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very curator, I suspect, wants to be an eye-opener, wants to hear whispers of "Eureka!" wafting through the exhibition space, or down the museum corridor. Douglas Eklund must have heard them, in 2009, when he organized THE PICTURES GENERATION exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. At least, I

hope he did. The show brought together such artists as Cindy Sherman, Robert Longo, Richard Prince, Sherrie Levine, and David Salle to explore a movement that merged the opposing strains of Conceptual and Pop Art. Since Douglas Crimp's original, 1977 snapshot of a show, there has been precious little institutional attention trained on this group. In terms of premise, Eklund's version was so simple, so elephant-in-the-room-obvious. Yet, there was so much that was not obvious. I find myself thinking about this mind-expanding installation quite a bit, often referring to its catalogue pages.

What struck me about THE PICTURES GENERATION show was the recontextualization of a history that is not so long ago. For instance, I have known James Welling, and his work, for ages. However, what I did not know was that Jim had appropriated imagery of cowboys as early as 1974. I had also never seen David Salle's 1973 UNTITLED (COFFEE DRINKERS) in person. I was struck by the similarities of the artist's gazing female figures to those in one of my favorite series by Richard Prince. Was Richard aware of David's COFFEE DRINKERS? Or, was this simply something in the air? Was one trying to out-appropriate the other? Who knows. However, Richard, as David himself graciously acknowledges in our interview, "did it better" by enlarging scale and ratcheting up the drama.

The switch clicked for me when seeing David Salle's work in the Met show. Until then, I had not been fully aware of how "multi-media" David's earliest paintings actually were. Although I was familiar with his BEARDING THE LION (1977), I had never experienced the sound element (Tim Buckley's "Song To The Siren") or pulsing light component of the work in the flesh. For those who thought of Salle strictly within the Mary Boone School of Schnabel/Fischl/Clemente - a high octane 80's painters' bootcamp - this was quite a revelation. It was Eklund's

exhibition that situated Salle, for the first time, squarely within a tradition that has very little to do with painting, and everything to do with film, video, and multimedia.

Thinking of THE PICTURES GENERATION show along a broader trajectory, I am reminded of a work by Christian Boltanski conceived for Pittsburgh's Mattress Factory in 1991. Titled ARCHIVE OF THE CARNEGIE INTERNATIONAL, 1896-1991, this floor-to-ceiling installation documented the 5,632 artists whose work had been included in the 51 previous editions of the Carnegie International. The names of once-famous artists were individually inscribed on 5,632 cardboard boxes, with the obscure practitioners greatly outweighing the names of those who regularly appear on today's museum and auction house walls. Boltanski's message? Most contemporary artists, though critically popular at a given moment, do not necessarily make it into the annals of art history. Like fame, longevity is elusive.

David Robbins drives home this point in his iconic work, TALENT (1986). The installation is a grid of 18 black and white portraits of 80's artists, both well-known and lesser-known. I have met so many of these figures - Jenny Holzer, Allan McCollum, Steven Parrino, Jeff Koons, Gretchen Bender, Robert Longo, and Ashley Bickerton - over the years. While a few have achieved superstardom, others show regularly at prestigious galleries and museums.

Some are no longer with us. I vividly remember seeing Gretchen's seminal 24-monitor-projection screen work, TOTAL RECALL, at The Kitchen in 2013, roughly ten years after her passing. We miss you, Gretchen. Steve. Sarah. Mike... Sometimes, longevity simply means staying alive.

David Salle addresses career longevity in his fabulously titled article, OLD GUYS PAINTING. The ARTnews essay begins, "Painting is one of the few things in life for which youth holds no advantage. The diminutions wrought by aging... are offset among painters by fearlessness, finely honed technique, and heightened resolve. A ticking clock focuses the mind." The piece goes on to forensically examine the painting processes of Georg Baselitz (age 78), Alex Katz (age 88) and Malcolm Morley (age 84). Despite differing practices, the common thread amongst these three venerable artists is what I define as integrity, and David cites as a "moral unity." His is an eloquent argument for knowing oneself, honing skill, and just, well, sticking with it...

► **Silver 1**  
2014  
pigment transfer on linen  
84 x 60 inches  
Art © David Salle, licensed by WGA,  
NY courtesy Skarabk, NY.  
Photography credit: John Beers



**AS IF:** I loved your article in a recent issue of *Art News*, *Old Guys Painting*. In it, you wrote, “Painting is one of the few things in life for which youth holds no advantage. The diminutions wrought by aging... are offset among painters by fearlessness, finely honed technique, and heightened resolve. A ticking clock focuses the mind.”

