

Simon Dinnerstein and Lynn F. Jacobs

The Fulbright Triptych

Fulbright School of Law – University of Arkansas-Fayetteville



The Fulbright Triptych

1971-74

oil on wood panels

14 feet in width, framed and separated

Palmer Museum of Art,
Pennsylvania State University

Gift of the Friends of the Palmer Museum of Art

LJ I originally thought that this was going to be an interview, so I am going to start with questions. I am sure it will develop into a conversation. I would like to welcome you. Why don't you tell the story of the genesis of the triptych?

SD First I would like to dedicate this evening to two extremely good friends of mine, Miller and Jordan Williams, exceptional people.

I went to Germany on a grant in graphics. When I stopped going to art school at the Brooklyn Museum, I spent a few years drawing and doing prints. I had a friend, Shirley Pulido, who had lived in France for a year on a Fulbright Grant in fine arts. I was intrigued by the idea of living abroad. I remember speaking to Shirley about her experiences but didn't think my work was advanced enough to apply. To my surprise, Shirley told me that my art had progressed greatly and that I should seriously look into the Fulbright program.

I applied for a Fulbright Grant to go to Spain to study with Antonio López García who is an artist that I admire greatly. I got a letter back saying that my first choice didn't work out but that my second choice, going to Germany, did come through. The second choice was Germany to study the art of Dürer. Since art school, what I did was draw and do graphics. The drawings I do are quite large and extreme. I think that there are few artists working in the United States who take drawings this far.

It was difficult to find a place to live in Germany near the art school, which was located in Kassel. We finally located an apartment but basically I thought that it was not that interesting or inspiring. Everything in the apartment was very, very middle class and very cleaned up. Not a lot of atmosphere.

But, I drew. One of the drawings was of an old woman standing. About half way, or a little bit more than half way through the year, I found myself sitting at that table, engraving and looking out the windows. What is on the table are tools of engraving, so the plate is in the middle and you engrave the plate in a particular way, with burins. You cut the plate with burins. You basically turn the plate and drive the burins in a forward direction. Around the plate are burins, burnishers, scrapers. So, I was working in this manner.

For some reason or other, one day I moved back about 6 or 8 feet, looking at the windows and table and I thought that this view would make a terrific painting. I had been drawing, but I thought this should be a painting in color. Given the fact that I had spent all my time drawing, one could say that attempting a painting at this scale represented a tremendous leap of faith, but, nevertheless, I thought this could be a very interesting painting. The area that I actually observed was the table, the landscape and about half the pictures on the wall and half the objects on the table. I like putting up pictures. It's sort of like a refrigerator. You put up pictures and it defines who you are. The space for the people within my painting didn't really exist in the room I was working in. The room in my painting was becoming some sort of fantasy room, having begun life as a naturalistic one.

And then I got the idea that having people on either side would provide a different temperature in the wings than the middle. So the middle is slightly cooler and the exterior wings are slightly warmer. If you mingled those two temperatures together, you got a new temperature.

On the left side are images, pictures, reproductions connected with my wife and teaching. On the right side are images connected with art that had inspired me. When we came back from Germany in 1971, the middle



panel was drawn in rapidograph pen. Every single line. This is quite compulsive. Every single line was drawn on a smooth white surface, which is composed of multiple layers of gesso. For the art students here, the wood panel is covered with many coats of gesso and then it is smoothed and sanded and the final coat you get something that is like ivory. I drew everything out in pen.

I started the painting in Brooklyn.

LJ It's a very large-scale painting. You didn't do any preliminary drawings, except for the engraving, right?

SD I don't recommend this. It is really, really nutty. There are no preliminary drawings. I just drew right onto the surface.

LJ Did you correct when you were doing that?

SD Some things were corrected but, basically, it was on point. But it means that the margin of error is very little or nothing. You're talking about .04 of one percent margin of error. I don't work like that now. I do studies and then re-work it larger...recompose it bigger. But this was done straight.

