

Power, Kevin. "David Salle Seeing It My Way." *David Salle*. Munich: Staatgalerie Moderner Kunst. 1989. 18-37.

Herausgeber
FUNDACIÓN CAJA DE PENSIONES

AUSSTELLUNG FUNDACIÓN CAJA DE PENSIONES, MADRID

Ausstellungskommissar
MARÍA CORRAL

Organisation
ALICIA TRULLENQUE, FUNDACIÓN CAJA DE PENSIONES, MADRID

Installation
GERARDO DELGADO

Transport
MÖBEL TRANSPORT AG
JUDSON ART WAREHOUSE INC.
QUALI-T CREATIONS INC.
SIT, TRANSPORTES INTERNACIONALES, S. A.

AUSSTELLUNG STAATSGALERIE MODERNER KUNST, MÜNCHEN

Organisation
CARLA SCHULZ-HOFFMANN

Restauratorische Betreuung
SUSSANE WILLISCH

Sekretariat
SUSANNE BRACHT

Transport
FIRMA HASENKAMP

KATALOG

Konzeption
GERARDO DELGADO

Technische Durchführung
EDICIONES EL VISO

Fotos
GIANFRANCO GORGONI
RICHARD N. GREENHOUSE
MARIANNE HAAS
JACQUES HOEFFNER
JEAN KALLINA
SIGMA
MARTHA SWOPE
MARTHA SWOPE ASSOC. / SUSAN COOK
MARTHA SWOPE ASSOC. / CAROL ROSEGG
MONROE WARSHAW
ZINDMAN / FREMONT

Fototechnik
CROMOARTE

Fotosatz und Druck
JULIO SOTO, Impresor, S. A.
Avda. de la Constitución, 202, Torrejón de Ardoz, Madrid

Bindearbeiten
ENCUADERNACIÓN RAMOS

KATALOG

Redaktion der Deutschen Ausgabe
HANS-MICHAEL HERZOG
CORNELIA STABENOW

Übersetzung aus dem Englischen
KERSTIN TONNEMACHER

I.S.B.N.: 84-7664-172-9
D. L.: M-28236-1988

1 E. HOPPER. «FENSTER BEI NACHT», 1928
«Windows at night»



DAVID SALLE: SEEING IT MY WAY

Kevin Power

I have always been interested in the kind of character... who is indecisive, ambiguous, and irresolute.

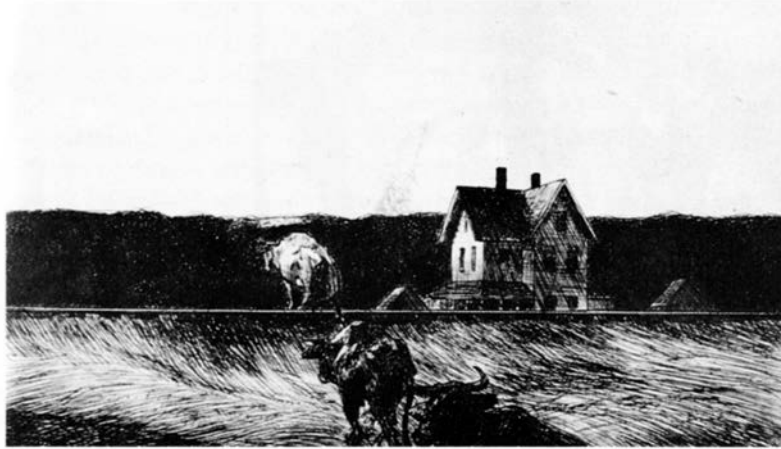
Douglas Sirk

Sirk made the most tender films I know, they are the work of a man who loves people and does not despise them as we do.