David Salle: Thanks.

**AS IF:** I thought that was an absolutely beautiful, fantastic title. I loved how you got into the formal aspects of each of the artists – Georg Baselitz, Malcolm Morley, and Alex Katz. It is so well written.

DS: It seemed to me that no one had really described Malcolm’s paintings from a kind of inside-the-paint point-of-view. It was a challenge – it’s hard to write about his work and bring it to life on the page, but I’m glad I did it.

**AS IF:** Have you spoken to Georg, Malcolm... Or Alex?

DS: Alex called to say he loved it. I haven’t heard from the other two yet. I’m told that Baselitz doesn’t read English, but I imagine someone read him the high points.

**AS IF:** It would be interesting to hear Malcolm and Georg’s reactions. While reading the article, I was wondering if you consider yourself an “*Old Guy Painting?*”

DS: Well, I think when an artist writes something about another artist, they’re always also writing about themselves. It’s part of the subtext. I just thought the title was descriptive and funny. I asked both Alex and Malcolm if they had any objections to it. Of course, they didn’t. They too thought it was funny.

**“WHEN YOU WRITE, YOU HAVE TO TAKE ‘OWNERSHIP’ OF WHAT YOU CHOSE TO FOCUS ON. IT’S A COMMITMENT, AND IT REFLECTS WHO YOU ARE.”**

**AS IF:** The title is almost filmic. Think *Grumpy Old Men*, Or *The Bucket List*.

DS: Yes, exactly so. It’s very accessible. My editor, Sarah Douglas, was a little bit leery. She didn’t want to offend anyone. I said, “Don’t worry, I’ve cleared it with the guys.”



#### **Trappers**

2013  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
84 x 129 inches

Art © David Salle, licensed by WGA.

NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY.

Photography credit: John Bean



#### **Fishing**

1998  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
64 x 96 inches

Art © David Salle, licensed by WGA.

NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY.



Alex is 88 years old; I mean, he has a right to be called ‘old guy.’ And it’s the “guy” that makes it funny. You can’t say the “Old Men”, or “Old Painters.”

**AS IF:** You have been writing a lot these days.

DS: I’ve been writing a lot, yes.

**AS IF:** How does that inform your practice, or solidify things, in your mind? How does it relate to your day job?

DS: It’s hardly news. Many people have said some version of this: You don’t really know what you think about something until you sit down to write about it. You don’t know until you try to describe how something works, and whether or not it works on its own terms, and what those terms are. So it can’t help but inform what I do in the studio, whether it’s later in the day, or the next week, or overall. When you write, you have to take

‘ownership’ of what you chose to focus on. It’s a commitment, and it reflects who you are. It reminds me of something Charles Saatchi said to me years ago about collecting. It was when he had just done his Alex Katz show – probably 20 years ago.

**AS IF:** I remember seeing that exhibition [Alex Katz: *Twenty-Five Years Of Painting*] in Saatchi’s Boundary Road space.

DS: You could say that show was the fruit of Charles beginning to collect Alex’s work in a deep way. There has always been this underlying... I don’t know if it’s criticism, exactly, but controversy, about why Charles has to own all these paintings. Why can’t he just do the shows, and explain his point of view? He thinks there’s a difference between what a curator does, which is to borrow things, sort of no strings attached, and someone who actually commits to acquiring all the work they show. Not only of

course the financial commitment that it entails, but also the effort involved in finding, selecting, etc. Charles said it was only by going through the whole process – and living with the work on a regular basis – that he came to understand the art itself. For him, it was really an act of understanding. From that vantage point, you’re in a position to make a statement about the work. Writing is similar. Although I’m not collecting anything, it’s related. You have to think about things in a different way. I’m also interested in description for its own sake, as a creative thing in its own right.

**AS IF:** You had mentioned that you were on deadline. Was it for the article, or is there a book?

DS: Well, the essays from the past few years are being collected for a book that Norton is bringing out [publisher WW Norton & Company]. It’s set to come out in the fall of 2016.





#### Good Bye D

1982

Acrylic on canvas

112 x 86 inches

Art © David Salle, licensed by WAGA.

