everyone went there to become an artist, just normal people too.

GB: Do you think too little or too much money destroys art? Which is worse - no money or too much money?

JJV: Too much money is very bad - it's terrible. Honestly, if you have money, what the fuck are you doing making art? Leave it for people who are struggling. Jesus, I mean, what are you going to express? "Oh shit, I have a nice sweater on!" I mean, c'mon. You look at Jeff Koons and it's so hard to look at the art because you can't separate it from the money involved and invested in the work. I'm not saying people with money don't deserve to make art, but I'm saying there's gotta be some struggle somewhere - be it financial or internal. I think if you have money it usually makes your existence a little easier so I don't trust it as much. That's just where I'm coming from. I came from some money and then I didn't have a place to live for a time - that shit made me a better artist. I think too little money is never a problem. You can make shit out of a stoebch if you really wanna make it. I don't have a studio - I work out of my bedroom.

GB: I was gonna ask you about that.

JJV: I like it that way. My room is so disgusting I'm not allowed to live in it. I can only paint in it and if I'm tired, maybe I'll sleep.

GB: Mmm.

JJV: Too much money is always a problem - with everything.

GB: Do you think the romantic dream of the artist destroying himself or herself for his or her art is dead? You know what I mean? Do you think artists got more sense now?

JJV: Um I think.

GB: It was more for artists a long time ago.

JJV: I mean, drinking and smoking and all that romanticized stuff are for people who don't know how to deal with stress. I think, um, when you go to school, you go to school for art and they teach you this fucking black and white version of the Frank O'Hara partide of an artist. Now we have computers. Who the fuck reads anymore? And there are grants. It's not the same shit. I don't even know what that version of an artist is you know. Oh, it's not my reality. I think it's BS. I think it's all bullshit - myself included.

GB: You think all this new computer stuff is gonna replace art?

JJV: Yeah.

GB: I see a lot of it and there's no art in it - it's all technical.

JJV: The subjective is gone. When I was growing up, I liked records because I thought they were subjective. You could go to the record store and dig through the shit and find one album out of whatever that was good, you know. Now you just fucking look shit up online and you don't have to invest in anything. Even the idea of looking - it's like, "well, I'm not gonna see that art show because I saw it online already."

GB: Do you think the government should support the arts?

JJV: Yes, I mean also, hrrm, I don't know. Coming from a socialist view, which is where I'm coming from, I definitely do. But, I also think of all the assholes who say this is their job and don't take it seriously and that pisses me off too. Agh, yeah, I think they should.

GB: Are you satisfied that the current art viewing public gets your art?

JJV: Do I think they get my art? No.

GB: Are they missing something? Are they seeing something different that you didn't know was in there in your art?

JJV: Well, I hope they get it. I'm not even sure that they do. It's my kind of painting. Well, it's my kind of art. I don't think of myself as a painter - I'm using painting as a tool.

GB: You call yourself an artist rather than a painter?

JJV: Yeah, I don't wanna be a painter. I paint right now because it's the most respected and easily consumed form of visual art. And, the shit I want to do, if they get it that's great. I don't think they'll really get it until the end of my career - the big unreal. So, um, I don't know if they get it or not. I kind of hope they don't get it.

GB: I agree with you on all those points.

JJV: It's gonna take a while - this is round 1 of round M. Painting is what I'm doing right now, but I'm definitely interested in sculpture and video and performance etc.

GB: What kind of paint do you use? Are you using oil or acrylic or what?

JJV: Acrylic. I don't have patience for oil and I don't know how to use it. I really don't. And it's too loaded with historical shit. I use airbrush.

GB: Oh you do? That's interesting.

JJV: My parents are commercial printers. I worked in their silkscreen factory in New Jersey growing up and I was around the production of a lot of corporate merchandise - shirts, hats, tote bags, banners - all kinds of crap like that. That was my visual stimuli. My work focuses on illustration and vernacular, well colloquial design. I use the airbrush because it lends itself to a trade or a skill as opposed to an expressionistic gesture. It's unpolitic and so visually obvious - it is so separate from the implication of a painted mark. It's an efficient, populist way of image production and it probably does come from these experiences from childhood. I also think it's questionable - I mean, who the fuck uses an airbrush?

GB: Your graphic sense is really great. What about your composition? You have classical composition in your pieces I think.