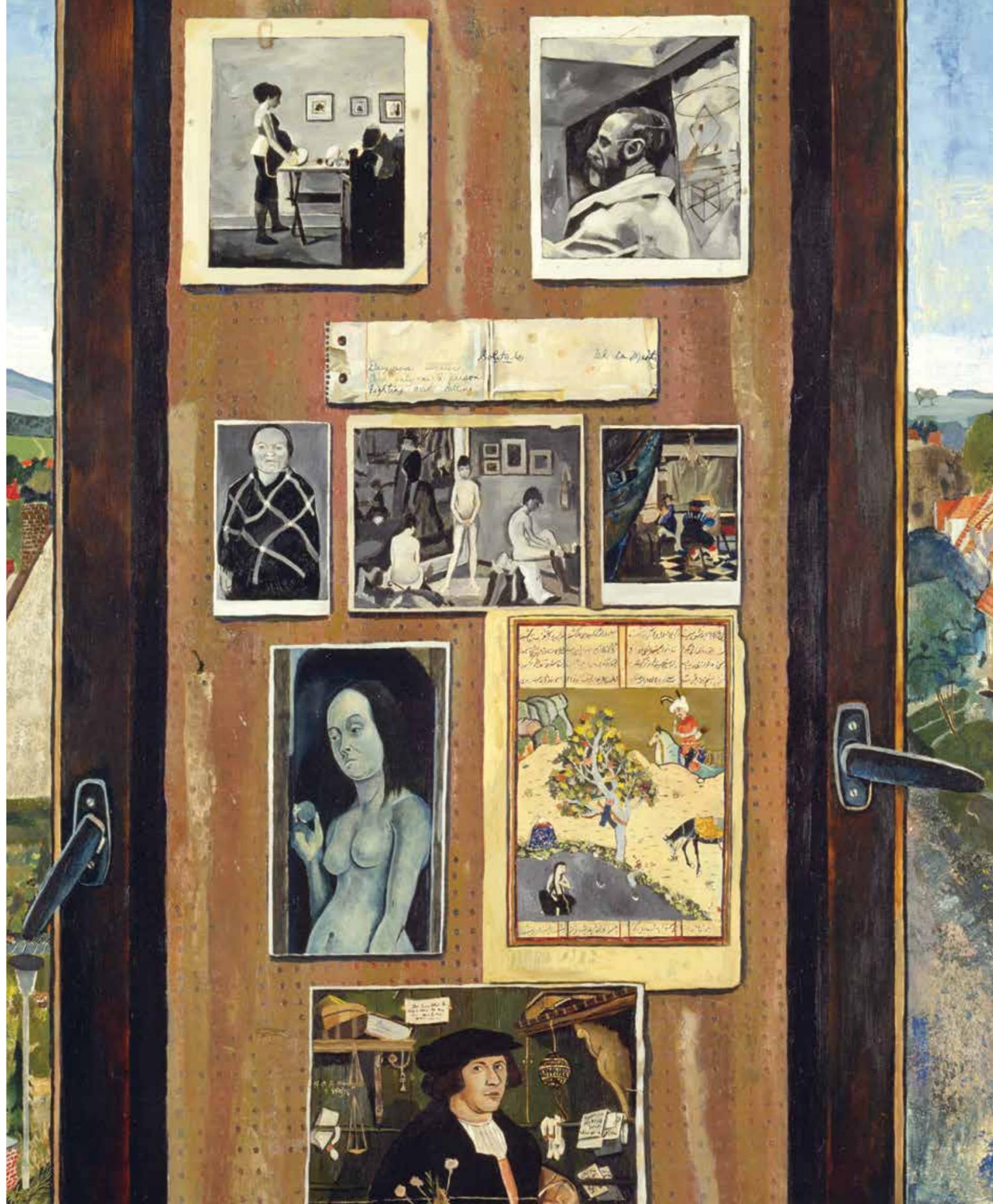
LJ But what was the reason that you had this painting on wood rather than canvas, which is obviously more commonly used by painters?

SD There is a difference between working on wood and canvas. It's hard for me to explain this. Wood seems to me more the medium of a draughtsman. Andrew Wyeth's paintings are done on wood. Early Renaissance paintings—Flemish—are done on wood. George Tooker's art is done on wood. After the early Renaissance, and after the Flemish people, paintings got bigger. Wood at a certain size warps and moves around. If you actually look at the backs of Flemish paintings many of the backs have cradles on them. It's difficult. But the surface is very interesting. It's more anonymous. You can make textures with that surface.

Here's an example: the floor of the apartment we had in Germany was a standard parquet floor. When we got back we were really in bad shape financially and I put an ad in the local paper asking if anyone had a spare room. In return for the use of the spare room, I would do work for them and fix it up. Amazingly, someone responded. They had an extra room and it needed to be fixed up. The floor in the spare room was the support floor in a brownstone. That support floor is pine and then a fancier wood is put over it. Thus, the room had a support floor of pine that was painted a red color and that's the floor I painted in the triptych. It was really a lucky happenstance in that it was a lot better than the parquet floor, which had very little character. But that [support floor] had a lot of character! So the slatting in the floor was built up with gesso and thicker gesso almost like a relief. If you go up and look at the floor in the painting, you'll see it's thicker and has a place for the groove where the slots meet. You can't do that on a canvas. I needed a wood panel to do that. And then when I painted over it, the viewer's eye moves with the texture of the floor. You can have control with the use of the wood panel whereas the canvas—the texture of the canvas—it felt like it always controlled me.

LJ Well this is *The Fulbright Triptych* and you know I'm going to ask you this but why did you make a triptych? What does that format mean to you?