Fassbinder

David Salle is an intensely American painter—an intensity that manifests itself not in the sense of excess, expansiveness, rhetorical brashness, or raw energy but rather in the way he registers and reads the world, in his phrasing of experience, and in his pushing of things towards their limits in a dazzling display of calculated tension and control. Salle shuns the overkill and the vacuous pumping up of self. There are no loose ends or emotions in his work, no frivolous draining away of energy. He is a mid-westerner with, as Lisa Liebmann points out in an article in *Artforum*, «a sense of emptiness at the core of being»¹. It is an observation that is, perhaps, worth taking a little further. Salle undoubtedly has an acute sense of the threatening void, of the smallness of man, and of our vain efforts to impose order upon the world. It is an awareness that hurts, roughs up the edges of sensibility, and occasionally leaves the same kind of jagged cuts and scars on the flesh that one associates with Still's work—a painter whom Salle much admires and who shows a similar kind of gnawing at the nerve-ends and a similar gouging from within. The Midwest is a landscape of provocative monotony. It teaches both endurance and frustration. It teaches us that what we see does not necessarily tell the truth but it does outline the nature of the complexity. The horizon is finally what the eye can take in with a glance and here the glance is vast enough. Things reflect back and everything ultimately depends on the questions one asks or on the angle of vision. For some the monotony of this landscape has been flatteringly read as wholesome simplicity, a lack of artifice, and a reassuring sameness. James Bryce, writing in the 1870's, leaves us with little doubt concerning its impact «from the point where you leave the Alleghenies at Pittsburgh, until after crossing the Missouri... a railway run of some thousand miles, is a uniformity of landscape greater than could be found in any one hundred miles of railway in Western Europe. Everywhere the same nearly flat country, over which you cannot see far because you are little raised above it, the same thickets of the same bushes along the stream edges, the same solitary farmhouses and struggling wood-built villages. And when one has passed beyond the fields and farmhouses there is an even more unvaried stretch of slightly rolling prairie, smooth and bare, until after six hundred miles the blue outline of the Rocky Mountains rises above the western horizon»². I have no idea as to the exact nature of Salle's reaction to this landscape but I doubt if it shows the same kind of easy benevolence. I suspect rather that he sees it as an off-tone void onto which he can project his own ideas, fantasies, and feelings: dumbly receptive but violently frustrating.

The Prairie belt has always been a cradle of ambitious dreams, of mobile social progress, and of thoughts of the



Big Time. Salle knows these things first-hand. He has seen ambitions fired by the taste of immediate profits and suffered the price sensibility pays to survive. He has felt them in his bones and recognized that there is a time to move on. He is not, of course, alone in feeling this need to push his horizons beyond the reductive repetitiveness of the landscape and the ensuing narrowness of vision. Sherwood Anderson's hero George Willard did it in the 1920's. Some go West like McClure, Conner, or Salle himself; others East like Gallup or Padgett. All of them move to the edges! I have, perhaps, laboured this point but I do so because Liebmann draws from this formative experience two central metaphors for Salle's work: «fields» and «screens». They are appropriate images, deftly suggesting surfaces for the imprint of the scanning eye, limiting frames for jarring emotions, or a neutral ground for what is on occasion a cold war! *Field* seems to me useful, especially if understood in terms of physics, as an open, inclusive space that accepts everything that comes into it as a high-energy charge and where things cohere not in any logical or easily explicable way but simply because they emanate from a single person and register themselves with intensity. They come together as a visceral fit, as a temporary harmony or calculated dischord. Screen, however, is an even more powerfully evocative image. It effectively defines the shallow ground onto which Salle projects, at least up until 1985, his layers of images. It is not a «mirror» which would carry resonances of depth, time, and history, but literally a «screen» which registers shallow depths and new perspectival effects. His play with veils or transparencies serves him as a means of both affirming and denying the presence of other images just as his skilful manipulations of changes in scale and pictorial language produce contrapuntal tensions, modifications in tone, passages of development, or sub-themes. The exploitation of these effects leads to the definition not so much of a specific «meaning» as to a condition that is ambiguously and perversely alive. As far as Salle is concerned the surface is a place where the disparate assembles, and this is equally true of those works produced after 1985 where the locking of the elements is orchestrated with a firmer symphonic hand, and everything comes together with a suggestive «click».

These works are becoming more and more brutal, violent, and broken, more and more unreserved in their confrontations with the spectator.

The «screen», then, for Salle is his natural landscape and it becomes known as landscape itself does «through the totality of its forms»³. They fit because they occur through some tangent of need, some rhythmical insistence that corresponds to the constantly qualified and qualifying currents that underlie the flow of emotion. Salle is both seer and seen, both the filtering eye and the libidinous voyeur. He looks at the phenomena of the world with ironic, playful, or compassionate glance. He can sense the funnel rim and the sad people who, despite their smiles, scurry and sing across its mouth, fully recognizing that the images he projects lead inevitably to false readings as the spectator hurries to tie up a disturbing sensation into a significant whole. Yet there is no hidden puzzle to unravel, nothing but glimpses of content, emotional currents, shared intuitions:

But we stray
we strays, as we always do
and those mercies always wanted⁴

At one level Salle acts as a surgeon, cold-bloodedly taking his knife to the behavioural patterns of a contemporary consciousness, revealing its coding systems, its defense mechanisms, its reptilian attacks, its gentler moments, its sense of absurdity, and its acid laughter. He is not interested in narrative as such, or, at most, in a simultaneous plural narrativity that permeates and circulates our lives as telling. He is concerned not with linear direction but with digression. He looks both out and in, selecting, pointing a melody, finding an intimate register, scoring a range of feeling, and structuring the nature of what is. It is here that we shall find the keys to his work, irrespective of the particular tone he chooses to adopt —a tone that stretches from sophisticated self-consciousness to lyrical vulnerability, from edgy cynicism to a swirling, permeating sense of loss. Salle knows, as Kenneth Irby does, that we all end up by carrying our landscapes within:

3 STANDBILD AUS «THE TENTH VICTIM» VON ELIO PETRI, 1965
 Frame from «The tenth victim» by Elio Petri



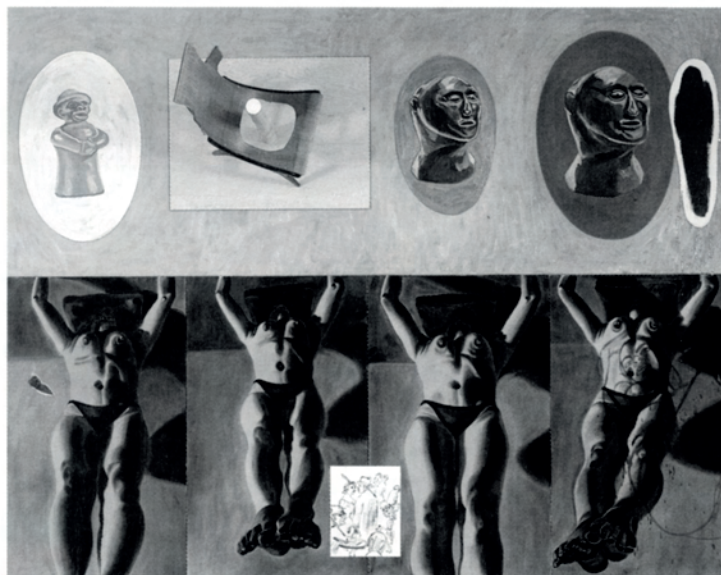
4 DAVID SALLE. «THE TRAIN», 1986
 Der Zug - Sammlung Douglas Cramer, Los Angeles



the small stone picked up
 without thinking is everything, the unattended stray
 memories,
 everything, in the throw of the vision, in the catch
 of us in the vision⁵

Cat. No. 8

Music, dance, and film are integral to any understanding of the way Salle brings images together. They provide us with useful comparative measures of the permissions he takes. His work advocates suspended judgements and a predisposition to live at ease amidst uncertainty. It leads not to solutions but to complicated pirouettes—a high-wire act, wilfully exhibitionistic, that has us all gripping the edges of our seats. It encourages multiple readings but settles for none. Peter Schjeldahl, for example, offers the following sophisticated and seductive reading of *Fooling with Your Hair* (1985) as «a kind of personal essay or manifesto, the artist's heart laid bare, that reads like a mathematical equation. Its first term, and first-person singular, is copied from a drawing by Watteau, *The Shoeshine Boy*». In Watteau's original, interestingly, the boy is an amiable but evidently dim-witted urchin. Adapted by Salle as an alter-ego, he takes on the sexual elegance, the haunted worldliness, of a young Pierrot. His mystery is expressed, and explained, by two equated pairs of images: a pair of intensely biomorphic 50s-Italian lighting fixtures and a pair of Giacometti sculptures, the first a noble bust and the second a tragic-faced, big-breasted nude weirdly blends *Angst* and lust. The hyper-artificial lamps and chthonic Giacomettis bracket, between them, an orgasmic universe of variations on the theme of eroticism and visual form. The pure colors marching across the upper panel are like a cadenza of approbation from an orchestra of paint tubes. In three panels of differently tinted grisaille, meanwhile, a Salle model exerts her femaleness even more gruelingly than usual, as if the occasion demanded a peak performance from all concerned—including the viewer, confidently summoned to a relentless carnival»⁶. It is a witty and intelligent take that skates across the surface at a breathless pace. Yet, it remains, at root, a narrative reading, proposing possible holds and turning the images into a playground for interpretation. Alternatively we might try to come to grips with it in terms of a finely balanced set of formal procedures, as a boldly orchestrated work for two hands with the left hand maintaining a solid chiaroscuro rhythm while the right hand moves around above with a mixture of cascading notes and slightly dischordant snatches. One thinks of the polished elegance of Cecil Taylor's improvisations, of the total bravura of pulling it off at top speed. The bottom line serves as a melodic pulse, surging up and falling away in grisaille variations that subtly modify the erotic impact of the image. The result is a muted sensuality, a carefully controlled play of light, that moves horizontally across the whole surface of the painting. Time is thus introduced as Salle paces our reading and choreographs our attention. We follow the movements of the dance. The straddled Caravaggesque figure, caught up in her sadomasochistic games, leaves us even more uncomfortably unanchored somewhere between a cheap clip-joint and the New York City Ballet, unsure if we are slumming out our rawest feelings or