JJV: Oh, well thank! The whole point is for then to be legible or immediate. I don't really like cartoons at all. I didn't grow up loving cartoons. They're just so democratic and they give you everything. You don't have to think. It's not particularly "artful."

GB: Do u have a nickname?

JJV: Yeah, J JV or James. My middle name is Spike Lee - like the director.

GB: Oh yeah, the director?

JJV: Yeah, my parents let me pick it, but they're not hippies - so weird.

GB: Hm, strange. Are you left handed or right handed?

JJV: I'm right handed. I can't do anything with my left hand except like pick my nose or pick up shit. That's what I use my left hand for.

GB: Good one!

JJV: My left hand is just like this extra fuckin' thing, but my right hand is pretty decent. I also have carpal tunnel in both hands.

GB: Oh really, already?

JJV: Allireass!!! I played oello for nine years and I worked as a waitress for a long time so my shit's a little bit fucked up, but I take three Tylenol and then I'm cool.

GB: I think you can fix that carpal tunnel too.

JJV: Yeah, I was working as a painting assistant when I was scheduled to get the surgery, but I couldn't afford to take off for a few weeks and to not paint for maybe longer. It's not hurting now. It's not that bad. It was hurting a little during my show but I have all my fucking body parts so I tell myself to stop being a little baby bitch.

GB: Do you ever work with assistants?

JJV: I hope I never need help.

GB: Yeah, good for you. Do you consider yourself to be a artist,

doing satire?

JJV: Um, the paintings I make are based off of an attitude about things that anger me. The kind of painting I make isn't about painting. I won't paint something unless I really care about it. I don't make anything that is aloof. It can be painted aloof, but I'm not trying to pose fun at things. I'm making work that I think I care about. Maybe that's why people like my work because not everyone likes the things I do. But, I still treat the subjects with respect - they're not about satire or irony or any of that shit. They're all serious.

GB: Oh, yeah? That's good! How about another kind of word - has anybody ever called you an entertainer?

JJV: Oh yeah, hell yeah. You mean as a person or my paintings?

GB: Oh, both.

JJV: Yeah, actually there's so much shit going on in most of my paintings it's kind of like watching TV. When you look at them you can become passive, which is a power thing...hmmmm, you know what I mean? I think entertaining is pretty cool.

GB: It's not a dirty word.

JJV: No, not at all. Who am I making this shit for? Myself? It's about other people, right? Or else it's the most masturbatory thing you can do, making art. I mean art is already indulgent - at least give people some shit to look at.

GB: I wish I could've seen your show. Is it gonna be on the Internet?

JJV: Yes, I can send you images.

GB: Yeah, I'd like to see those.

JJV: There's a bunch of new work in the show - the biggest painting in the book was a bitch for me and you can tell because it looks overexposed and it is. There's a good one of a devil. He's cooking for the last day on earth.

GB: Oh boy, sounds good.

JJV: There's another painting - a pile of dirty dishes, like this weird word Bentley meant Mondrian kind of thing. Another one is called "Beauty Hunter," which is a BMW going off a cliff - I'm driving and my spirit is exiting the car right before I get killed.

GB: Oh, wow! Do you think it's possible to be an artistic success out of NYC?

JJV: Definitely, I mean it depends what success means. There's the New York bubble - when we talk about art we forget there's art being made in spots like the West Indies and they don't do that shit for money - it's part of their cultural integrity. Here, it's part of our financial culture. It's a hard question to answer - I don't think I can realistically answer that.

GB: I don't know either. It'll probably never be answered.

JJV: You can be a dentist and do something artful, shit.

GB: Hmhm. Do you believe in a certain importance in art to counteract the certain craziness of life on earth?

JJV: Oh, yeah. Say I'm sad or happy or nervous or excited or pissed off and I don't know how to express it to my friends or my family, then I can put those feelings into my work. I listen to crogue when I paint because it calms me down. But, some people do it without feeling, based in a dry formality, and make tons of work because they can't sit still. If you can't sit still, do something that helps other people - be a doctor or something.

GB: Yeah, haha, that's right.

JJV: Seriously, if you don't know what to do, do something to benefit other people. I think the kind of work we both do is made for other people!!

GB: YES!

JJV: You use text because you want people to read it.

GB: Right?