SD It's absolutely marvelous that I'm speaking with you. I first encountered Lynn, who I never met until two days ago, visiting a bookshop at the Louvre Museum. In this bookshop—maybe it's because your book just came out—instead of your book being in the library position, it was facing front. I really loved it and made a point of remembering your name and thinking "this would be a great person to have a conversation with." I had seen a number of triptychs during the year in Germany and I think the triptych form seemed to me like a book. Elements in a triptych converse with each other through space and in this case they converse middle to right; middle to left; wings to the middle; wings to the landscape. That conversation is very interesting and it's amplified by the separation. If an art historian was writing about this they would write all the reasons that this should be a triptych. It might be a little more than what I'm saying, but not much.



LJ I mean, what's been interesting to me about the triptychs that I've studied as an art historian is how the separations, the connections work within these parts. As you know, most of the Flemish triptychs are hinged and fold up. Did you think about doing it folding...or is it pragmatic? The scale of it would make it very hard to support those wings with hinges.

SD I didn't think of it folding but I did think of the three frames being bolted together. Each frame would then provide the visual space between each panel. The way it was eventually framed had to do with my gallery and how they wanted it to look.

There's another part of this that might be very interesting to mention...I worked on the painting for about a little more than a year. For the art students here you really have to be a little nutted out to devote yourself to creating art. I would like to think of this activity as *highly intelligent stupidity*. So I worked on this painting a little more than a year and we ran out of money—completely ...nothing. I had an idea of how I wanted to present my work. Many art students do a painting and then try to sell it. Students of mine have felt that. My idea was completely different. My idea was that I wanted to accumulate enough work to have a show that had a philosophy, that had a point of view. I don't quite know why, but that's what I felt. So we ran out of money and I remembered a gallery, Staempfli, that had shown Antonio López García. That show was the best show I'd seen of a contemporary artist. The reason his work is so good is that it's very figurative but it's also very modern and very pulsing with energy and haunting.

I was pushed against the wall and I didn't know what to do. So I took a bunch of photographs and went to that gallery—the first gallery I ever went to—and I walked in off the street. Now, for you art students, this is unbelievable. You just don't do this. I walked in and met Phillip Bruno, the co-director at Staempfli. This was on 77th and Madison Avenue. The co-director's role is to prevent you from meeting the gallery dealer. Like there's a moat and they're backing you away. So I told him that six or seven years before I had seen an exhibit of Antonio López García, was very struck by the work and felt that there was some connection between my work and his work. I asked him, "Would you take a look at these pictures?" For some reason, Phillip decided to look at them and that was extremely lucky. (I didn't realize *how* lucky it was at the time.) He looked at the photographs and said, "I'd like to show these pictures to George Staempfli." Soon after, they decided to come to visit me in Brooklyn.

Brooklyn *then* was not Brooklyn *now*. Brooklyn in 1973 was populated primarily by people born in Brooklyn. Where I live now in Brooklyn, we're two of the handful of people who were born in Brooklyn. I had the feeling that for this gallery Paris was closer to East 77th Street and Madison Avenue than it was to Brooklyn. So they came first to our apartment and then to this studio. They were tall, very distinguished and they stood in front of *The Fulbright Triptych* for a very long time. The middle panel was about two-thirds, maybe three-quarters done; the left panel was white; the right panel was white. I had given them a maquette of what was going to take place in each panel. They spent a lot of time looking at the painting—maybe 20, 25 minutes. They didn't say anything. Not a word. And then, George Staempfli, the owner of the gallery took out a very fancy cigar, a little black cigar. And he started smoking the cigar. And then, breaking the long silence, he said two sentences: "I think this a great painting and I'd like to own it." I almost fell on the floor. A few days later, I received a letter from George saying that they would like to buy the painting, *unfinished*, and pay every month for me to work on it. At the end of this time, I would have an exhibit there.

Just like in any fairy tale, there were two conditions to their offer. The first condition was that the painting had to fit into his gallery which was located on the second floor of an apartment building on the Upper East Side in New York. (To make a long story short, it fit; it got up there.) The second condition is pertinent to your question. The second condition was: George Staempfli to Simon: "I warn you in *no uncertain terms* not to do the wings" Why? Because if you did the wings you would be making a painting that would be so large that no one could buy it. No museum could buy it. No collector could buy it. And (parenthesis) he couldn't sell it! So here I was in this man's office. Very fancy. A big door was about to open. And so I—wacky enough—argued to do the wings. And I argued this way and that way and so forth and he was not convinced.

At the time I was reading a book by Hermann Hesse. The book is called *Magister Ludi* (*The Glass Bead Game*). In this book Hesse describes the life of Joseph Knecht. After the story of Joseph Knecht is finished there is a section of Joseph Knecht's poems that were found posthumously and then, after that, there is a section of essays and writings that were found after Joseph Knecht passed away. So I said to George Staempfli, "Why do you think that Hesse does this? He does it to flesh out who Joseph Knecht is; and these additional sections form the echo of his life." So George Staempfli, a very distinguished looking, sartorial man looked at me and said, "I knew Hermann Hesse." Wow!