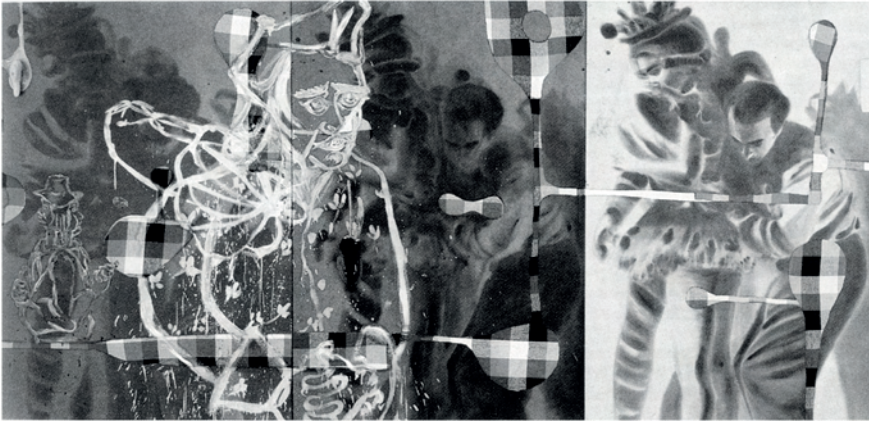


aesthetically transcending them. Not that Salle, in fact, wants to transcend anything —simply to organise and shape! When he asks us to focus it is, almost paradoxically, on what appears to be a wrought-iron garden-chair that forces us off the surface. In one of the wings of the upper panel the male lead appears to be getting ready to launch into his risqué passions. Momentarily vulgar, momentarily noble, he is above all deeply self-conscious. The tonal values of the external panels direct us back down to the lower frieze, but the rhythm has now changed to a violent, brilliant staccato. The chiaroscuro effects are recalled in a shattered fashion in the Giacometti figures that appear almost as kitsch souvenir-shop reproductions. The first of the fifties lamps provides the colour chord for the series of separate panels that flash off from it in harsh, quick, angular phrasings. It is this musical structure, somewhat akin to Coltrane's «sheets of sound», rather than the literal significance of the images, that creates the overall feeling. The chair now almost turns into the protagonist, the addition that slots everything into place. It prohibits separate readings of the two bands since it seems as close to the surface of the work as the images on the top line. It is almost as if the left hand had momentarily crossed over the right and snapped out its own telling phrase.

at. No. 13 *Marking through Webern*, although produced two years later, is clearly related to this work. It is a more complex and finely tuned performance but it further underlies the centrality of music and dance as analogous modes for discussing the way he structures his work and the kind of «meanings» it conveys. Indeed I believe that they offer a far more substantial access to the work from 1985 onwards than the more fashionable talk of postmodernist fragmentation that clearly remains so relevant to his earlier work. In this instance the bottom line offers four stark, almost repetitive, phrases of a scantily clad figure in black panties in a foreshortened plunging baroque posture. The second and third phrases are bridged by a small insert of a drawing from the 1920's. These divisions are echoed in the top panel where the wooden board and the blue oval produce similar bridging-effects between first/second and third/fourth. It is a violently reckless and churning sequence. On the extreme right the two friezes are united by a series of direct and fairly brutal

devices that include a superimposed, crudely drawn, and incompleting inset, some loose dripping, and an overwritten figure. This is an aggressive piece, even loud-mouthed, with the phallically pierced chair literally abusing space with the coarsest of everyday comments, and the chunky folk-art ceramics, «pure» americana some might say, doing little or nothing to modify the tone. Sexuality is irremediably bound up with dance, just as it is bound up with the blues. It is the undercurrent and transforming agent to all human situations. It is this condition of dance as sheer presence, total selfawareness, and organized intensity that Salle wishes to bring to his work: the sensation of being one's own reality and not a substitute for something else.

Salle directs us to Webern in the title he chooses for this work and, should we follow his lead, we would turn, perhaps, to the Webern of *Episodes*, or even to Ives of *Ivesiana*, where both the choreographic and the dance rhythm focus, moment by moment, on the concrete impetus of the music. Edwin Denby writes of them in the following terms: «while dance ballets like these are going on, you can recognize, the pattern-game that music and dance are playing. In the music you recognize the classic conventions or, at least, the classic type of noise. In the dance —at least for the most part— you recognize steps and figurations, the classic harmony of motion and grace of behaviour, the drama of solo, pas de deux, and ensemble. Like in a familiar game, you can catch the surprise of a fast play. You catch the sudden image the play leaves. And as you follow the nervy, personal impetus by which each of the dancers is individually creating the composite dance, you begin to sense between dance and music —as if it were a slower and larger image that took time to communicate— the image of a real quality of motion the vitality of which is a secret of art.»⁷ It is in this overall impression of artifice, seduction, manipulation —in short of power— provided by dance that Salle seeks for his own work.