JJV: You want them to question their shit, or at least be a little self-aware.

GB: Are you interested in communicating or doing something so far out that it's coded?

JJV: No, I want to communicate for sure. I mean, NYC, we make these pictures for other people to look at. I'd do Bealite paintings if I didn't want people to see them.

GB: Oh yeah.

JJV: Actually, I don't want to communicate - I want to dictate.

"Jamian Juliano-Villani," 2013, Joshua Abelow



Courtesy of the artist



JAMES FUENTES
55 DELANCEY STREET NEW YORK CITY 10002

The Frozen Land by Peter Halley

Originally published in *ES*, New York, No. 12, November 1984

"For death must be somewhere in a society, if it is no longer (or less intensely) in religion, it must be elsewhere; perhaps in this image which produces death while trying to preserve life."

—Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

We see before us a strange and macabre spectacle. The dead no longer lie forgotten in their graves. They rise before us, great numbers of them, in darkened rooms; they glow with light. In one place, they make political speeches. In another, they are telling raucous jokes. Here they speak among themselves, over their feet addressing the living. Great choruses of them dance and sing, sometimes in a serious manner, sometimes lightheartedly, but, miraculously, the dead are not aged or decayed. They appear in full bloom of youth, at the peak of strength and beauty. The living gaze at them in awe and fascination. They listen intently to their every word. Their images appear everywhere, both in public and in the most private recesses of the houses of the living.

And we see that the living inhabit a world that has become bereft of meaning. To the living, life is a farcical marionette show, while death is an overwhelming void. Yet the strange spectacle of the dead holds out a kind of fascinate of hope to the living, a semblance of comfort against their endless dread. Following the example made by the dead, the most powerful among the living devote much time and effort to having their own appearances preserved and recorded. These less fortunate do the same, according to their resources. As they age, many among the living also have their faces and bodies recorded in the image of perfect youth, believing that this resuscitate will ward off the onslaught of death and time. This macabre scene is not a description of some primitive religion, nor is it the product of some horrible science-fiction fantasy. It is life, or what is left of life, in the icy landscape of the twentieth century. It is life in a culture that has been torn from the symbolic, but that is not less obsessed than the symbolic world with death. But here death is not viewed as a reunion with the universal, nor as a return to origins. Here death is seen as an eternal void, and as a fate that must be eluded, no matter what the cost.

And the cost is considerable. It is the cost of the construction of the great frozen facade of pseudo-life, in which transient life is pictured ever more esentially as static and immaterial, in which youth never ends, and movement and speech, those quintessentially ephemeral phenomena, are made to seem permanent. We live today in a culture that denies death, as is often said, but that occupies itself instead with transforming life into a frozen, never-ending simulacrum of itself. All the means of our culture are employed to advance this goal. In the nineteenth century, we have just described, the darkened room is the movie theatre, while the glowing figures are those represented in film or on television. It is said that movies and TV have seized reality away from lived experience. But their role in creating a frozen tundra of pseudo-life is no less important. However, these media represent only the present-day state of the art in a series of technological and ideological inventions for creating simulacra of frozen life. It is a series that goes back to the Renaissance, when the symbolic world first began to crumble. If we can believe the judgments of our historians, up until the time of the Renaissance, men and women consciously prepared themselves for death. They could accept that death's hour had come; they could, with some measure of resignation, ready themselves for their reunion with the universal order. As death, a person would first part from the trials of the temporal world; a person would be brought before the judgment of God. Death was the culminating event of life. It was the time of purification, the time of judgment, the time of reward and damnation.

The Renaissance was the beginning of the end of this order. In the Renaissance, icy facinades of life first began to appear alongside and even intermingling with the symbolic order's treatment of death. Since the Renaissance, the role of these facinades has steadily grown stronger as the symbolic order has steadily weakened.

Three major inventions appeared in the Renaissance that laid the foundation for the creation of the facade of simulated life. These were the portrait, the concept of art, and that of fame. The portrait is usually discussed in its role of documenting the emergence of the sitter the Renaissance: in the portrait, the facial features of the individual are distinguished from those of other members of the same sex and station. However, in the portrait we also see first deployed a technology for creating the effect of stopping time and fooling death. The portrait isolates the particular age of its subject as such as it emphasizes the particular character of his or her features. The subject becomes a kind of human clock whose age can be pictorially frozen and precisely read. Further, the stopping of time is made manifest by the portrait's handling of light. The use of chiaroscuro creates the effect of a specific moment of natural light arrested. And the stopping of light is synonymous with the stopping of time, since for the Renaissance the passage of time and the movement of light were still the same. The portrait thus becomes a portable, static equivalent for the individual's appearance. With the portrait, the image of a person is no longer subject to time; it can transcend death. The timeless simulacrum begins to take the place of the living individual.