So I bring this up because this picture was on exhibit for about three years at the German Consulate in New York. I have mentioned this story to other people. As much as I respected his opinion, I think that in this instance George Staempfli was mistaken. It seems to me that this is a much better painting with the wings. That's my opinion. Without the wings, it's a very good painting. It's very technically realized. But with the wings it has a left-right emotive force...and the human beings, too. But if I was smarter I would've said, "Yes sir, Mr. Staempfli, I'll do whatever you want, just give me an exhibit. Yes sir!" But I didn't.

LJ I'm glad it worked out. I love the story and I feel obliged to interpret your work for you.

SD But that's what an art historian should do!

LJ So I'm going to make an interpretation and see what you think of it. In this book that's been written about this triptych people are coming at it from many different viewpoints and I know you're open to many different viewpoints. I just wanted to throw my viewpoint in. So when I was thinking about this question—why wasn't it a folding triptych?—a lot of the triptychs I've studied are hinged and they fold and there's separate imagery on the outside. I started to wonder that maybe you put the outside of your triptych on the inside because you have two windows there and those windows have latches as if they could open up. So I was wondering how you feel about my interpretation that you have actually, in a certain sense, made a folding triptych because you have put the outside on the inside of your painting.

SD I like that a lot. I never heard of that before.

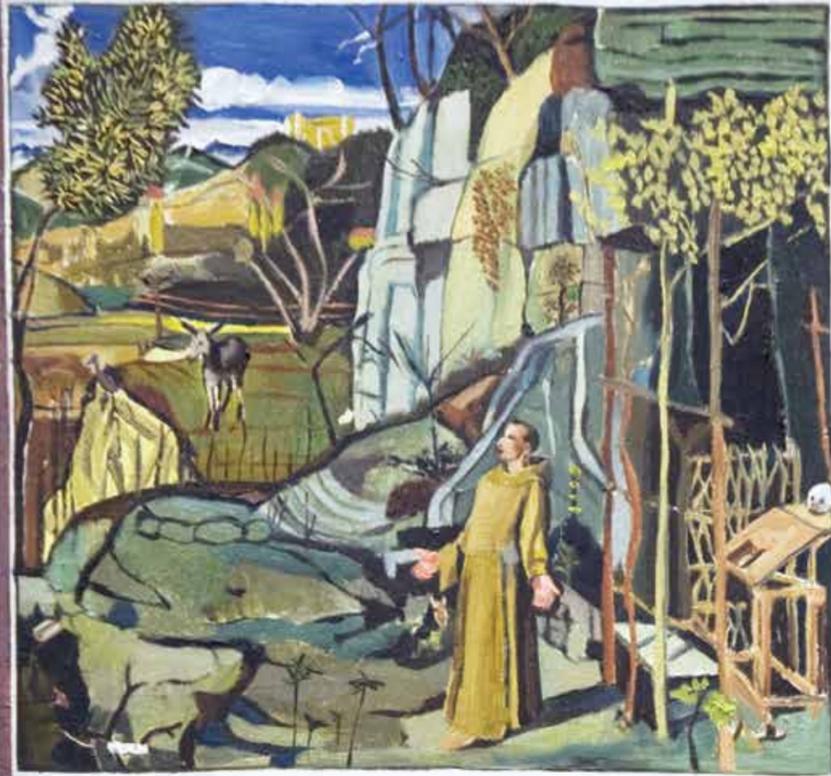
LJ (Laughing) Ah, very good! I think you may have subconsciously done that.

SD A man who was very helpful, really, genuinely helpful, in getting this painting here couldn't stay. He was just here at the beginning. His name is Don Judges and he is a professor here at the Law School and now works in a different area. The other night we were having dinner and I mentioned that it's very curious that an artist learns about his work *after* the artist does the work and, little by little, after and after and after... And the artist isn't really special because most people do the same thing. They learn who they are "later." And then they'll say, "I learned this and I learned this. Then by the time they're 60 or 70 or 80 they'll say, "Oh, there's this theme that's running through." So, recently, on Facebook, I put a picture of a window on that I had done. Then I put another picture of a window. And then I put another picture of a window. And then another one. And I realized that I had 20 or 22 pictures of windows. And it never had occurred to me that windows were so important to me. And when I mentioned this the other day, Don Judges said, "Well, you have the windows in this painting." And then he said, "The whole thing is a window. It's a window into this world." I don't know...I kind of like that. I like that a lot. Yours is great as well!

You should know that what Lynn is talking about is when triptychs close, they close to, usually, a grisaille—a grayish-toned image. So, for instance, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*—the wings don't open and close (at least, I've never seen that)—but, if it closed, you would see a grisaille of the earth. The creation of the earth, in the form of a globe, is depicted in gray. And when it opens you see everything in color. And the opening and closing related to, usually, religious holidays. I don't know what religion Bosch celebrated. That remains to be determined by you.