NY courtesy Skaradeh, NY

**AS IF: Oh! Fantastic. What are you calling it?**

DS: "How To See".

**AS IF: Awesome... However, I did think that, perhaps, you were writing your memoirs. Just out of curiosity, is that in the works?**

DS: I am also – very slowly - writing a memoir-ish thing. It's going to take a long time.

**AS IF: I can't wait to read it. By the way, on the subject of memoirs, did you read Eric Fischl's *Bad Boy: My Life On And Off The Canvas*?**

DS: Of course I read it.

**AS IF: I found the book so interesting because it focused quite a bit on Eric's process and practice.**

DS: I think that, apart from everything else, Eric's book would be very helpful reading for any young artist or art student. Anyone in art school would empathize with Eric's description of trying to define what one's work is about all the confusion and false-starts.

**AS IF: You teach?**

DS: No regular gig, but I like to do it, now and then.

**AS IF: I graduated from university at the tail end of the 1980s. I am always interested in hearing tales from that era... Can you tell me more about what it was like?**

DS: You mean the 80s? It's become so mythologized. The thing is, every decade actually begins in the previous one. Or rather, the ground-work for a shift in sensibility – which gets assigned to the new decade – is laid down by conditions that exist earlier. What we think of as the 80s really began in the 70s, and was more or less finished by 1987. The 90s began in the late 80s, etc. What that means in the narrative of the 80s is that the artists of my generation got out of school in the early or mid-70s – which was formative in its way. These people – me included - kicked around New York for some years in a relatively unwelcoming art world. The economics of it was not on our side. Galleries were not interested in young artists. Few people were going around to studios, let alone to art schools...

**AS IF: Now, gallerists pounce on the art schools... Like vultures. It's the exact opposite.**

DS: In the time we're talking about, galleries didn't look for new artists because they didn't need any. And, you know, all this started to change. I supposed there are all kinds of reasons... It's a confluence of things having come together. The media started to take an interest.

**AS IF: Speaking of media, I think Douglas Eklund's *The Pictures Generation* exhibition at The Met had resulted in a recontextualization of your work.**

[Organized in 2009 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art curator, Douglas Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984* spotlighted a number of "Pictures Generation" artists, including Richard Prince, Sherrie Levine, Cindy Sherman, and Jack Goldstein, among others.]

DS: Doug did a great job. I just read part of the catalog recently to my step-daughter. She's crazy about Cindy's work.

**AS IF: I want to talk about John Baldessari because he is sacred territory. What was it like studying with John?**

DS: You use the word "studying." It might be the wrong verb. One hung around with John, one observed John... one kind of helped out John.

**AS IF: What was his class like? How many people were in your class?**

DS: I can't remember. It was a good sized class, ten, or twelve, fifteen people. It was loosely structured – people would bring in work and we would talk about it. John would hold back and give his opinion last, if at all. There were many visiting artists. John would bring pretty much anyone who was passing through LA to come talk about their work. We were horribly bratty kids. Our class invented this thing, which later became kind of widespread at art schools, a kind of art school version of "get the guests". We asked the toughest, most impolite questions, interrogating people's intentions – you know, why did they think what they were doing was

important? I mean really asking the most inappropriate, rude questions - and we were just kids. The correct answer to any of the questions should have been "Fuck you." (Both laughing)

**AS IF: Did any of the guests ever say that to you?**

DS: Bruce Nauman would not play ball. He laughed along with us for a while and then just sat on the floor and wouldn't say a word.

**AS IF: I always love these stories because they tell a very important sub-story.**

DS: Well, I guess the thing about how the 70s bled over into the 80s is just how loose and unstructured that time was. It was kind of the Wild West. Journalists have tended to exaggerate both the amount and the effect of money on the scene. The money thing was really the difference between being able to eat occasionally, and being able to have a tab at a place where you could have a hamburger and a beer on a regular basis. The point I'm trying to make is that things were kind of just wide open. There was very little hierarchy.