Dance also thematically links *Abandoned Shells* and the *Symphony Concertante* series; the former through its use of a photo of Balanchine in rehearsal and the latter through Balanchine's choreographing of a Mozart composition that carries the same name. *Abandoned Shells* is clearly a homage with its Warholian repetition of the image of Balanchine correcting a dancer. The image appears as a kind of icy x-ray, an insistence that is left behind after one has penetrated the scrawly figure drawing and the optical jumping of the fragments of material. *Symphony Concertante*, however, is something else! Salle sets about choreographing his own score with the same pulsing, coherent, rhythmic figures that were Balanchine's trademark. To quote Denby once again: «Balanchine makes you feel the connection between the dance steps and the stage space... Most choreographers rely on the subject matter of their dances to do this for them. But Balanchine thought of dance as having musical subject matter, which is quite different from a plot. The sequence of steps, the variety of movements, are all related to the music. The musical subject matter of Balanchine's dances is difficult to describe but it can be deeply felt. There is a completeness about Balanchine's dances within that context»⁸. The analogies with Salle's work are evident enough –the emphasis on a musical subject matter rather than a plot, the heightened sense of presence so difficult to pin down, and this sense of being as Salle himself comments of Karole Armitage's works «a fact in the world»⁹. The images Salle so consistently uses are neither autobiographical, nor even obsessive. His attraction to them lies in the fact that they work aesthetically and that he can literally make them change their function by giving them different weight or tone. Salle's mixing of these images is patently american –voraciously eclectic, garishly iconoclastic, fickle brilliant, and uncompromisingly intelligent.

There are two works in the *Symphony Concertante* series, although *Yellow Bread* and *Kelly Bag* also show obvious associations. *Symphony Concertante II* presents an officer with a victorian waxed moustache (a Magritte portrait). He stares out, with a certain smug arrogance, at two «musicians», one nude and the other dressed, both holding musical instruments behind their backs. The officer, in fact, looks through them. He appears caught on a screen, almost as if the two girls were watching television. Behind the officer, just to the right of his head, is a Belloc style photo of a young girl. It is all very kinky and our officer (if he has not dressed specifically for the occasion) finds his pleasures as he may. He is surrounded, if we accept him as the protagonist of the scene and not simply as a flashing image, by the elements of his puzzle. At this point, however, the narrative collapses and other factors take over. We can take the relationship no further and our attention centres on the secondary details. Why are the musical instruments hidden behind the girl's backs? What is the role of the piece of futurist ceramic that keeps on shifting our attention away from the portrait and undermining its importance? Is it simply a matter of echoing yet reversing the colours of the officer's uniform? We find ourselves involved, once again, in those elegant balletic or cinematographic postures of the female figures that speak so eloquently of fear, repulsion, rejection, se-

crecy. The dominant tone is one of assurance, of lyrical exhilaration, of the odd moment of lechery, and of imperative needs expressed in finely modulated passages. There is an overwhelming passion for elegance that reminds me again of something Denby wrote, not of *Symphony Concertante*, but of Stravinsky's *Danses Concertantes*, also choreographed by Balanchine: «they are like characters in a garden, individuals who communicate, respond, who modify and return without losing their distinctness. The dance is like a conversation in Henry James, as surprising, as forbearing, as full of fancy. The joyousness of it is the pleasure of being civilized, of being what we really are, born into a millennial urban civilization. This is where we are and this is what the mind makes beautiful»¹⁰. Salle is concerned that, irrespective of the nature of the emotion, whatever the overtones of vulgarity, coldness, or carnality that might accrue to it in the fragmentary process, that the image should be elegantly stated and maintain the classical order of a highly-cultivated style. His world writes itself on many levels. It accepts intuition, improvisation, risk, but submits them to an ultimate control. He shows us, perhaps, that the truth of a human situation, or of a visual order, lies in the itinerary of not being able to find it.

Much the same occurs with *Symphony Concertance 1*, although the accompanying music no longer seems to be that of Mozart but rather Debussy or Ravel. The mood is different and the fragments carry other reverberations. We find ourselves somewhere else, familiar but impossible to define. He is a master-of-ceremonies, a maître de cuisine, who organises his world as a language and it is this capacity that finally makes it particular. He plays out problems as solutions, moving casually between the shifting concepts of language, world, and consciousness. Everything in this work is finely balanced, dressed to kill, and giddily self-reflexive.