LJ That's a very long conversation that we probably can't get into today. But, maybe another time. So, in this book your daughter, Simone, said that you aren't interested in iconography; you're much more into some





formal issues. Of course, I have to disagree with that - that obviously, one of the issues in this work that I hope that you'll agree with, is that this painting is about art. I wanted to ask you what you're saying here: is it a homage to art, to the artist, or both?

SD All of the above. The problem I have with iconography is that I spent some time at the American Academy in Rome. Iconography there was connected with—I can't remember the name of this theory about art...about interpreting art...it begins with an "S." Does anyone know the word?

LJ Semiology?

SD Yes! Semiology. And what I don't like about that personally is that it makes the art historian and the critic into, equal to or greater than the artist. Now if I say that I don't entirely know what I'm doing and then, if I read a book and the art critic is writing semiology and they are saying "it's this, this, and this." I find that disturbing because they are saying "I think it's this...I think it's this...I think it's this, and, yes, this; this is what it is." On the other hand, iconography is symbolism which can be a kind of amorphous symbolism, playful. It can be in the air...it could be things that you don't understand. It could be lots of different things, but I think what Simone meant was more like semiology. So in this picture you have naturalistic details which could be symbolic. And you could make a good argument that the picture is about *process* and the creation of a work of art.

LJ Do you want to talk a little more about that? What do you mean by *process*? Where does it reside in the painting?

SD Well the *process* is located in the plate in the middle panel that is being engraved. Everything leads to that plate. That plate is like a sun...a wafer...a god. And all the pictures on the walls are the inspiration for what's going on in that plate. And when you do your art you have childhood influences...pictures that you liked as a child... you have your world as a child, your family, what your mother told you, your girlfriend, your boyfriend, the landscape you grew up in. All those influences and the pictures you respond to are the food that you're eating to create the art. You don't work out of nothing. And so my feeling is that all of these diverse images represent what I'm thinking...what's behind the artist. They're very disparate. There are a lot of children's drawings in here and I don't think you would see children's drawings depicted in oil paint previous to a hundred years before now. I don't think amongst 1500, 1600, 1700, 1800 paintings you would see the depiction of a life of a child. Am I correct?

LJ Probably.

SD So the amalgamation of all these things is...*the artist*.

LK Your project that you got the Fulbright Grant for was to study the art of Dürer. But with so many images on the back of that wall, so many inspirations, there is no Dürer. So, where is the Dürer?

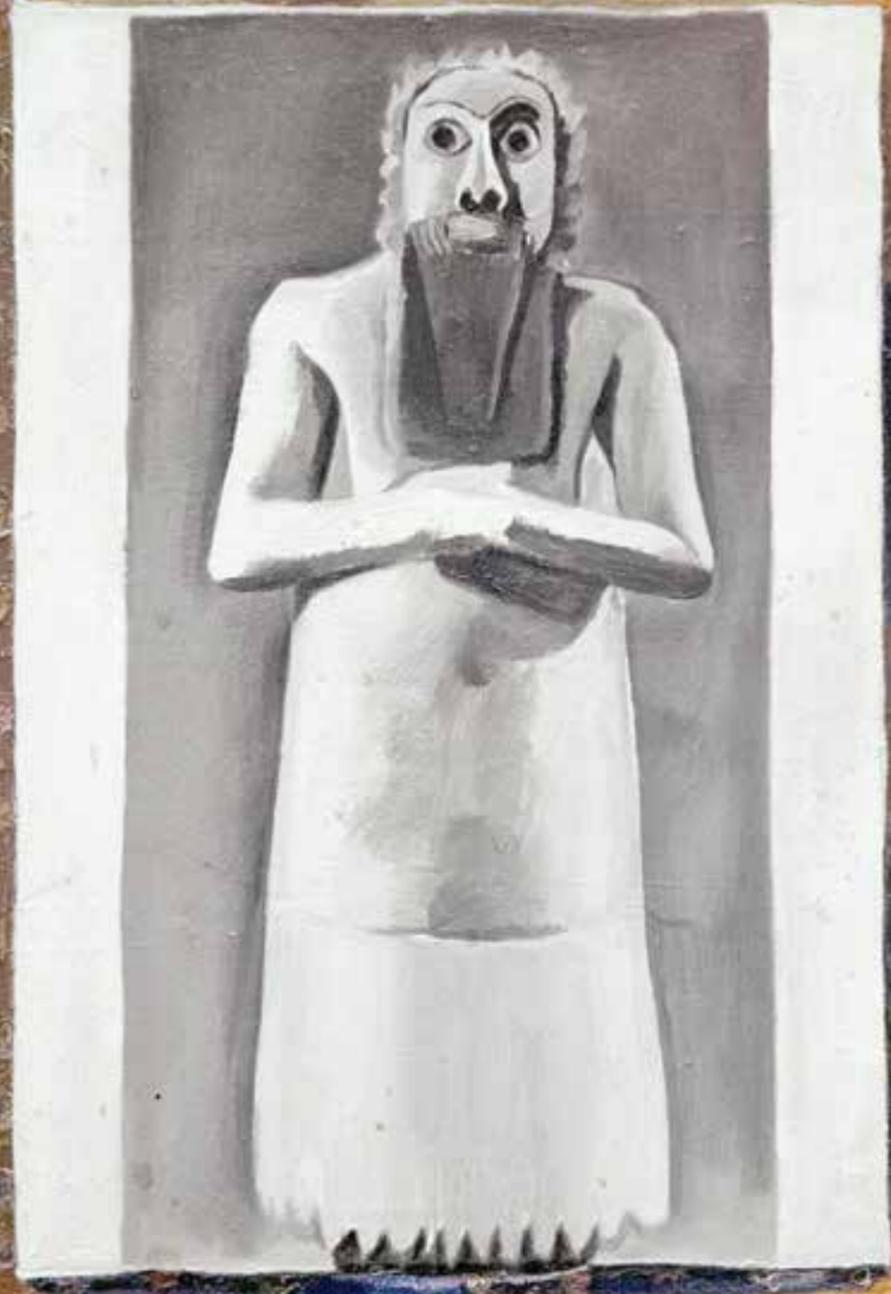
SD Dürer is the engraving.