The portrait could achieve this wondrous effect by virtue of the specialized skills of the practitioners who created it — by virtue of their art. With the Renaissance, art emerged from its service to the symbolic order. There are no more anonymously destined crucifixions or altars. Art is instead harnessed to the task of "immortalizing" mortal humans. The Renaissance artist actively promoted this idea: Alberti, for example, claimed that painting made "absent men present and makes the dead seem almost alive".

The artist became the high priest in the cult of simulated life. Not only would the work of art immortalize its subject by permanently preserving his or her specific appearance, but, by the beauty the artist created, the work of art would also attract the attention of succeeding generations, further assuring the "immortality" of its subject. This idea of immortality was expressed in the concept of fame. No longer did European culture devote its resources solely to achieving eternal life through pious union with God. The religious concept of afterlife began to be replaced by another idea: that everlasting life could be attained by imprinting the glory of one's deeds on the minds of those who would come after — by the power of one's fame. The preservation of name and reputation replaced the preservation of the body and the soul. Today, there are everywhere reminders of the pervasiveness of this idea. Streets, squares, and buildings are named for generations of statesmen, revolutionaries, and generals. Portraiture, art, and fame outlived for three hundred years to ward off death, but in the nineteenth century a new cluster of inventions appeared to replace the further stretched structures of the symbolic. These new inventions — history, realism, and photography — made possible a fuller actualization of the ideal of timeless life. History established a discourse between the dead and the living in a way far beyond the limits of the idea of fame. History enabled the whole matrix of an era, its economic structures, its conflicts, and its styles to move backward and forward in time. Through history, consciousness could roam hundreds of years into the past. The present could discourse with dead generations. Through history, we are able to believe that the future may one day participate in the debates and crises of the present day.

The nineteenth century also invented realism, in which the idea of the frozen image is likewise extended from the individual to the scene. In a Courbet, for example, the portrait's specificity is extended to the clothing of the peasant girl, the dusty landscape, and even the bony cows. On the one hand, realism widened the focus of the life to be simulated on the other, it advocated a new confidence in the "reality" of this simulacrum. Out of the same impetus came the invention of photography. At the level of procedure, the slow, painstaking techniques by which painting had sought to stop time were replaced by a process in which the camera could instantaneously freeze the scene. The length of time depicted in the image and the time necessary to make the image become the same.

The invention of this fast, mechanical process also served to naturalize the creation of the frozen image. A specialized intermediary was no longer needed. As a result, the photograph began to be considered as long as the living model.

With the advent of photography, it was no longer only images of the wealthy and powerful that were preserved. It evolved that photographs were made of practically everyone. Because of this popularization, the frozen image became increasingly important within the seals of the family, which was also the place to which the treatment of death was also increasingly relocated. Families became repositories of snapshots of their members, both living and dead. Within the family, every stage of life of each individual was documented. There are photographs from infancy, childhood, and the various stages of adulthood. In this way, the stages of life no longer die after they are lived; they become frozen moments against the flux of temporal life. Time starts to lose its meaning in this situation. Writing in *Camera Lucida*, Barthes examines a photograph of his mother at age five, after she had died: "I studied the little girl and at last rediscovered my mother." The aging man has encountered his mother as a child.

All these ideological and technological inventions accumulated during the last four-hundred years have set the stage for the events of the twentieth century. We live today in a world where the dead and the living can no longer be distinguished and where time no longer flows forward. The machinery is now in place for us to turn our backs completely and finally on death.

