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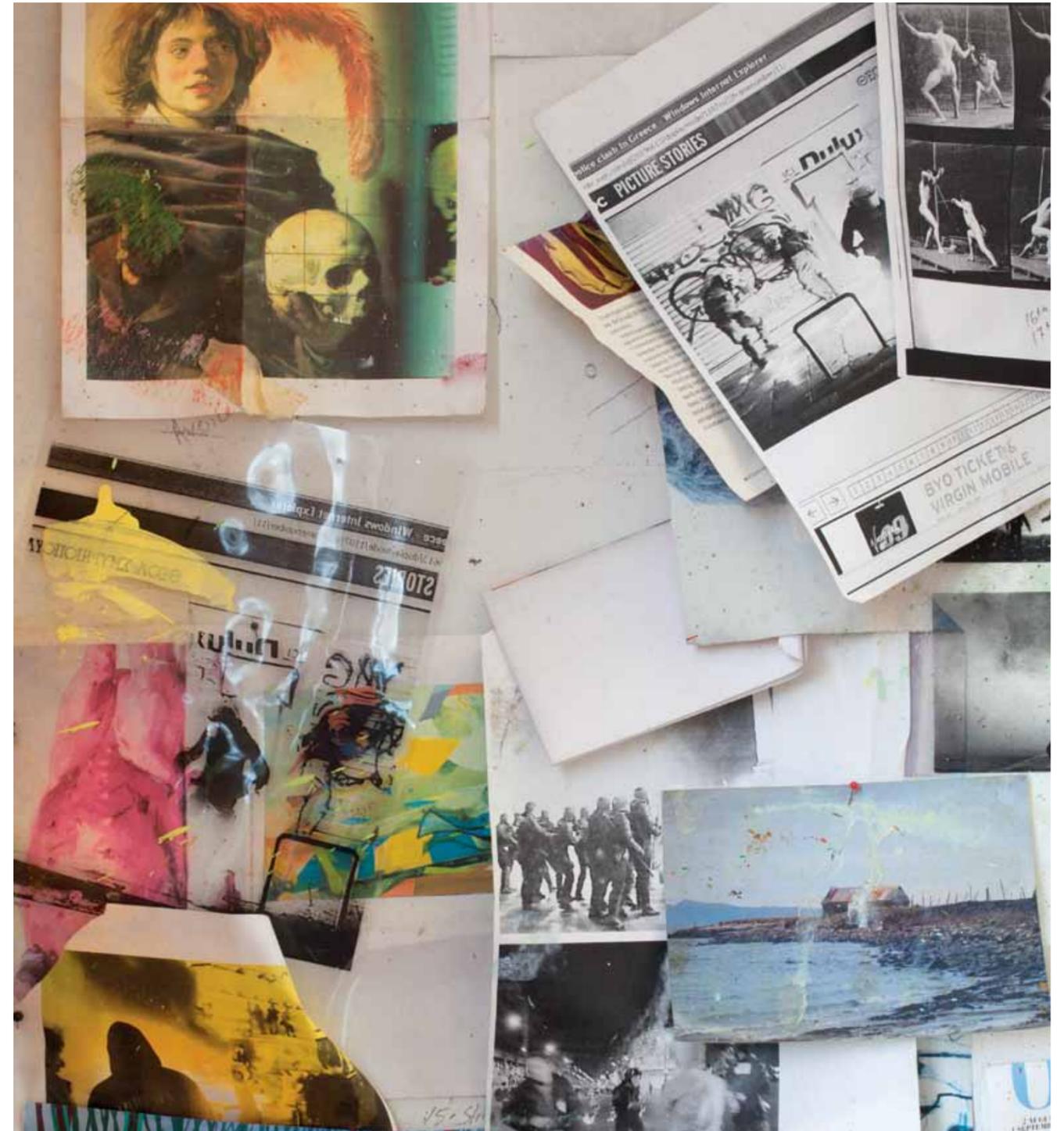
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From page 2
Self Portrait Study 2001
76 x 76cm Oil on linen COLLECTION OF MICHAEL HARDING & ERIC CARSON





Foreword

This publication celebrates Stefan Dunlop and his trade as a modern painter. Over the past ten years Stefan has engaged with the act of painting to produce aesthetically challenging and complex works.