LJ That's what I thought. Right answer!

SD There's one part of this that maybe you're not touching on. But when I got this grant I had hoped to go to Spain but I got it to go to Germany. This was 1970. Going to Germany in 1970 was very different than going to Germany in 2016. 1970 was just 25 years after the Second World War. We had very mixed thoughts about going. We had a definite pause about making this trip. And the idea that this painting came out of a year in Germany is flabbergastingly remarkable! It means that what you think is logical can always be overturned by... life. It means: don't be so sure about what you think is going to happen because I would have never thought of this painting coming out of a visit to Germany. And more than that, if I had gotten the grant to go to Spain, I would never have done anything as good as this.

LJ I'm asking you that because you are talking about the historical situation, it being 25 years after the war... also the '70s so we're dealing with the Vietnam War and in Germany it was a pretty tense time...the time of the Baader Meinhof group and a lot of terrorism going on in Germany at the time. Were there any political issues that fed into this or was this deliberately stepping back into the aesthetic?

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SD It was really the setting. I am not religious. I think I've gone to a synagogue four times in my life—two times by accident. But still you feel this extraordinary Second World War event. And we had many fascinating conversations. When this painting was on exhibit at the German Consulate, I would sometimes go down and hang out there. There was a write-up in *The New York Times* and it brought a lot of people there. One day there was an older couple that was there who were French. In their '80s. A very distinguished woman...wonderful looking! They were looking at the painting for a long time. So I came up and introduced myself and this woman said to me, "You see the flag on the outside of this building? I would never step foot in this building if it wasn't for your painting." It's so complex, life, that to find this in Germany, it's really unusual.

Now Dürer is what I would consider the prince of art. Dürer is German. He has all the characteristics of being German. But he is a prince. He is flying overhead. He is just amazing. He is one of the gods of art. And if I once joked about this painting, I remember saying that if Dürer was flying over Brooklyn and looking down at my painting, as he flew over he would smile and keep going.

LJ And write it in his diary. He wrote down a lot of stuff in his diary. One of the things in art history that we are talking about a lot—maybe not as much, as semiotics that we still talk about are gender issues. And there are obviously gender issues going on in this triptych. You have the left female side, the male side, the image of the women...and a male over you [pointing to a projected image of the triptych above where the conversation is being conducted] And the Van Eyck. Some people have commented that your wife and your daughter look like the Madonna and child. So, there are a couple of things I've been wondering. First of all, one of the standard things in the hierarchy of triptychs from the 15th Century is that the left side or wing is for the more important and, normally, the male side of a 15th Century triptych. It's relating to the hierarchy from *The Last Judgement* because Christ's right side is his favored side (and, as a left-handed person, I'm not happy about that). But, nevertheless, that's the privileged side, that's the heraldic right side and you've put your wife and your daughter in there and you've put yourself in the less hierarchically important side. Were you aware of this? Were you aware that you were doing this? Were you trying to play on the Madonna and child issue?

SD A little bit. As I mentioned earlier, this painting doesn't exist in real time. When I started the painting, my daughter wasn't born. And we didn't even think that she would be born. My wife was going to be holding that card with a "Y" on it. That card is a phonics card. And at that time, Renée taught a class of little children and she taught them to read by holding these cards up. (She hates this idea now.) But I liked the shape of the "Y." And the kids would say (sounding out the four sounds of Y). Then my daughter came along—this was about a year and a half or so later—and I took the "Y" out and put my daughter in. I thought that my side was going to be too strong, so I thought that they would be better on the left side. The right side in Western art is stronger than the left. That's my hunch and I think I've read about this concept as well.