**AS IF: Speaking of a burger and a beer, was there a particular hangout at CalArts? Where did people go?**

DS: Well at CalArts, there wasn't. There was just the school. When I first got to New York, there were a few artists' bars; places where you could trade work for a tab. That's really how people survived for quite a few years. To go back to Nauman for a minute - to give you an idea of how casual the world was when I was eighteen or nineteen, I looked in the phone book and I found his phone number. This is before he visited the school. I called him up out of the blue and said, "You don't know me, I'm a great admirer of your work, would you mind if I paid you a visit?" And Bruce said, "Okay." So, I went to his studio in Pasadena. I happened to be reading the same book that he was reading – something by [Ludwig] Wittgenstein, and we talked about that for a while. Then I brazenly asked him if

**“THE THING IS, EVERY DECADE ACTUALLY BEGINS IN THE PREVIOUS ONE. OR RATHER, THE GROUND-WORK FOR A SHIFT IN SENSIBILITY – WHICH GETS ASSIGNED TO THE NEW DECADE – IS LAID DOWN BY CONDITIONS THAT EXIST EARLIER.”**





**False Queen**

1992

Oil and acrylic with  
objects on canvas

96 x 72 inches

Art © David Salle, licensed by VAGA,

NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY

NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY



**Swimming, Phoning**

2015