The project grew from a chance opportunity when Dr Richard Brettell from the University of Texas saw Stefan's paintings featured in a magazine article and invited the artist to participate in the University's CentralTrak residency program in 2010.

Originally from New Zealand, the artist has lived and studied painting and drawing in Brisbane, London and New York and has exhibited widely in these cities. His work is held in many private collections in Australia and overseas.

Stefan Dunlop is a mostly figurative painter. His subjects are often unidentified people positioned in invented or borrowed landscapes, or suspended in vastly decorative though empty colour-fields. Groups of figures are often viewed in the act of undertaking something monumental, and both the theatrical and dramatic are familiar recurrences in Stefan's images.

His early still-life and portrait paintings also have dramatic overtones emphasised by stark, contrasting illumination and isolation of the subject. He draws from historical models depicting human endeavour and our struggle with nature. The major painting 'Ships' completed for the University of Texas residency, mirrors these ideas, depicting men in two wooden boats desperately battling the sea for their survival as colour explodes across the canvas in muscular swatches.

His tonal and highly graphic style has a reductive effect on any narrative thoughts, subtly bringing the fundamental elements of image-making to the surface with seemingly simple structures while also allowing the viewer a glimpse of the painting's complexity.

Stefan Dunlop's performance is hard to define which is the whole point and purpose of the painter who, like a tradesman, does not set out to entertain any particular emotion, theory or meaning for his art.

Szalla Interview

"I just had to do a talk on my work and bored the shit out of myself. Nice one. Contemporary art can go fuck itself...I'm going to paint."

Dunlop, April 26th 2006

Interview with Jason D. Szalla – Beyond The New York School

J.D. Who are your artistic precursors?

S.D. Everybody, I think I'm very much aware of the tradition of western painting and my place in it. You are not alone with painting as it's a game played by yourself and with others. There is an element of competitiveness.

J.D. What other artist/artists or art has affected you?

S.D. Well that drifts around depending on what particular series I'm involved with at a particular time. Perhaps a constant is that I like to look at all work available across history up to and including the present giving equal weight to say Rubens as to Neo Rauch. The point being one eye on the contemporary and one on history. I'm not so fixated on the contemporary.

J.D. You have a degree in finance? Banking? Does this inform your painting in anyway?

S.D. Nope

J.D. As far as your New York Studio School studies...did you enjoy your time there?

S.D. Yeah that was crazy. It was important for me as it was my first step in a conscious decision to become a full-time painter. It was funny and reminded me of the early 80s show "Fame", everybody getting around with egos and ambitions far outweighing their realities. The teaching was good and I met my first serious art people. The Studio School taught a fundamental, observationist based figurative style and that discipline has stuck with me.

I remember I was standing outside the school there one morning with a friend. Somebody walked by disssing us by saying "wannabe artists". My mate turned to me and said, "yeah he's right, we do want to be artists."