The fact that Salle should have chosen to collaborate directly with Karole Armitage is, of course, no cause for surprise. Armitage builds her work up in much the same way as Salle with a similar insistence on the mosaic law of parts, the same exploitation of dischord and surprise, and even, possibly the same understanding of the body as the location of human inquiry. This eclectic procedure can be seen, for example, in *The Mollino Room* (1986) which featured Mikhail Baryshnikov dancing to a composition that sandwiched two Hindemith pieces around a Mike Nichols and Elaine May improvised routine called *My Son and Nurse*. It is a decision that echoes Salle's own willingness to mix cartoon and quotations from Art History. The reference to Carlo Mollino is explanatory and appropriate. Mollino is a seminal figure in the evolution of European modern style and his work is based on the evocative juxtaposition of different period styles. This is precisely the procedure of Salle and Armitage in their respective domains. Eclecticism in the eighties has become a dangerously empty recipe and Salle's work avoids the pitfalls through a series of original formal and structural innovations that creates a situation where the images visually and emotionally need each other.

The European Phrasing of the Late Albert Ayler (1987) for which Salle completed the mammoth task of producing both the costumes and the decor, is even more eclectic. It

mixes together music by Webern, Stravinsky and Ayler along with Lord Buckley and Yo-Yo Ma. It is a fairly breathless operation that, perhaps, helps understand why Peter Schjodahl's reaction should be in such purplish prose: «Ayler hits a plateau of harmonious erotic feeling, powerful and free... that I want to call courtly»¹¹. Yet what remains immensely important is the push towards synthesis and the clear evidence of the interdependence of the parts. Salle and Armitage seek to structure improvisation and what they find in Ayler is the power of convincing phrasing. Ayler in the seventies was criticised for being structureless. It is a surprising accusation since his music clearly comes off Coltrane and Ornette Coleman! What attracts Salle is, I imagine, Ayler's ability to organise complex statements and to construct spontaneous variations which reflect the contours of the theme. Frank Kofsky effectively describes this procedure for us: «My guess is that Ayler has adopted the technique of spinning out a solo based in a simple theme because this allows him to create a series of sounds of extraordinary force and effectiveness, all the while keeping the overall work relatively direct and comprehensible»¹². Salle in much the same way knows how to problematize the field or references without losing control.

Denby, whose writings on dance I have quoted on several occasions, was as much a poet as a dance-critic. He tells us that he had been reading a poem where the introduction of *it*, a small, modest, unemphatic, and simple *it*, had changed the whole sense of some lines. I suspect that he may well have been talking about John Ashbery's *Pyrography* where the use of *it* somehow fuses easy familiarity and radical ambiguity. Ashbery is a poet who creates tensions at the intersices of language and who wilfully denies the literal surface of meaning. He is the ideal poet for Salle who also sits happily at ease in the sea of ambiguity, piling up images that move smoothly onwards but never fully clarify each other and that evidently prefer contingency to any other kind of relationship. He also knows how to use a modest, apparently insignificant, image to serve as a flash and introduce a disconcerting change in direction. We are left comfortably ill-at-ease. There is the same relaxed permissiveness and perverse inclusiveness that we find in Ashbery's poetry:

But all the fathers returning home
On street cars after a satisfying day at the office undid it:
The climate was still floral and all the wall paper
In a million homes all over the land conspired to hide it.
One day we thought of painted furniture, of how
It just slightly changes everything in the room
And in the yard outside, and how if we were going
To be able to write the history of our time, starting with today
It would be necessary to model all these unimportant details
So as to be able to include them; otherwise the narrative
We would have that flat, sandpapered look the sky gets
Out in the middle west toward the end of summer¹³

Salle, similarly, paints sensations that partially elude him and that he intuitively recognises as being carried in the diverse fragments that make up the work. He is always on the

8 R. MARSH. «PICKNICK AM STRAND», 1939
«Picnic at the beach»



9 R. MARSH MACHT SKIZZEN AUF CONEY ISLAND, CA. 1950
R. Marsh taking sketches at Coney Island



point of revealing the secret but there is never a shared discourse, or, at least, not if we understand by «shared discourse» a quality susceptible to some clear definition. Salle prefers the shifting sands. The fourth wall to that room Lisa Liebmann talks of is invariably missing. If there is a vision that underlies his work it is the sense that life holds us and is unknowable, and that the fragments that make up our day and present us with an open field of narrative possibilities, speak finally only of themselves. He moves in and out of sensations, feeling them from different perspectives, now hot, now cold, now ample, now intense. He gives us a feeling, as Ashbery says with regards to Gertrude Stein, «of a 'plot', though it would be difficult to say precisely what is going on. Sometimes the story has the logic of a dream... at other times it becomes startlingly clear for a moment, as though a change in the wind had suddenly enabled us to hear a conversation that was taking place some distance away... but usually it is not events which interest, rather it is their way of happening»¹⁴.

