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MARSH ART GALLERY • SIMON DINNERSTEIN RETROSPECTIVE



SIMON DINNERSTEIN, 1985, "Night," 36 1/2" x 76 1/8", conté crayon, colored pencil, pastel, crayola, oil pastel



WARNER BROS.

"I consider myself a regular person with an extraordinary job," Queen Latifah says.

## Latifah seeks dose of reality

BY MIKE McDANIEL  
©HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Changes are ahead for "Queen Latifah." "Big Brother" kinds of changes. "We're going to stay current, stay with the times," said Latifah, who is barnstorming the country to promote her talk show's second season. "We're going to try some experiments this time around with some reality-based TV, in the 'Big Brother,' 'Survivor' sort of sense."

Plans call for the show to sometimes devote one or more of its segments to video of an ongoing or upcoming story, using footage obtained from wiring houses with microphones and cameras.

"If we have an issue, we'll go in and wire a person's house for a period of time, just let them be in their own environment and let them go about life as they ordinarily go about it," Latifah said.

"We'll check up on them maybe once or twice a week, and until the time comes when it's time for them to come to the show."

"Say it's spanking the kids — should you or not — and some guy says, 'Oh, I spank my kid all the time.' Well, we want to see it. We want to see how you do behave with your son or daughter. And that gives us a better base from which to speak."

### "Survivor" fan

Latifah is an unabashed admirer of reality programming.

"I like 'Survivor.' I haven't really watched 'Big Brother.' I watch 'The Real World.' This is kind of a 'Real World' thing."

"I'm one of those who watch 'World's Scariest Police Chases,'" she said. "I'm fascinated by stuff like that. I watch 'Trauma: Life in the ER.' I watch Discovery and TLC all day. I like to learn about other things. Human behavior is very interesting because it's never what you expect."

"So we're going to try this and see what happens. I mean, we're still a talk show. We're not a 'Big Brother.' So we'll only use it in the way we feel is necessary for the show."

### Keeping it fun

The show, which begins a new season Sept. 11, also will adopt a documentary style from time to time. But Latifah plans to keep it fun, irreverent and dotted with

# Exploring the edge

No slave to fashion, artist draws us into other states of mind

BY ROY PROCTOR

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Don't expect to find Simon Dinnerstein's paintings and drawings on the walls of America's first-rank art museums or in any blue-ribbon grouping of public and private collections.

You'll rarely find any.

To his often highly placed devotees, the 57-year-old Brooklyn, N.Y., artist, whose touring retrospective will open Thursday in the Marsh Art Gallery at the University of Richmond, has languished unjustly in obscurity for his steadfast refusal to be trendy.

"No one could accuse Simon Dinnerstein of being a fashionable artist," Thomas M. Messer, retired director of New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, wrote a decade ago in his foreword to a coffee-table tome tracing Dinnerstein's career.

Messer cited Dinnerstein's "total disregard of prevailing taste, his apparent disinterest in the visual arguments of advanced art circles, and . . . his single-minded concentration upon the development of a highly personal, creative pursuit."

Is Dinnerstein, then, an artist whose time has not yet come?

Richard Waller, director of the Marsh Art Gallery, believes passionately in Dinnerstein's sometimes monumental works.

The two met when Waller included Dinnerstein's works in a show devoted to artists in Brook-



SIMON DINNERSTEIN, 1993, "Counterpoint," 52 1/2" x 41 1/2", conté crayon, colored pencil, pastel

lyn's Park Slope neighborhood that he was organizing at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1980.

Waller has followed Dinnerstein's career since then.

When Dinnerstein called Waller two years ago to ask if he would be interested in helping to underwrite and book a retrospective that was originating at the Walter Art Center in Fayetteville,

Ark., Waller was primed to say yes.

"He's a very accomplished artist doing beautiful paintings and drawings," Waller said. "They're very classical."

"There's still a strong vein of realist, figurative work today, and Simon is a part of that along with George Tooker, Lucian

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SIMON DINNERSTEIN, 1983, "January Light," 43 1/2" x 29 1/2", conté crayon, colored pencil, pastel  
The Martin Luther King Jr. Labor Center, N.Y.

### Dinnerstein at UR

WHAT: Retrospective of work

WHEN: Thursday through Oct. 8,

Tuesday-Sunday, 1-5 p.m.