Session 7 2005
140 x 124cm Charcoal on paper

- J.D. After this, what do you consider your first major exhibition? How did this affect your viewpoint of your work at this time?
- S.D. Well I think my first major show was at the University of London Fashion Space Gallery. I think I looked at it and thought "Mmmm you might be able to paint." You know I got a feeling from the show. Somebody wrote in the gallery notebook "More style than substance" and again I agreed with the sentiment.
- J.D. And now?
- S.D. You know with painting it's always the next show, the next painting, the next idea, more, more, more.
- J.D. There seems to be this pervasive, provincial attitude in New York City that the future of art, specifically painting, belongs to a generation that is eternally younger than Jesus. Do you believe this being born in 1972?
- S.D. I think the obsession with youth is not restricted to painting. It's pretty lame really but I do like hanging out with art students, they have good ideas, and the obsession is not completely misplaced. The fountain of youth eh? More seriously I respect painter's with long careers who have been through the creative crisis several times and changed their style during that time. To me there is nothing worse than a singular style. Gerhard Richter interests me in this way, people are a bit sick of him being over exposed but I keep coming back to his work and it just blows me away, the scale and ambition of his life project. David Hockney is another that springs to mind.
- J.D. Is this a particularly New York viewpoint? Or do you see this psychosis globally?
- S.D. Oh definitely globally but it really doesn't bother me, it's too easy to get caught up in all of that and it's just completely non-productive.
- J.D. Does being a father, a family man influence your work?
- S.D. Well look, life, family, day jobs, leaking roofs all need to be dealt with, you know that's life; that's it and from that I try to carve out this cave to work in, this time slot for the work and really it's intensely personal in that very specific practice of painting. I think the two things can complement each other although that is often not immediately obvious.
- J.D. Many say painting is a solitary endeavor like writing fiction or poetry...do you believe this?
- S.D. Yeah I do, pretty much completely, I don't know why but I think it is. I mean there are some collaborations, perhaps most famously between Basquiat and Warhol but on the whole I think it fails. I remember talking to you about a collaboration between yourself and Bucklin where you ended up painting each other out the whole time and the whole thing just degenerated. I think this is the general experience had by most. I know I couldn't do it.
- J.D. Not to go completely off the scale, but what do you think of the never ending "white cube" gallery space, the clinically sterile but successful art fairs in which you exhibit and "promote" your paintings?
- S.D. Shit dude it's the system. Honestly it's just the system right now and you have to try and be clever to play it. People bang on about this gallery system and okay fair enough, but painting has always worked under some kind of restrictive overlay and you just have to navigate under it.

Past systems have included the 18th century French Salon system that still managed to produce Delacroix and, via agitation, the Impressionists.

I mean money and art are intrinsically linked. Michelangelo worked for the Pope, Rubens worked for Kings, then things changed. Vermeer worked for wealthy private collectors. Van Gogh has a lot to answer for, he created the romantic ideal of the starving artist, selling nothing and working "for the art"



Jennifer & Claire 2001
153 x 122cm Oil on canvas PRIVATE COLLECTION

but the reality is that art history rarely works this way. The bottom line is that to make paintings costs a lot of money and they need to be paid for. It's a nuisance but they do.

- J.D. Your work is so dynamic and beautiful in the context of real architecture and private homes...it seems to have a pulsating life of its own...How do you personally access this in relation to what we have just addressed? The gallery space exhibitions or the global art fairs?
- S.D. You know something; I personally love the white walled gallery, I think the paintings work best in this context. So much energy goes into the painting itself that I'm kind of too exhausted to deal with the architecture as well. The white wall thing is pretty much a 20th/21st century thing but I think it works for the art of our time.
- J.D. Look Stef, after knowing you and experiencing your work for over ten years, I like to think of you as an explorer, as being adventurous, yet you have never seemed too influenced by the hype and fashion of contemporary art. So, how do you stay on top of your own game?
- S.D. Now we are getting down to brass tacks! There are very few people who really know what good painting is and if you set out your stall as a painter you have to believe that you have a pretty good idea about it. So you measure your work and its success against other painter's work, not against what is said about their work or where it is hung etc. but against good work. You know what this is; you see it because with painting you use your eyes, not your mouth. So you go into a gallery and see a de Kooning that blows you away and think shit I need to lift my game, or you see a Stephen Bush and think okay, there is an entirely new level of colour there. This is how it works. The whole painting thing is held together by a very small number of good painters.
- J.D. Beyond the visual, do you read contemporary fiction? Go to plays? Do you read poetry or listen to the latest Rolling Stone top ten? Does any of the contemporary literature or music come into your paintings?
- S.D. You know I like to think not but of course you are right. It seeps into the work and I think the narrative element in my work is increasing over time. I use the Internet a bit but oddly in this digitally hyped age I also use a lot of printed matter. The Internet/Google is a super broad search, no focus, misleading. I go to the State Library and pull out old picture books on mountaineering, animals in motion, shipwrecks or whatever. The images in these books completely obliterate what you can get off the net and the imagery is richer, rarer and just not available digitally. You know we are in the middle of cultural convergence and I think that it's boring to be all looking at the same shit.
- I also read contemporary art magazines, to see what everybody else is up to and enjoy the criticism of Matthew Collings over say Jerry Saltz.
- J.D. Again, this may be a tangent, but fuck! There seems to be some great, almost visionary distance between you and the subjects in your paintings. Even when the object is as intimate as a steak or human skull; you as executioner of the work seem to be eons away. Can you say anything about this "space" between you as the painter and your elusively simple everyday subject matter?
- S.D. That's interesting because those works you mentioned are all from direct observation in the still life tradition. As you yourself know, the time spent alone with an object when painting it from observation is completely outrageous and you get to know the object like nobody else. I agree those works have a different feel from work completed from projections, imagination and grid-ups. But beyond that I have no explanation. It must be related to the time under observation.



