



ART FEATURE

Goss-Michael Foundation
2500 Cedar Springs Road, Dallas
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Behind the Art

Richard Patterson reveals the stories behind some of his most celebrated works

On view at the Goss-Michael Foundation through May 31, this second solo exhibition in Dallas by Richard Patterson (the first at the Dallas Museum of Art in 2000) includes important paintings, sculpture, and prints from the last twelve years. Mr. Patterson is well known for paintings that embody notions of desire and despair. Psychologically charged and larger than life, they transform everyday American and British pop culture images from television, film, and advertising and infuse them with heroic proportions. In his own words, he remarks about some of the works on view.

Reclining Nude and others from the Spice Girls series (1997-98)

"These are paintings based on the Spice Girls, which are fairly typical of paintings I'm known for. I never met them [NOTE: Kenny Goss is friends with them and is the godfather to the daughter of Geri, Ginger Spice, and they've now seen Patterson's representations and love them.] But they were so prevalent in the '90s and were such an odd cultural phenomenon. I had ambivalent feelings toward them because it was all about girl power and post-feminism and all these things, but actually their audience was four-year-old girls who'd fall asleep in the front row! So it was a lot of posturing, and it was about the explosion of the "Swinging Sixties" re-enacted in the '90s in London.

The foreground is the legs of Ginger Spice. It was taken from a collage of all the Spice Girls lying on a four-poster bed together, and I sort of collaged myself into the background, as if I were the pin-up poster on the wall. In my groin area is actually the handlebar of a toy bike, the throttle. There's a bit of a sword-fight standoff between the green phallic symbol and the stiletto heel of her shoe. It's a kind of pun and a joke on sexual politics in a light-hearted sort of way."

The Kennington Years (2002)

"I was asked to be in a show in Belgium, whose theme was an interface between film and painting. I picked this because I always loved the film *Midnight Cowboy*. Seeing it now, in this economic downturn, is even more poignant because the Jon Voight character went up from Texas to New York with high expectations. It was a painting I made in London of the scene at the end on the bus where Dustin Hoffman's character, Ratso, dies on his way from New York to Florida. It was a premonition, because I didn't know I was on my way to New York or Texas!"

Exile on Jackson Street (2003)

"Amy Phelan was a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader in the mid-90s and is now a big art collector in New York with her husband, John. I painted it in New York before I moved here. It was done by John as a surprise for her birthday, since I'd already done a series of cheerleader paintings, although those were very blurry, more mysterious. I told him I don't do commissions. But then his business partner sent me this image, her original Cowboys Cheerleader trading card, and it was so extraordinary! A cheerleader's really interesting, because it's a very obvious sexual stereotype: the guy goes out there and performs, and the woman jumps up and looks really great and eggs the guy on. When I left my first studio in London, which was in the epicenter of the coolest place on the planet at the time, Hoxton Square, I was much lonelier and much more disconnected. The reason I got into painting cheerleaders was that I needed a cheerleader."

Black Narcissus/Ellwood, L-Word: Culture Station (Zipper) 1B

"I see it as being a bit like a chapel or something like that, like a confessional. The construction is aluminum panels and maple panels and it contains imagery, some of it printed on to the panels. I think that looking at art is an active process, not a passive process, so I want people to poke around it and look at it and see each dimension. It's got a vintage Triumph motorcycle from the 1960s, the golden era of the British motorcycle industry. There's a picture with generic glamour models. There's a picture of me half in a mariachi outfit in my studio with a palette and a paintbrush being a symbol of maleness. I sort of envisaged the whole thing as being a bit like in a church—you might have the architecture, the art, the paintings, the sculpture. It has a secular function and a religious function. It was a reaction to the commodification of art that's become so extreme in the last five to ten years, where paintings, in particular, have become very easily tradable objects. I wanted to make something bigger and more difficult to move around and more private, more personal. Kenny owns it now. It's been seen in the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston and in London.

— Laurel Ornish