Oil, acrylic on linen  
72 x 67 inches

Art © David Salle, licensed by VAGA,

NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY

Photography credit: John Benez

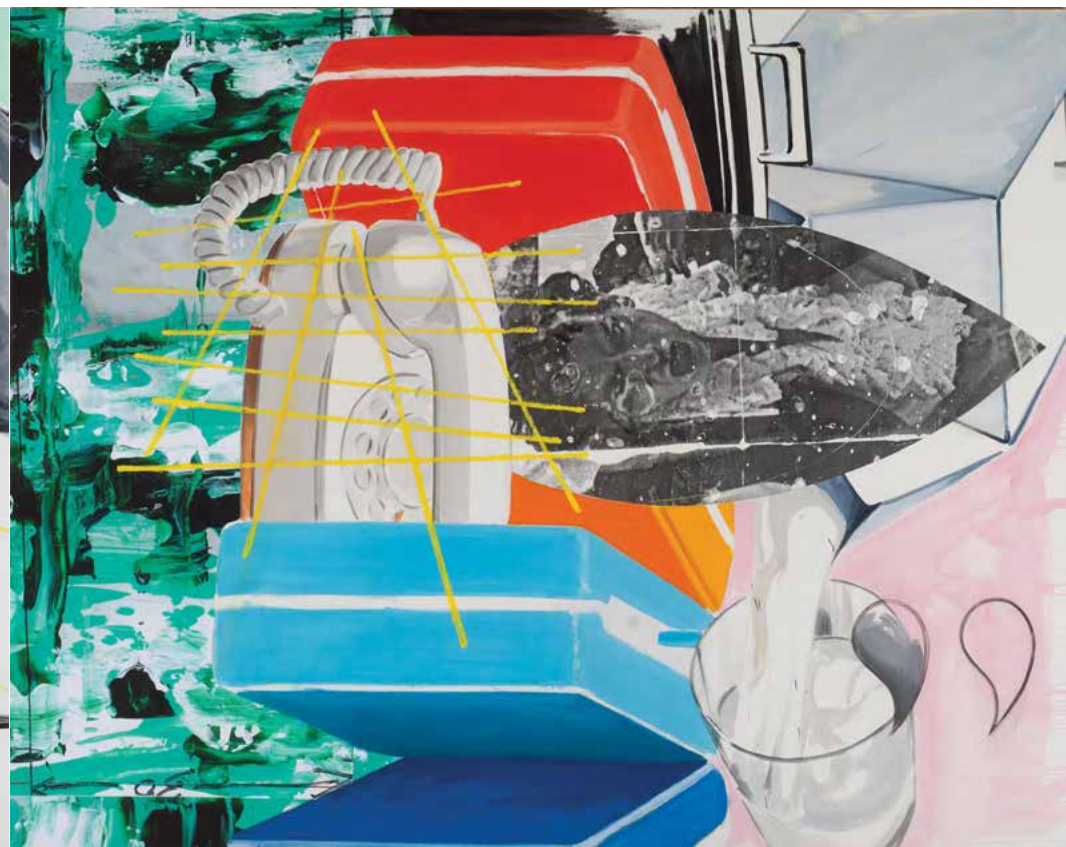




**GRACE OF**

2013 – 14  
Oil and acrylic on linen  
82 x 102

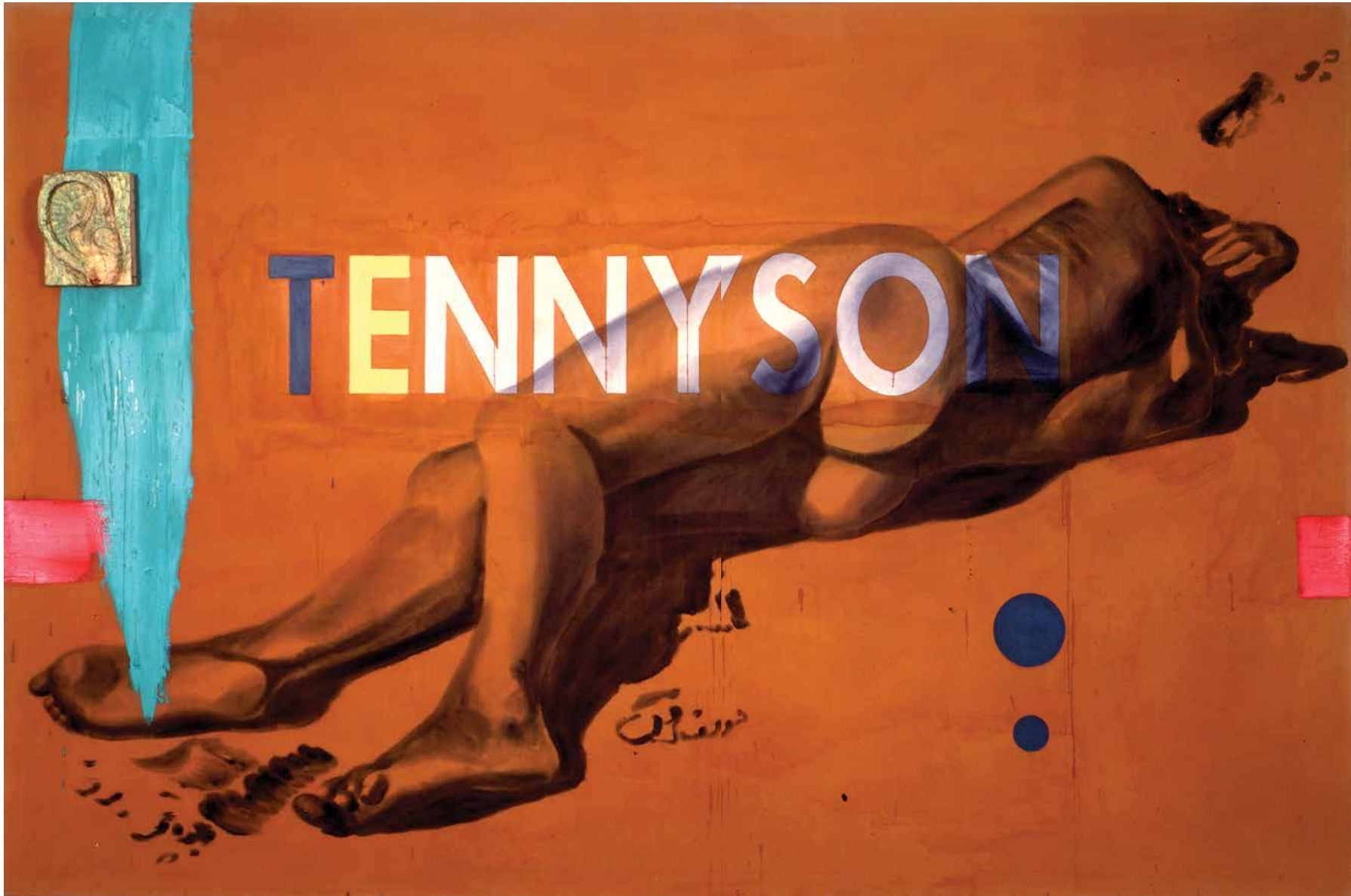
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NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY  
Photography credit: John Beas



**Pouring, Leaving**

2015  
Oil, acrylic, crayon,  
archival digital print and  
pigment transfer on linen  
74 x 94 inches

Art © David Salle, licensed by WGA,  
NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY  
photography credit: John Beas



**Tennyson**

1983

Oil, acrylic on canvas  
with wooden and plaster  
relief

78 x 117 x 5.5 inches

Art © David Salle, licensed by WGA,

NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY





**Ghost 11**

1992  
Ink on photosensitized  
linen  
85 x 75 inches

Art © David Salle, licensed by WGA,  
NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY  
Photography credit: John Beards



**Ghost 6**

1992  
Ink on photosensitized  
linen  
85 x 75 inches

Art © David Salle, licensed by WGA,  
NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY



he would come to my studio. And Bruce said, "Okay." A few weeks later, he came over to my place.