Salle is unconcerned with context. He wants that space where we all live —an interchangeable environment that includes his favourite dog, cut-off limbs from Gericault, vaudeville scenes from Reginald Marsh, eighteenth century cartoons, magazine illustrations, photos, etc. Not that these elements come together loosely, quite the contrary their meetings are as precise and careful as a ballroom dance. They need to be where they are, although that need has no explanation beyond that of a retinal sensation and a proven intuition. He is, however, concerned with spectacle, with what Debord calls that «hyped-up vacuum we live within»¹⁵. Spectacle, like modern society, is at once unified and divided. Like society it builds its unity on disjunction. Salle shows us that all demonstrated division is unitary while all demonstrated unity is divided. He presents the spectacle of a world which really is topsy-turvy, in which the true is a moment of the false. He stages these *truths* for us all the time recognizing that «the basically tautological character of the spectacle flows from the simple fact that its means are simultaneously its ends. It is the sun which never sets over the empire of modern passivity. It covers the entire surface of the world and bathes endlessly in its own glory»¹⁶. He presents the glamour of sheer image that willingly absorbs our disbelief.

It is John Hawkes who perceptively writes of Salle as living

within a «landscape of indifferent hunters and vanished lovers», fully aware that «dead passion is the most satisfying»¹⁷. Salle, in his turn, acknowledges that he is drawn to Hawke's novels, perhaps especially to the way in which he presents us with verbal pictures—insane asylums, arid deserts inhabited by giant snakes, cars streaking towards destruction—that dominate over plot or character. Both artists give pride of place to the image and allow it to organise the dance. Hawkes argues that he is looking for a «totally new and necessary fictional landscape or visionary world» that is «thoroughly, self-consciously fictional, self-contained artifice, tableaux»¹⁸. Salle also clearly feels the attraction of a private solipsistic underworld. He wants his own world with his own voice, though this is not necessarily an egocentric one. He sets out on an inner migration with an ambivalent destination, knowing that the American fables of redemption are now mere nostalgia. They offer no psychic renewal, «the old theme of the American aspiring to move forward in time and space unencumbered by guilt or reflection in human limitation is certainly unavailable to the guilt-ridden psyche of modern man»¹⁹.

The phrase «dead passion» is an interesting comment on Salle's work that applies both to his attitude towards sexuality and to his sense of the possibilities of contemporary painting. It is a condition that instinctively appeals to Hawkes because it reflects a primary concern of his own novels as he reveals in a conversation about *Blood Oranges* where he observes that his fiction is generally «an evocation of the nightmare of a terroristic universe in which sexuality is destroyed by law, by dictum, by human perversity, by contraption, and it is this destruction of human sexuality which I have attempted to portray and confront in order to be true to human fear and to human ruthlessness, but also in part to evoke its opposite, the moment of freedom from constriction, constraint and death»²⁰. At one level Salle does indeed talk about the fraying of psychic health, about the shattering of sexuality into simulation and glossy borrowed rituals, about the fear, awkwardness, and uncertainty that accompany human relationships. Yet, even more significantly, the phrase is appropriate as a revelation of a condition that Salle has won for his work, a consequence of that «emptiness at the core of his being». Salle himself tells us in an observation that applies essentially to his earlier work: «The paintings are dead in the sense that to intuit the meaning of something incompletely, but with an idea of what it might mean or involve to know completely, is a kind of premonition of death. The paintings, in their opacity, signal an ultimate clarification. The paintings do this by appearing to participate in meaninglessness»²¹. He knows that passion found is passion lost, that everything, as we ourselves are, is running through a sieve, and that even what we try to state can never be fully held. But, having said this, neither should we forget that Salle's work are hymns to many possibilities and that with the death of meaning he is left with the power and beauty of images as things in themselves, with the satisfactions of finding for them an appropriate place²².

io. 16 *The Wig Shop*, for example, conveys this current of «dead passion». It is suffused with a feeling of love that is breaking apart. The melancholic recognition that something is being