Bon Voyage 2003

184 x 128cm Mixed media on canvas

COLLECTION OF CELIA McLEAN

J.D. Do you “feel” for the subjects you choose to paint or is it simply something purely “physical” with the medium itself? Am I being too vague about a possible architecture or compositional hierarchy that drives you intuitively?

S.D. I think you kid yourself that it’s purely “something cool to paint” but in reality there is a small narrative “feel” element. As an example I’ve got this idea to paint an exploding airliner because I’m really into explosions at the moment and the dynamic compositional qualities that they present and the intrinsic energy they have and also the free form of painting that they allow. The airliner part I think would put the explosion into its most extreme format, so this is the idea, based completely on what you have called a “compositional hierarchy” but I cannot deny that there is also something else going on.

J.D. Have you ever thought of yourself as a “conceptual painter”? Or maybe a “classicist”? Your ideas of colour seem to be beyond the time you actually live in, yet are still rooted in the masters of the past?

S.D. Well you know at the Studio School they kept telling us that every painting was conceptual, (which by the way I never understood). Look I’m a classicist, I don’t think that can be denied, definitely not conceptual. The whole conceptual thing confuses the hell out of me. I’m an object-orientated painter. The object, the painting itself, the result is what matters. The concept, the process, the ideas behind it do not. To me the proof of this is that even now we really have no idea of the concept behind a great historical painting but the object survives and astounds us. In the end the object prevails.

J.D. So what is it exactly about painting that keeps you painting?

S.D. Well I think that you have this idea to do something, like for example the explosion painting, and you might work towards that over a year or whatever and then one day it’s done and for me personally that’s it. That way of working cannot be repeated and I don’t think it would be even possible to repeat it. So the idea has been played out and you need to move towards another idea about painting and what you are trying to achieve. So it seems to be this kind of morphing, evolving idea about what you are trying to achieve. The key with painting is that there is no end, it’s never conquered. Right now I’m looking at some more messy painting, I’m trying to accept imperfection as a way to give the work more freedom.

J.D. Because you exhibit regularly and sell to collectors; what do you think brings the public out to experience your work? Is it sheer scale? Colour? What makes the work sell? And ultimately, what do you hope they walk away with after experiencing or purchasing your paintings?

S.D. Oh no the sales word, I thought that was taboo? You need to talk to Damien Hirst. I don’t know how to answer this. You just stick your work out there and hope somebody gets it. I think the work is kind of hard, there is a masculine, garish, saturated romantic feel to it and it’s not easy for people. I find the work takes time. If people dig it they need to spend a lot of time with it. It’s an edgy, cagey kind of process. I’m lucky to have had a handful of people that have supported me to date, got me this far.

J.D. Given you were born in Invercargill, New Zealand, and most New Yorkers don’t even fucking know where that is...how has your birthplace come into your work?

S.D. I did begin painting there in “splendid isolation” as indeed I work now. Cut off from the “Art World” or rather at a safe distance. I remember at about 15 years of age looking at Picasso, Modigliani, Soutine. They really excited me back then. I had no interest in or knowledge of contemporary art.



Andrew 2 2003

182 x 142cm Oil on canvas

COLLECTION OF GEOFFREY & SUSAN ELDER

J.D. *"The visual language is part of the way we think, but not really work based around style but around a search for a certain emotional, psychological or physical need."* I ran across this quote the other day in a magazine that exploits itself as well as its contributors as "the new luxury." Given my prejudice toward you and your painting, I felt that this was yet another throw-back to the New York School shlock, yet on a Jeffry Deitch/Koonsian scale. I thought Greenberg and Pollock were dead, but apparently not? How do you feel about this considering your painting seems to be about "work"?