**AS IF: What were you doing at the time?**

DS: I was making paintings that were very self-referential. I'll give you one example: a rectangle painted gray, leaning against the wall but actually balanced on a stick. On the stick were polaroid photographs of the painting falling off the stick. And other variations of that theme...

**AS IF: It sounds very Nauman-esque, in a way.**

DS: In a way. Also Johns-ian, of course. Either way, nakedly derivative. One painting was made out of plaster, embedded with polaroid photographs. The photographs showed the painting you were looking at being exploded and reconstituted; that kind of thing. Bruce looked at these things for quite a long time. Then he said something I still remember, probably the single most important thing anyone ever said to me about my work: "It's not clear enough what they're about." Then he got in his Ferrari and drove off.

**AS IF: Ferrari? (laughing) That really surprises me.**

DS: You know, this was Southern California.

**AS IF: I thought it would be a pickup truck!**

DS: This was before New Mexico. It was kind of surprising to me too. But I was just a kid; I didn't know anything.

**AS IF: On the subject of clarity, people are always trying to pry your work open for meaning. I know this is something you don't love to do, but indulge me... Let's talk a little about *Bearding The Lion In His Den* [1977]. It's such a startling multimedia work. I would love to hear your thoughts about your choice of the music - the song is so romantic. What were you thinking when you made that work?**

DS: It's funny, when you're young, you don't want to be pinned down. You don't want to be understood too quickly. Now it doesn't faze me at all. I think that work is about sadness - it's drenched in melancholy. As I recall, there are four elements in the piece - typical of my work at the time, and, in a certain sense,



***Tiny in the Air***

1989

Oil and acrylic on canvas

94 x 136 inches

Art © David Salle, licensed by WGA.

NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY.





“WHAT I TRY TO DO WITH PAINTING IS GET THAT IDEA OF TEMPORAL FLOW AND SEQUENCE AND RHYTHM INTO A STATIC OBJECT. THAT MIGHT BE A PERVERSE, QUIXOTIC, AND OR EVEN FAILED THING TO DO.”



**Typing, Thinking**

2015  
Oil, acrylic, crayon and  
archival digital print on line  
68 x 44 inches

Art © David Salle, licensed by WGA.

NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY.

Photography credit: John Beers

still is. The two photographs, the improbable light effects, and the music. The art part is to structure those elements into some sort of alignment - or misalignment. Like any art, I think the work is about the experience of it. It requires a certain viewing time - you can't get it in 30 seconds, because you have to hear the music cycle through. Ideally, you should spend some time with it. Someone might ask, "What does a racecar have to do with African dancers?" I don't know. It's not a question that can be answered in any direct way, but they are linked together - now. You can feel it without necessarily being able to explain it. You know, I was happy to see that piece again after all these years.

**AS IF: I had never seen it in person.**

DS: I thought it held up rather well.

**AS IF: You once said, "I don't think one always chooses subject matter, sometimes subject matter chooses you." There are certain images that you have used over and over again. Three that come to mind are the snowflake, the angel, and the Giacometti figure. To what extent can you tell me about this imagery?**

DS: I will tell you another time.

**AS IF: I love the painting *Good Bye D. Who is "D"?***

DS: That painting is pretty much an open book - no mystery there. I had recently split up with my first wife - Diane - it had been painful, and I was saying goodbye to her in the painting. There, that wasn't hard, was it?

You know, there are two basic approaches to painting that were relevant to my generation. One was reductivist, like Frank Stella's black paintings. A lot of the art that we value and admire works on that model - by excluding everything that is not relevant. There's an internal consistency, the result of radically paring down. There is another model which operates more on the wavelength of poetry. In that model, there are any number of diverse components used in an additive way - you can't make a poem out of one word. You can make a perfectly good painting out of one thing, but a one-word poem? Not for long. For whatever reason, I chose to make paintings that work more like poetry. I don't know why. It was quite quixotic.

**AS IF: Indeed, your titles are incredibly poetic. There are a lot of artists who take the *Untitled* route. So, naming is clearly important to you.**

DS: I don't think a painting needs a title, but if you are going use titles, it's nice if they add something.