WHERE: Marsh Art Gallery at

University of Richmond

ACCOMPANYING BOOK: 118

pages with seven essays and 93

illustrations; \$18

RECEPTION: 8:30-10 p.m. Sept. 7

at gallery, preceded at 7:30 by

artist's lecture in nearby Cousins

Studio Theatre; free

MASTER CLASS: Dinnerstein will

teach drawing of portraits with

model 1-4 p.m. Sept. 9 in UR Visual

Arts Building; \$25

INFO: (804) 289-8276

www.richmond.edu/cultural/museums

Simon Dinnerstein's "Night" (top) turns a potential dream into a nightmare in its vision of children wearing masks made of paper bags and huddling in an eerily nocturnal landscape. The artist himself recalled that in making the drawing he "wanted to get at things that I felt as a child made me anxious." Also in the Dinnerstein retrospective are "Counterpoint" (far left) and "January Light" (left).



SIMON DINNERSTEIN, 79 1/2" x 156", oil on panels

In "The Fulbright Triptych," Simon Dinnerstein has painted his wife and child in the left panel and himself in the right panel. In the central panel, the artist has arrayed his printmaking tools on a table.

## Art

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Freud and Balthus. These artists have a psychological edge, and Simon's work explores that edge.

"His continual reference to dreams in his titles gives us a clue to the freedom with which he approaches the narrative in his paintings. At first glance, you might think the nudes are just models in the studio, but Simon draws you into some other states of mind that go beyond realism into realms of the unknown, of fantasy."

Dinnerstein isn't nearly as well known as Tooker, Freud or Balthus, however.

In Waller's view, Dinnerstein has paid a price for being unfashionable.

"His latest work is large-scale nudes," Waller said. "That's a very tough area in which to achieve a recognizable household name. Our society is still very conservative where the nude is concerned."

"Simon is an artist who believes very strongly in his approach to the figure,

and this exhibition shows the nude as an aspect of this artist's work."

Simon's nudes — always female, frequently reclining, unapologetically erotic — make up about one-third of the current array of 48 paintings and works on paper created as far back as 1967.

Along with the themes of self-portrait and family, they exemplify "the artist's search to understand our humanity through the innate beauty of the human form in real, mythic and dreamlike environments," according to the gallery.

Dinnerstein also has been penalized for working slowly, Waller believes.

"He's not that prolific," Waller said. "The triptych took over three years to accomplish. Some of the nudes stay on the easel for two or three years. Simon is an artist who is into his art for the long haul."

The triptych in question — "The Fulbright Triptych," so named because Dinnerstein embarked upon it while studying printmaking in Kassel, Germany, in the early 1980s — occupies the show's

position of honor.

"The Fulbright Triptych" pays homage to the conventions of triptychs — three-panel pictures — created for altarpieces in the Northern Renaissance at the same time that it subverts the spirit behind those altarpieces in peculiarly modern ways.

Instead of the portrait representations of kneeling and praying donors that we expect in the flanking panels in a Northern Renaissance work, Dinnerstein has painted his wife and child in the left panel and himself in the right panel. All stare resolutely at the viewer.

In place of the devotional image that would have occupied the central panel centuries ago, Dinnerstein has arrayed his printmaking tools on a table beneath two windows that look out on the town of Kassel.

The window views function as separate paintings. Attached to the wood-paneled walls in all three panels are dozens of lifelike representations of reproductions of paintings spanning the histo-

ry of art as well as children's drawings and other mementos relating to Dinnerstein and his family.

With all its ambiguities, resonances and levels of meaning, "The Fulbright Triptych" is a "secularized altarpiece, a deliberate displacement of orthodox religious iconographies," Robert L. McGrath, an art history professor at Dartmouth College, writes in a catalog essay.

The dreamlike quality of "The Fulbright Triptych" becomes much more pronounced in the show's two huge and haunting mixed-media drawings — "A Dream Play" and "Night" — which are well-known and haunting Dinnerstein images as well.

In the foreground row of figures in "A Dream Play," Dinnerstein "has located himself and his wife and daughter at either end of the picture to frame the central actions that in turn links them like two ends of a Japanese scroll unfurling across time and space," art historian Albert Boeme wrote in his main essay in

the 1990 book on the artist.

"The panoramic ensemble depicts members of the Dinnersteins' extended family entering and exiting in dream, rather than real, time. Thus deceased ancestors mingle with the living, and the living are seen in multiple stages of youth and adulthood."

"Night," on the other hand, turns a potential dream into a nightmare in its vision of children wearing masks made of paper bags and huddling together in an eerily nocturnal landscape.

The drawing deals with "the eruption of nightmare or infantile anxiety," according to Boeme.

"This is a world of children without parental presence or the security of the family embrace, a world that is, according to the painter, 'unsafe.' Dinnerstein himself recalled that in making the drawing he 'wanted to get at things that I felt as a child made me anxious.'"

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