

An Unfinished Painting: An Offer

George Staempfli

Staempfli Gallery

47 East 77 Street, New York 21, New York

Telephone: Lehigh 5-1919 Cable: Stagallery, New York

April 12, 1973

Mr. Simon Dinnerstein
20 Fiske Place
Brooklyn, New York 11215

Dear Mr. Dinnerstein:

Both Phillip Bruno and I were quite impressed with your work. I particularly liked the large unfinished painting. Here is an outline of my thinking:

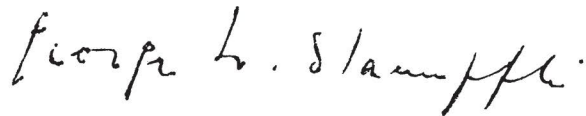
1. I believe it would be a good idea to organize an exhibition of your work in this gallery when the big oil is finished. To show the drawings alone would not have the same impact.
2. We would be willing to offer you \$— for the big oil (*if* we can get it in the gallery which we would have to test with a dummy!) and I would suggest that we would pay you \$— a month toward that purchase for a year, and the remaining \$— when the painting is finished. It is probably foolish to buy an unfinished painting, but I have confidence that you will live up to your own standards of excellence.
3. In return, Staempfli Gallery would expect the exclusive rights to represent you and to sell your work at least until after your exhibition here. At that time

we could arrive at some more permanent contractual agreement if we still both feel so inclined. In between time, our commission would be one-third of the sales price.

4. I frankly wonder if your plans for the *Triptych* won't prevent you from painting more accessible pictures. The two outside panels without the center would not make too much sense, and *with* the center they would restrict (for size and subject reasons) the sales possibilities almost exclusively to a museum. And museums, unfortunately, are spending very little money on purchases these days, mainly because they have no funds. I would urge you to think carefully before you start on the *Triptych* wings. Perhaps you could combine the two figures into another single painting, in which they would be independent of the existing center, both visually and emotionally. But that, needless to say, is your own problem. Let's put it this way: the center does not need the wings in any way.

If any of the above makes sense to you, give me a call and perhaps we can talk about it sometime next week.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George W. Staempfli". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

George W. Staempfli



April 1973

An Uncompromising Quality . . .

George Staempfli

There is an uncompromising, almost merciless quality about the way Simon Dinnerstein looks at something he wants to draw or paint. It can be a person, or a landscape, or a still life—a corner of a flower garden or an ugly building across the street. Whatever the subject, he will recreate it with intense realism, exactly the way he sees it, without softening or embellishment, without “artistic liberty.” He uses charcoal like a chisel, and his pictures have a gothic exactness and plasticity which defines their subjects in crisp angularity.

In only one work, his monumental *Fulbright Triptych* of 1971–1974, is there a noticeable mellowness and emotional indulgence. It is a largely autobiographical work, composed around the trinity of his wife, himself and their baby. The detailed objects appearing in the *Triptych*, grouped around the centered working table, give us a glimpse into the privacy of his family life. Bits of old letters, postcards, news clippings and children’s drawings are pasted on the walls around the windows like pages out of a confidential diary. They relieve the stern and rather forbidding presence of the parents’ portraits in the wings of the *Triptych*. We realize suddenly that Dinnerstein’s detached and controlled use of hard-edge reality is merely a cover for underlying currents of sensuous warmth, and for his positive participation in the stream of life.

Catalog Introduction, First solo exhibit, 1975