**AS IF: Some mystery, or some texture...**

DS: Or maybe a little bit of fun! When a title really fits a painting, in the way that a song lyric is perfectly fitted to a melody, it expands the meaning of both. It's lovely when that happens. Think of Jasper's painting, *Watchman*...

**AS IF: So, there is not a specific way in which the titles come about?**

DS: In the past, the titles have usually referred to whatever I was reading at the time. But,

this is actually happening less and less. Now they are invented out of thin air.

**AS IF: Photography is so important to the work. You probably do not remember me as a little gallery girl at the front desk at Robert Miller, and that's okay. (laughing) However, while working at the gallery, I remember the show that John Cheim and Howard Read curated in 1991 [David Salle: *Photographs 1980-1990*].**

DS: You were never a little gallery girl. The whole thing had been John and Howard's idea. I always had a love-hate relationship with photography. I've been involved with it since I can remember. My father was an army photographer during World War II, and we had a darkroom in my house when I was a little kid. When I was eight, my father taught me how to use the darkroom and how to use his Rolleiflex camera, light meter, the works. I actually had a little portrait studio in the basement of our house.

**AS IF: This was in Kansas?**

DS: Yes. I took glamour portraits of my eight-year-old friends.

**AS IF: Wow. I've never seen this written, or referred to, before - anywhere. Have you ever mentioned this to anyone?**

DS: No, I don't think anyone knows that. I haven't been able to find any of the photos, which is probably just as well.

**AS IF: I read somewhere that you first started taking drawing classes when you were nine. Is that correct?**

DS: Yep.

**AS IF: Speaking of your childhood, I also remember reading that your mom had something to do with fashion.**

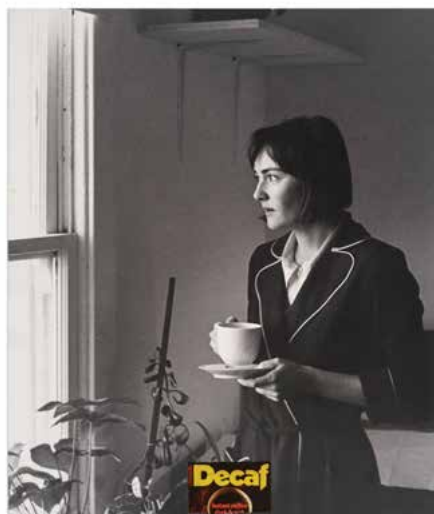
DS: Well, my father was a buyer for a store. He had a shop of his own, where my mother also worked, but that store failed. My father then went to work for another store as a buyer of what then was then called ladies' ready-to-wear (what is now called "sportswear"). So, my father would be in New York three or four times a year on buying trips. He also did the windows and ads for the store. We used to lay-out the ads together.

**AS IF: Well, I have to say, that could explain a lot with respect to the work. Number one, not every child has his own photography studio. I am also fascinated by how the whole concept of display and fashion, permeates your work.**

DS: Display and presentation: it's what the PICTURES show was really about. For the first time, the presentational began to outstrip the pictorial. Maybe I was primed for that in a way because of my upbringing.







## "SOMETIMES, I LIKE TO WORK WITH THINGS UNFOLDING IN SEQUENCE, IN A SPECIFIC TEMPO, AND TO CONTROL THE VIEWING TIME, THE DURATION - THINGS YOU CAN'T DO IN A PAINTING."

**AS IF:** I would like to throw out an artist from another century... I would love to hear your thoughts on Vermeer [Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675), influential Dutch 17<sup>th</sup>-century master, celebrated for his domestic and interior scenes of middle-class life]. When looking at some of your earlier work, my mind often goes to Vermeer - the women, the isolation, and the solitude.

DS: It's funny about Vermeer... I've seen relatively few of his paintings in real life, there are not very many to begin with. I like how he concentrates the world into a simple action, like pouring milk, reading a letter, both things I've used. But they've been used by many painters. He's actually not someone I think about a great deal. But I can understand why you bring him up. There's the piece that

was in the *Pictures* show. [*Untitled (Coffee Drinkers)* (1973)], in the Met's collection. Four women standing in their kitchens, drinking coffee and looking out the window. Probably I was thinking more of Diebenkorn, believe it or not. Not in a literal way, but in terms of the image, the photographs are like one of his poses, translated into a photograph. The gaze in and the gaze out.