LJ Is that because we read from left to right?

SD I think it's because we read from left to right and in Western art the right side is stronger and it's also true in theater. In theater, if you're looking at the stage of a theater, the right side is stronger. I felt that placing myself on the right was better. Since the right side was stronger, I was balancing the left side, which had two characters, Renée and Simone. I didn't think of anything more than that and I liked placing my daughter there, on the left.

LJ Just to get a little more general as we come to the end of our hour, I was wondering if you want to talk about – since you obviously have so many references to artworks of the past that inspired you there on the back wall with other kinds of things too—I thought it might be interesting for us to talk about what do you think the role of the art of the past is for the contemporary artist?

SD In the United States, critical thought would be that art began...about five years ago. And if you were a little less extreme, you would say, "No, it's not five years ago; it's about 20 years ago." And I think it's much more complicated and the problem that a figurative artist has is to deal with this tremendously long tradition that art

has and to create something that is new or pulsing or modern or special...and to do it without a strategy...to do it out of your heart. And these other artists to me are inspiration and food for pushing that idea. I don't see how you could avoid that. One of the big knocks on figurative art is that the critic will say, "This is illustration" or "This is academic." And I think that's a very big mistake. I think that there really is something called "illustration" and there is something that is called "fine art." But when you call something that's fine art "illustration," it's pejorative. It's like you're doing this [*gestured giving it a "thumbs down"*]. And when you call something that's figurative, "academic," it's a loaded word; you're saying that [*thumbs down gesture*]. Do you agree?

LJ Oh yeah...that's definitely an issue for art today. There are a lot of people here today who are in our Foundation program and I was wondering what advice you might want to give to people who are beginning to think about possibly having a career as an artist?

SD I think the best advice I could give is "you only live once." I'm sorry to tell you, in my opinion, it's just one time around. If you think something else, you might be right but, from my point of view, it's one time. If you have a feeling about doing something, you should at least give it a shot. And give it a good enough shot to say, "I gave it my all; I tried; I did all that." You don't want to be the kind of person who gets to be 40 or 50 and says, "I should've done this; I should've tried." You really don't want that. So, that's my opinion but this picture took three years to do and you have to be quite worked up to do this one painting for three years.

LJ So can I ask you what your favorite triptych is and why, not including *The Fulbright Triptych* here?

SD Well if you consider the Van Eyck triptych of *The Adoration of the Lamb*, if you consider that a triptych, I would say that that's my favorite. And if you're learning about that painting in Lynn's class, that's a remarkable painting that was done in 1400-something and supposedly done by Van Eyck. It's thought that he is the inventor of oil painting. It's a very early painting and you could make a very good argument that painting has not advanced much more than that painting. If you consider the Isenheim Altarpiece by Grünewald in Colmar a triptych, I would put that on the same level. An altarpiece. It's a polyptych. So it opens a few times. There's also a painting in Beaune by Rogier van der Weyden that I think is a triptych. In many of the triptychs, the donors are painted into the painting. The donors are praying and they're in the painting. And in Beaune, Rogier van der Weyden has Chancellor Rolin praying and it's in a hospital, a converted hospital. This is very interesting. Chancellor Rolin, because of the religious background at the time, thought that if he built the hospital, commissioned the painting and got the artist to depict him praying, he would be in a select place in the next world. And regardless of what one thinks of that, it got the painting to be done. And the painting transcends whatever it was that he thought.

LJ So this triptych, *The Fulbright Triptych*, is from '70 - '74 and we're quite a ways out from when you painted this. I was wondering how you feel when you look at this painting and you confront your younger self—not so much physically, but how you confront your younger artistic self? How you feel when you look at that?

SD That's a great question. Really terrific. First off, I wish I had an inspiration like this again. That's one thing. I worked on this painting just about every day for three years, so I saw it all the time. Then, in this last period of time, I went down to the German Consulate maybe 75 times out of three years. I've seen it many, many, many times. When I look at the painting, I cannot take it in. I can't put my arms around it. I can't grasp hold of it. It eludes me. And that is simply amazing because I know all the things in it. And I think that the secret of this painting is in the space between the pictures and the people and the windows and the table. It's that space between everything that's another theme in the painting. I just can't take it in.

LJ That's such an interesting answer because one of the things—we talked about the role of Dürer for you—one of the most interesting interpretations I've read about Dürer's *Melancholia* is that there is so much in this engraving that is deliberately designed to be something you can't grasp and, hence, it encourages a state of melancholia in the viewer because there is so much in there that it can't be grasped...

SD Terrific. That's terrific.