S.D. To me I feel like I've got this super urgency to get work completed, this constant full-on stress level to work. Never enough time, never ever ever enough time. I think it's a negative thing in terms of painting but I try to use it. I think that that is the key with painting. If you are isolated then you need to use that in your work. If you don't have time then milk the stress and put the energy into your work. It reminds me of a list Diebenkorn did about how to paint, do you remember that? One of the things on the list was "Try not to get bored but if you do, use it's destructive potential" or words to this effect. I understand what he meant by this.

I'm too busy with family, work, painting to intellectualise too much about the work and this is my advantage. It allows me to avoid the shlock... If you are part of the system use the system, if not use the fact that you are not. You have to be aware that during your career you will move in and out of the system, in and out of fashion.

J.D. Before I move on to a complete philosophical rant, let me ask one last... Do you believe in the painter's ability to manifest beauty?

S.D. Oh yes, completely.

Szalla interview with Stefan Dunlop, January 2011.

Szalla



J.D. Szalla is a painter, writer and director born in 1972, who grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and has been living and working in New York City since 1999. He currently works at the Guggenheim Museum to pay the bills, while continuing to develop new work in theater, film and contemporary art.

He is presently editing an up-coming Chapbook of his recent poetry based on the dive-bars of New York City entitled: "If you run out of toilet paper ask the bar tender for some more." J.D. lives in Brooklyn with his partner, Erica Marie Miranda and daughter Izzy Stardust.



8 West 8th Street 2001
Pencil on paper ARTIST COLLECTION

Man With a Quilted Sleeve (After Titian) 2003
148 x 127cm Oil on canvas COLLECTION OF BEN & CASSIE MERCER





Old Master Lesson 1 & 2 2003 Diptych each 180 x 142,5cm, overall 180 x 285cm Oil on canvas PRIVATE COLLECTION



Explorers 2 2003 after photograph by Mr Alfred Gregory, a climbing member and official photographer of the 1953 British first ascent of Everest.
208 x 198cm Oil on canvas COLLECTION OF RENEE LEWIS & ANDREW STAFFORD



Explorers 1 2003 after photograph by Mr Alfred Gregory, a climbing member and official photographer of the 1953 British first ascent of Everest.
127 x 214cm Oil on canvas PRIVATE COLLECTION



Explorers 3 2004
240 x 170cm Oil on canvas PRIVATE COLLECTION



Head 2 2003
127 x 127cm Oil on canvas PRIVATE COLLECTION



Head 1 2003
127 x 127cm Oil on canvas PRIVATE COLLECTION





Crowd Notes

"Crowd" began its life sourced from a black and white photograph depicting a large gathering from the early 60s, some sort of radical student protest at an Italian university campus.

What I liked was the way it portrayed a large group in a dramatic circumstance, and something seemed to be happening: conflict, argument, and aggression, something significant and perhaps fundamental to our nature and relevant to our times. I'd been looking for such an image for several months. In fact the idea had been brewing for years, initiated after seeing the late work of Bruno Fonseca, Gericault and Goya. I wanted to take on some of the big, multi-layered figurative challenges that good painters of the past have tackled. I also wanted to see if I was up to it.

The piece began well enough. But after several weeks it became clear that it couldn't be resolved. I had come a long way with the colour but something was lacking in the composition. If the balance and structure of a piece is wrong, everything else is superfluous. I decided to cut the canvas down and create a smaller painting, in effect a study. Having failed initially on the large-scale canvas, I started re-arranging certain figures in the painting. One figure in particular was "mirrored" or "flipped" to the other side of the canvas and I could see the piece begin to work. The colour influence came from some of the paintings in the National Gallery, London. I'd noticed in old master paintings the use of robes or togas as a device for the abstract distribution of colour, which then builds a rhythm.

The Titian retrospective of 2003 was also influential – his early stuff has these huge patches of unmodulated, intensely saturated colour. A very solid colour paired with a very solid composition and shape. All this comes into my painting in a modern way. But interestingly, I'm never sure if these ideas have truly influenced the production of a piece, or emerged after the painting is finished. What I do know is that "Crowd" is largely decorative, and I like the interplay of a subtle narrative within a purely pictorial device.

Extract from *Talking Pictures*, Interview by Will Cantopher, BBC London 2004.



Crowd 2004
163 x 229cm Oil on linen PRIVATE COLLECTION