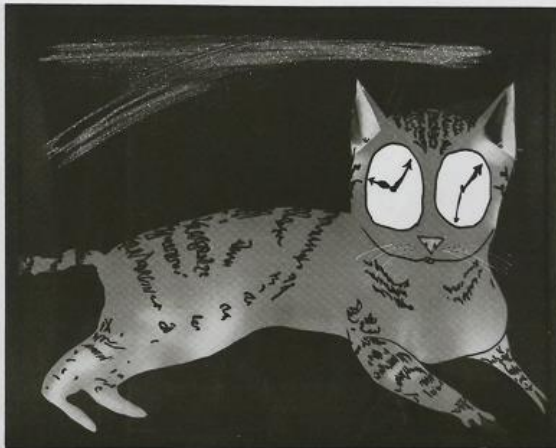
There has been a proliferation of recording media. Suddenly, in film, not only human appearance but also human action can be recorded; movement, the very sign that separates life from death, can now be simulated. At the same time, means for recording the human voice have been devised. Speech and song, the most poignant signifiers of passing time, can now be preserved forever. Around the new media—movies, records, and TV a great cult of homage has sprung up. Huge budgets and incredible resources are allocated to their production. So universally recognized is the importance of making a film that anywhere in the world the authorities will stop traffic and interrupt daily life for it; and there is always a crowd gathered, awed at the spectacle of life being transformed into

this image more permanent than life. Within the media, a complex, arcane culture has arisen, a culture whose goal is to further simulate timeless life. The key figures in this culture are the great "stars" of movies, records, and TV. The star is a superreal everyman with whom we vicariously identify and by whose frozen lives our lives become frozen as well. (Why else do millions of aging men sit Sunday after Sunday in front of their television sets, gazing at the image of endlessly strong, endlessly young athletes?) But the key task of media culture is the final destruction of the old, ordered idea of chronological time. This is accomplished by grafting together the technology of recording and the idea of history. Media culture does this in two ways. It records simulations of the past (and the future) as if they were the present, and, at the same time, it treats film and recordings actually made in the past as if they were part of the present. On the one hand, it creates the historical film; on the other, the culture of old movies. On the one hand, it records symphonies by dead composers; on the other, it distributes the records of dead rock stars. All become part of an achronic present, where time is condensed, its order is abridged, and its meaning is discarded. Paradox abounds in this recordopolis. Is Shirley Temple a child or a woman? Is Lauren Bacall twenty or sixty years old? Is John Wayne dead or alive? In *Birth of a Nation*, the long ago Civil War era is portrayed by actors who have long since died. Death is denied twice over. Our lives are filled with these fantastic images from the media that make it so hard for us to focus on death. Nevertheless, it is true that at a certain point, for the most part, we all do die. But already tiny holes are being made in the wall of death. The dying are scratched from death and kept alive with simulated organs. Genetic engineering is becoming capable of cloning life from life. Meanwhile, Walt Disney, that ultimate master of time, calmly awaits his resurrection at minus 180 degrees centigrade. If the era of modernity continues, if we continue to turn away from death in horror, perhaps through new inventions the dead will walk again; our "macabre scenes" will be played another time at a new level of verisimilitude. Perhaps Walt Disney will one day rise to speak again with those as yet unborn. Perhaps he will someday awaken to a version of the future he himself dreamt up in the distant past.

Note

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, Hill and Wang Publishers, New York, 1981.

"Clock-Eyed Cat," 2009, Brian Belott



Courtesy of the artist

"Red River," 2005, Keith Mayerson



Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York

"Make Up," 2013, Peter LaBier



Courtesy of the artist

Untitled (Arrow in the Eye), 1984, Richard Bosman



Courtesy of the artist and Brooke Alexander, Inc., New York

Interview with Richard Bosman by Ross Simonini

The painter, Richard Bosman was born in Madras, India in 1944 and currently lives in SoHo, New York. He has shown his paintings and prints since 1980, assembling a body of work that unites illustration, plain air painting, comics, and the broad spectrum of figurative art that emerged from New York in the 1980s. Bosman and I corresponded about the influences, ideas, lifestyle and process that led to his early canvases.

RS: Simonini: A lot of your paintings and prints from the '80s depict violent scenes - stabbing, drowning, fighting, hunting, falling. Did you think much about the narrative surrounding these scenes?