LJ So in a way Dürer is there in your painting.

SD I hope so. He's flying around overhead. I hope you look at his work—maybe it's a little out of fashion these days—but I think he's a total genius.

LJ So I think a good idea would be for us to end our conversation and go to look at the work.

SD Does anyone have any questions?

Audience Member Did you ever finish the engraving?

SD Yes, I did. There's going to be a traveling show, beginning next July, which will go to three venues. Not a lot of pictures, about 15. One of them is the print, *Angela's Garden*, and one of them is the actual copper plate for this work. Dürer engraved personally all those plates so the *Melancholia* that Lynn is talking about could have only been done by him. No one could have done that. Now, for instance, there were artists who engraved reproductions of paintings and those reproductions traveled around Europe. That's not the same as Dürer. All of his engravings were done by him. So, yes I finished the plate and I actually have done other engravings as well. One of these, *Polhemus Place*, will be in the traveling exhibit.

Audience Member What is the scale of *The Fulbright Triptych*?

SD It is fourteen feet wide by not quite seven feet high.

Audience Member What was your reasoning for the visual material on the wall behind Renée?

SD On my wife's side...the reading method that she taught had to do with phonics and had to do with circles. And the origin of the writing was based on circles and there's a fabulous picture next to the "Y" and that picture is a page of circles. When you go upstairs and look at this, the child who did this started beautifully...circle, circle, circle, circle, all neatly positioned on the line. Then the second line, same thing. And then the child started to lose it and the circles started to go like this [be drawn erratically]. And then the child really lost it and the circles [were drawn all over the place]. I loved the way the page looked because it was so sincere and earnest and serious and it was all about circles and I thought to include all that. You have to understand that this is not something that was depicted in so-called "high art." So a child's drawing, a child's art, is something that would be called "low art." It's like "primitive" or whatever. And I liked that idea. And what I thought was, can I get the oil paint to look like that? And, if you look at other parts of this area you'll see drawings, children's drawings, with crayons or pen or pencil. And besides the fact that they were wonderful-looking, my feeling was "can I get my oil paint to look like that?" And it was funny—very funny. And it was also not funny.

Audience Member Was it hard to part with it [*The Fulbright Triptych*] after you had made so many memories over the three years you worked on it

SD Yes. Very hard. You see the way Staempfli paid me the money, it felt like a deal with the devil. The guy was very imperious. He was playing around with me. He was offering me a future. And it was like—stories that have to do with a deal with the devil: We'll publish your book but you have to sign up with the devil. And I always thought that when the painting was finished and it went to him, he had a buyer for it and I would wheel it in and he would wheel it right out. But that wasn't the case. He did it. He just did it. And, actually, the gallery didn't have a huge amount of money. I was very surprised at what their resources were.

The other thing about this is that the effect of luck in life is not to be discounted. Staempfli was 64 years old when this happened. His wife, Barbara, was fabulously striking-looking. She was 32. And so, let's say he woke up in the morning the day he visited and he didn't have a good time with his wife the previous evening and was out of sorts. No way, Simon, no way. So luck is not to be discounted in life.

Audience Member Why is it in the law school?

SD It's in the law school for an interesting reason. It's in the law school because when it was on exhibit in New York it got a really wonderful response and a lot of people went to see it. There is an adage in American culture

something like, “there are no second acts in American art.” And, so this was like a second act for me. And I got very enthusiastic about wanting it to stay on view. And during the time it was on exhibit in New York, I met Stephen Reilly, the Executive Director of the Fulbright Association. I asked him, “is there someone connected with the Fulbright Program in a college, a university, or a foundation who would go for this idea.” Stephen said he would like to help and he had on his board, Christopher Kelley, a Professor of Law at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. So he asked around and Christopher Kelley said he would like to help. I was introduced to Christopher and I thought, “Wonderful, great.” And then Christopher introduced me to a man named Don Judges, who’s not here now, and Don did all of the very, very hard work of getting the loan agreed to: humidity controls, fire codes, temperature, guards, lots of stuff. It really was exciting to me and I would like the painting to stay on view...because I felt that it was so exciting.

Audience Member Other thoughts about Fulbright and your painting being at the home of the Fulbright here? Was that word part of your title while you were there?

SD I thought the Fulbright Program was fantastic. I thought the idea of it was amazing. When you stay in a country for a year, it’s not stereotypes any more. You really *see* people. And I think actually more Fulbrights would be better for the world. You really interact with people. I think it’s a marvelous program and for you people who are in Fayetteville, during the Vietnamese War, Fulbright was one of two senators who voted against that war. That is a very hard thing to do. The other senator was a man named Wayne Morse from Oregon. We have in the United States a great feeling about individualism, but we also have a great feeling about conformity. It’s a really great program and I think that *this* is the Fulbright Program frankly. [pointing to *The Fulbright Triptych*]

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