**AS IF:** You once said that you had an epiphany driving down Santa Monica Boulevard. You said that what you wanted to do in your work was to "drive a wedge between the named and the unnamed." I think that's essential to understanding your work. Is that fair?

DS: Well, it seemed true then. I guess I still believe it, though it sounds so didactic now.

What's it about? This idea of double-ness, two images that are similar but not the same, the thing versus the representation of the thing - something about that has always seemed to me to get at some existential truth. That difficulty, that otherness...

**AS IF:** In the early 80s, your canvases were segmented. I think that's really important to talk a little bit about.

DS: Yes, always the double. Compare and contrast. The eye jumps across from one panel to the other and then back again. The diptych has been around a long time - its use in art history is associated with the annunciation. I wanted to make something that was non-hierarchical. You always have to take one thing with the other; neither side wins. In the last ten years or so, I'm more interested in trying to make everything happen in one rectangle.

**AS IF:** Years ago, you once described your work to me as being about how images filter through the brain. Particularly, you talked about an interest in capturing not just this flurry of random imagery, but the images that linger.

DS: Well it comes up all the time - this idea of "image glut" - this proliferation of images in the culture. It has been said that my work is like having the TV on, and the radio, and the computer - you know, multiple screens



### **Untitled (Coffee Drinkers)**

1973

Gelatin silver prints with affixed product advertisement  
Each image 20 x 16 inches

Art © David Salle, Licensed by WGA,

NY courtesy Skarsted, NY.

and all that. But a painting doesn't really work that way, and I don't have much interest in that kind of random overload. What I'm after is a highly structured simultaneity. Think of choreography, or theater generally. Art is always about specificity, whatever else may be involved.

**AS IF:** Right, in the way that the brain retains images, and processes a sound. It's more about the way, one, you - presumably - processes information. I know you are very literary. However, do you ever tackle topics of neuroaesthetics? As a field, we are barely scratching the surface. But, I think we're going to learn so much more about how people respond to, for instance, that red telephone, or that green bowl of soup [pointing to paintings in his studio, *Swimming*, *Phoning* and *Playing*, *Dreaming*]. I think that's actually very exciting territory.

DS: I've met a few of those people, and frankly, I think artists are way out in front.

**AS IF:** But brain mapping is like going to Mars!

DS: Great!

**AS IF:** You mentioned choreography and theater. You've referred to staging a few times. This is interesting, because we know you actually designed your first stage set in 1985 for director Richard Foreman's *The Birth Of A Poet*. Later, you did multiple projects with choreographer, Karole Armitage. You actually received a Guggenheim fellowship for set design.

DS: It's been a big part of my life. Listen, paintings can be lots of different things - there are so many things they can do. One thing that a painting can't do, in a literal sense, is work with time. Painting is always static, which is part of its strength. Sometimes, I like to work with things unfolding in sequence, in a specific tempo, and to control the viewing time, the duration - things you can't do in a painting. It was very interesting to be involved with all that. That's why movies were interesting. Writing too. You have control over the pacing. What I try to do with painting is get that idea of temporal flow and sequence and rhythm into a static object. That might be a perverse, quixotic, and or even failed thing to do.

**AS IF:** Not failed.

DS: Okay. (Both laugh)

**AS IF:** Since you brought up film... In 1994, you directed a film, *Search And Destroy*. I know this was produced by Martin Scorsese. I would love to hear your thoughts on the process of filmmaking. Are there any other films in the cards for David?

DS: There have been other ideas for films, but nothing's gotten off the ground so far.

**AS IF:** Can you give me an example?

DS: They're all based on books.

**AS IF:** Oh? Example, please...

DS: I worked for a time on a script about the life of Frank O'Hara, to name one. Not sure we ever cracked what the story is, in movie terms.

**AS IF:** You can control the start and finish of a painting. It's very different in film.

DS: Yes, the making of a film, the marathon process of it. It's all great fun, but filmmaking is a very recalcitrant medium. You have all these people who need to be in more or less perfect alignment. I'm not sure I have the personality for it. I was happy doing it, but one only has so much time... and there are a lot of paintings I want to make.



**The Happy Writers**

1981

Acrylic on canvas

72 x 110 inches

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NY courtesy Skarstedt, NY.





David Salle in his studio  
in Brooklyn with his dog.