RB: Richard Bosman: I'm not quite sure what narrative means in terms of art. I prefer to think of what I do as making images that often imply a past, present and future. The "narrative" often exists outside the picture frame, so it's open for the viewer to interpret. As for the violence, it's partly due to where the images came from and a sense of drama. There was a big shift in the emphasis around 1979 to something perhaps more meaningful than abstraction and drama, to something more personal that reflected the culture around us. At the time I lived near Chinatown and was fascinated by Chinese comic books that I saw in bookstores there. They fit into two broad categories: one was the idea of travel and refugees, and the other were King Fu, which often depicted violent scenes. They were the source for many of my early images and I responded because I spent my early childhood in the Far East. Both themes I used as a starting point for my work. One was of the sea and travel and adventure and the other of violence.

RS: Would you attribute the violence in these paintings to anything particular?

RB: I suppose the source were just the King Fu comics. It seemed like new territory at the time and apart from movies and Francis Bacon it seemed like it hadn't been broached for a while in visual imagery. I was searching for my identity as an artist and the violence came from the sources I used and not from me personally.

RS: Do you wouldn't say you were in a violent state at that time?

RB: No, in fact just the opposite. I think of these paintings as fiction. That's not to say that there's no violence in the world, because divinely there is, but I'm not depicting real violence. It's fictional violence. Since the beginning of painting I think art has dealt with violence as a subject, from the early cave paintings of deer on through all the Crucifixions to Goya and Richter.

RS: In your experience, has the state of mind you were in during painting ever had an effect on the work?

RB: An interesting question. I've always identified paint with the feeling of the substance I'm trying to paint. For instance the fluidity of oil paint and the sea I find particularly compelling and blood too for that matter. In a painting, before it's seen as blood it's a glip of red paint.

RS: Would you say you've worked in discrete periods, stopping and starting styles, subjects? Or has the development of your work felt continuous and fluid? The way your website is set-up suggests the former.

RB: I'm not sure. Obviously I had to arrange my website in some kind of order. I haven't had too many stops and think my progress has been fairly fluid. I try not to repeat myself so my subject matter has changed, which necessitated a change in technique. Perhaps less violence calls for less violent paint handling. The intensity of expressionism is hard to sustain throughout a career.

RS: Did you feel connected to other artists at this point?

RB: I felt connected to Colab. A lot of people there were my friends, though I think I was more on the periphery. It was an exciting time for me as the return to figurative opened up a whole new way of thinking about painting. One could introduce social concerns, politics, personal imagery - things that existed out of the picture frame and that hadn't been depicted for a while and that related to the culture at large. I think David Salle is a tremendous stylist. I had Phillip Guston and Alex Katz as teachers in the '60s. Personally, I was friends with Martha Blumfeld, Dick Miller, Louis Chase and the Colab bunch. March, Marden Hartley and Frans Hals were influences.

RS: Do you remember what art you were thinking about at that time?

RB: Well, there was a Marden Hartley show at the Whitney and, of course, a huge Francis Bacon show at the Modern. De Zeeving and Malcolm Murley were showing regularly. I've always liked Frans Hals and the way the speed of the painting matched the subject. His relationship of general-to-specific is astounding and he's also a terrific tonal

painter - great user of black, greys and white.

I think I was in a sore at the time ... Kind of like tennis players can get. I was in my own world and the paintings seemed to develop without too much thinking on my part. I was new to oil painting since my previous work had been done in acrylic so I had to figure out how to use it. Unlike acrylic I loved the way it could stay fluid for a time and also defy gravity. It was messy, fluid, and could be painted wet into wet. I tended to use large brushes and the paint strokes were visible which gave the work energy. I wasn't interested in rendering but manipulating the whole surface of the painting at once.

RS: Did you have a day job at that time?

RB: From the late '70s to the early '80s I did part-time jobs (now done in seconds on a computer) and drywall. Never was particularly good at speckling but enjoyed the process. I used a palette knife to apply paint in a lot of paintings at that time. It's a fast rough way to apply paint in a visceral manner with an emphasis on a smooth surface.

RS: Some of your subject matter from that time revolves around Noir films. What attracted you to painting those scenes?

RB: Most of the imagery came from my reading habits at the time. I read a lot of Conrad which supplied the sea themes. Later I was into mysteries and thrillers like Simeon Legrand. I've never taken imagery directly from Noir films though it has been an influence. It describes a world of corruption and greed and human failings and often pushed against the idea of good taste. I liked that. To me it seems real and I didn't see why it couldn't be used visually in painting. I would go to the Chinese theatre on Canal St near where I lived and watch Chinese films. They struck me as being violent, supernatural and allegorical. Since I didn't speak Chinese it was a totally visual experience. I felt the same way about Chinese comics.

