

DAVID
PAULSON

Images From Within...



THE BIRTH
OF HERCULES

MIXED
MEDIUM ON
CANVAS

60" X 90"

CAVE PAINTER: THE WORK OF DAVID PAULSON

by Jennifer Samet

"It begins with a real question and a dilemma, which is about the value of painting. Why paint?" asks David Paulson, rhetorically. He asks the question from his studio – which I quickly term "a painting cave." It is located outside of Hudson, New York, but Paulson has covered the windows and skylight, even painted certain walls black. You descend a few steps to enter, and it is the paint itself you notice first. Flung over walls, tables, and the floor—drips everywhere—which you don't anticipate from looking at the finished paintings. The questions Paulson asks are not propelled by self-doubts about his work, aesthetic, or life. The environment vibrates with force, energy, and process: the basis for his work.

From this place of material force, the images emerge. His is not an optical process. It is a deliberate harnessing of energy to descend into the subconscious. He uses paint to reveal what is not available to us on a perceptual level. It is an un-masking of ourselves, and yet, Paulson believes there must be veils in painting too. "I don't think painting is worthwhile unless you reveal something – that is the challenge. But you have to have camouflage to deal with certain types of subject matter," he says.



BATHERS ACRYLIC ON CANVAS 60" X 72"

The paint drips, which we see in the environment, but not so much in the finished paintings must be a residual marker of how his process begins: with a physical attack of the surface. It is a warm-up, a way to move into that other space and catalyze the forces from which energy can be turned into matter. Paulson's older work halted somewhere in the middle of this metamorphosis. Figures emerged out of the creation of a certain quality of light, and metaphysical space. These paintings, like *Self Portrait* (1982), are haunting, ethereal. They utilize a direct and aggressive attack – loose brushwork, scratched surfaces, from which a head and torso emerge with inner, radiant light. The light is how Paulson made space, evoked that inner dimension; it is the magic element in Rembrandt's portraits and self-portraits.

In recent work, Paulson wants to be tougher, cruder. There can be humor in his paintings, the visual equivalent of sexual word play, provocations and puns. Hands and feet oversized, huge, hooked noses. The paint surfaces are thicker; it's a refusal to smooth out or tone down the brutality and ugliness we desperately want to push aside in our lives and worlds.

Humor and ugliness can both be forbidden territories for painting, and Paulson pushes into them in paintings like "*Pop Eye on the Road*," and "*Cracked Egg*." The angular planes of the *Pop Eye* figure are harmonious with the abstracted tree, road,



TWO FIGURES ON A DARK NIGHT ACRYLIC ON CANVAS 54" X 54"

and landscape surroundings. It is a harmony that nearly obfuscates the brutality, and comedy, of the subject – this guy with his hooked, cock-nose, his actual cock and oversize clasped hands at the very center of the canvas, and wide, spread-eagle feet. And yet, it is clear that the intentionality of the painting was not to depict something grotesque or provocative; this figure emerged out of form and process. The paintings have that symbiosis of challenge-beauty that harkens back to Matisse's idea that painting could be a comfortable armchair, or Van Gogh's hope that *La Berceuse* could rock a sailor to sleep. The utopian ideal of painting as a universal mode of communication informed Kandinsky's use of veils and hidden images; Paulson challenges us similarly, goading us into uncomfortable zones.

In *Fallen Titan*, the cave of the studio metamorphoses into painting space. Forms gradually emerge from shadowy planes, spatial complexities are revealed. The head or the Titan is etched in with white scratches of paint, like primitive handwriting, shoulders and torso in yellow, body foreshortened. Just beyond is a horse-form, articulated like a cave painting, against a dark gray mottled ground. These images are partially hidden, veiled, and just as we blink and adjust our eyes upon entering Paulson's studio, we must bend perception to find them.



BROTHERS ACRYLIC ON CANVAS 54" X 54"



IMAGES IN THE GRASS ACRYLIC ON BOARD 18" X 24"



DELUGE OIL ON BOARD 24" X 36"



MAN IN
BLUE SHIRT

OIL ON
BOARD

8" X 12"



MAN
SMOKING

OIL ON
BOARD

8" X 12"



CRACKED EGG

ACRYLIC ON BOARD

48" X 64"



POPEYE
LEAVING
HOME

OIL ON
CANVAS

72" X 36"



TOP
HAT

ACRYLIC
ON
BOARD

84" X 44"



MAN IN A PIN STRIPED SUIT ACRYLIC ON BOARD 18" X 24"

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 Carrie Haddad Gallery - Hudson, NY
2011 Thompson Gireaux Gallery - Chatham, NY
2010-11 Brik Gallery - Catskill, NY
Painting, Drawings, Sculptures
2010 Crowell's Fine Art Gallery - New Bedford, MA
Recent Work
2008-12 Sideshow - Brooklyn, NY
2004 The Painting Center - NYC
Recent Works On Paper
2001-03 Morris Arlos Fine Arts Gallery - NYC
2001 AFA Gallery - Scranton, PA
Five Figure Painters
2001 Hudson Opera House - Hudson, NY
Recent Works

EDUCATION

- 1979-81 Parsons School of Design - New York, NY - MFA - Painting
1981-83 New York Studio School - New York, NY - Independent Study - Sculpture
1976-79 Swain School of Design - New Bedford, MA - BFA/MFA - Painting
1977 Yale University - Norfolk, CT - Summer Program

TEACHING

- 1986-88 New York Studio School - Painting Instructor
1990-92 Parson's School of Design - Lecture Series - Art History
1996 Sarah Lawrence College - Visiting Artist - Sculpture Instructor
2002 New York Studio School - Visiting Artist - Drawing Instructor
2002 IS183 Drawing and Painting - "Seeing with the Mind's Eye"
2003 IS183 Advanced Drawing and Painting

David Paulson was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1955.

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