RS: Were there any specific Noir films you drew from to make the paintings?

RB: I'm not an expert on Noir films though but would like to watch more.

RS: Any Noir films that were important for you?

RB: Not specifically though I think I'm more influenced by the general tone. Also the scale is important to me and the way isolated images can have different or larger associations around them. I also like the emphasis on cropping and closeups.

RS: Did you paint from photography?

RB: In the '80s use of two images were from photographs ... not really. I don't copy images and usually add or take away things. Recently, I've used the Internet as source and sometimes my own photographs. I try to introduce a graphic element which is important to me.

RS: Did you do preliminary sketches for paintings?

RB: I didn't do many drawings as such but often did rough color studies in acrylic on paper. I had an installation of drawings at Brooke Alexander gallery that were done in charcoal. They related one to another sequentially like a comic book or film. Of course, printmaking, especially woodcuts, have been a way of drawing. What I particularly like is the resistance of the wood and the way the image arrives all at once. The wood grain gives so much and it forces a simplicity that I find exciting.

RS: Was your studio practice different then than it is now?

RB: Not too much. I mask off areas which I didn't use to do. Probably use less paint. Used to love Hocr paint that came in jars and was cheap.

RS: Would you say your work has changed since the '80s?

RB: I hope so. My life has changed and the '80s were a particular time and place. I get excited by new territory in terms of subject matter and hope my technique has evolved and become somewhat more refined to suit the new content.

RS: What was the process of making "Arrow in the Eye"?

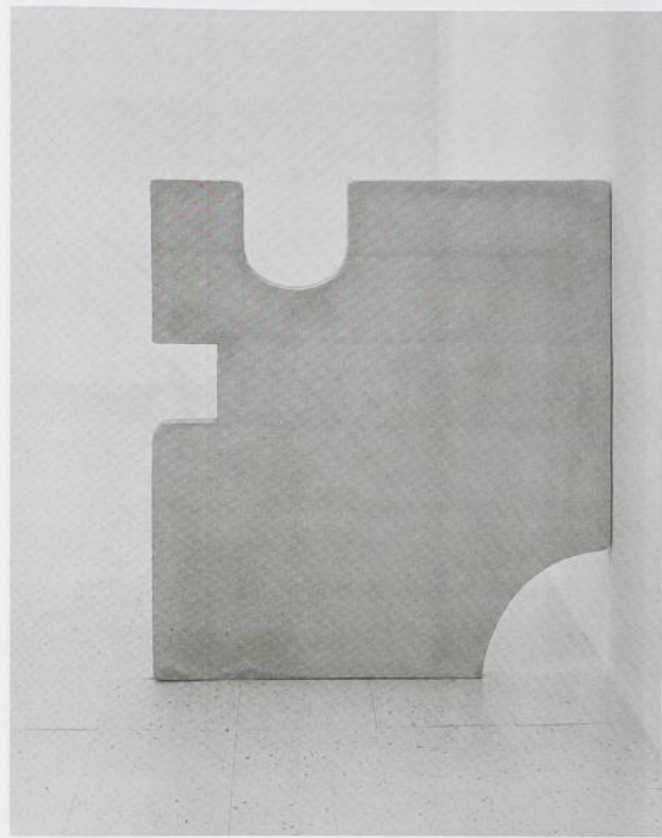
RB: I did a series of monster heads "Arrow in the Eye" was one. It seems like an unpleasant idea but I wanted to see how far I could push it - where one would get a visceral reaction in the gut, rather than optically. I went to school in Hastings which of course is famous for the battle of 1066. Harold was killed by an arrow in his eye and William Ist assailed the throne.

Interview with Richard Rosen by Ross Siniavski
"Love at First Sight," ca. 1957, George Grosz



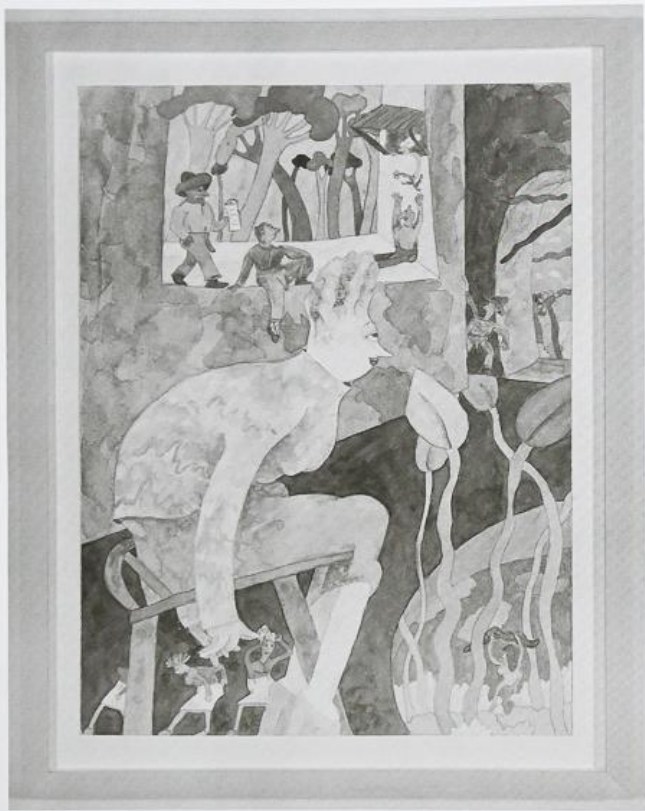
Courtesy of David Nolan Gallery, New York

"Stock Prop," 2010, Keith Sonnier



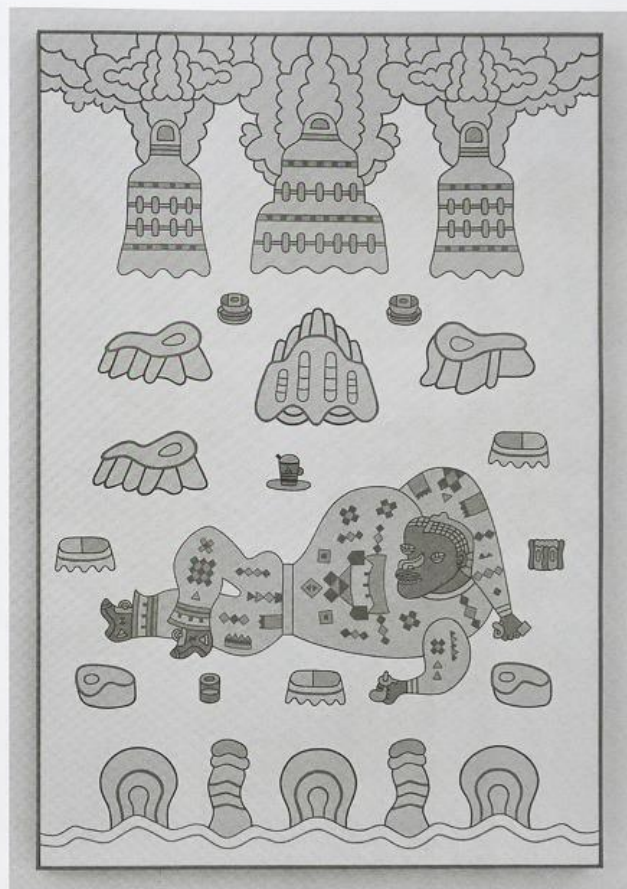
Courtesy of The National Exemplar, New York

"Sit and Look," 2012, Gladys Nilsson



Courtesy of The National Exemplar, New York

"Uh-Oh! Missed the Last Armadillo Outta Here," 2013, Karl Wirsum



Courtesy of Derek Eller Gallery, New York

"Narrow Passage," 2004, Ken Price



Courtesy of The Drawing Center, New York

"I MISS YOU BITCH," 2008, Joshua Abelow



Courtesy of the artist and James Fuentes, New York

"Petrella's," 2013, Petrella's Imports



Courtesy of Petrella's Imports

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joshuaabelow.blogspot.com

Editor-in-Chief Joshua Abelow
Managing Editor Petrella's Imports, New York
Designer Francesca Capone

"Outer Space," 1968



Courtesy of Kerry Schuss, New York

"Planned Anticipation," 1963, Vern Blosom



Courtesy of the artist and EDGE STREET, New York

"Abelow," 2013, Joshua Abelow



ist