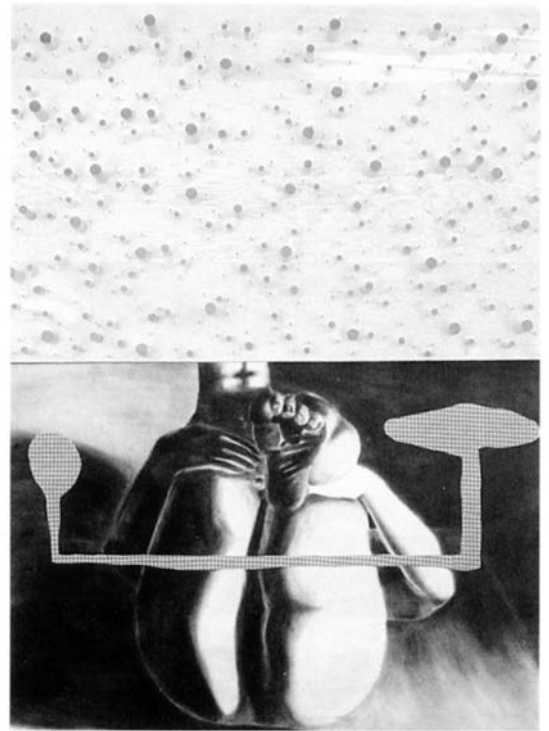
lost and that all we can do is to remember it, and not even that with any fullness. There is a bitter sweet tone of the nocturne. Salle turns to Solana for both the title and one of the images of his work: *La Peinadora* (1918). He is not particularly interested in Solana's costumbrista world—a world that finds its perfect counterpoint in the descriptions his brother offers of Madrid at the turn of the century: «the old Wig Shops with their cardboard dummies on the balcony and the small rooms that were reserved for the ladies who came to receive massage»²³. Neither is he interested in Solana's dark spanish expressionism that provides him with such a disturbing individual vision. What matters to Salle is the underlying mood of something having been and now caught in the desperate process of loss. These small rituals of pride in the «beauty salon» prefigure their own ends. She is surrounded by busts and models that appear more like decapitated heads. Her gaunt, angular features declare her determination to continue against all odds. Her eyes are lost in reverie. The insertion of the Giacometti bust seems both to catch and mock her thoughts. The right hand panel serves as a literal accompaniment, phrasing the same mood in terms of chiaroscuro or as a sonata. She appears to be tuning the instrument, looking for the appropriate sound. Salle draws our attention to the hands, to the plucking out of emotions. The spectator plays the role of voyeur, learning about himself as he surreptitiously encroaches upon the intimacy of others. But the work as such would remain too pat, too evident as commentary and as forced juxtaposition that struggles for solutions. Salle resolves this excessive dependency by the introduction of an alien element: a found still-life that he incorporates directly into the painting. As a pure visual element it functions perfectly, resuming as it were the tones of the Solana painting and introducing, both optically and psychologically, a tension that gives the work life. Its maudlin sentimentality serves paradoxically as a healthy correction to the general tonic of sticky nostalgia. Salle would also have recognized in Hawkes a leading practitioner in the rhetoric of «anti-realist» fiction—a rhetoric that puts great emphasis on turning conventional literary inducements to the reader into continual challenges to the intellect and emotion. Salle's own works are equally concerned with the introduction of ideas and could be said to live intellectually in terms of their preoccupation with the contraries of the viewing experience which are so crucial to their enjoyment. They exemplify De Man's assertion that a work exists in the foreknowledge of criticism and that its form is «the result of the prefigurative structure of the foreknowledge and the intent to totality in the interpretative process»²⁴. These works demand interpretation and as such specifically introduce the «temporal predicament» in that «to understand something is to realize that one had always known it, but, at the same time, to face the mystery of this hidden knowledge»²⁵. His work invites, frustrates, instructs, and shocks the seeking consciousness, and yet continuously announces that it is simply a work, a «fiction». It offers a knowledge which is never complete.

Eroticism is one of the driving forces behind this knowledge. It is part of his way of questioning the world. Numerous critics have identified soft porno as an element within his

10 DAVID SALLE. «THE WIG SHOP», 1987 (Kat. Nr. 16)
Der Perückenladen



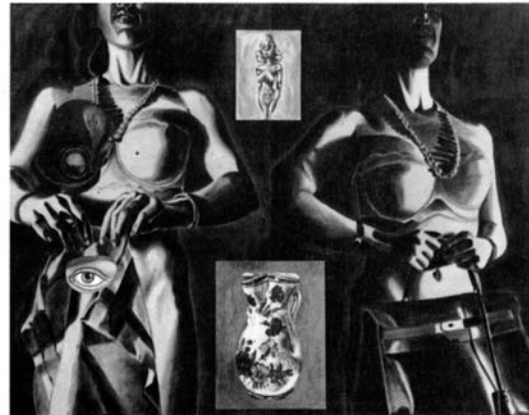
11 DAVID SALLE. «THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE BOOMING VOICE», 1984
Das Verschwinden der dröhnenden Stimme



work and built up a myth of Salle staggering around with a pile of dirty photos under his arm that he supposedly carried off with him after his page-mounting exploits for a magazine. Yet Salle has, in fact, used very few of these images and hardly any have been on «girlie» themes. Salle has repeatedly told us that he is not particularly interested in pornography. It serves him more as an accompanying drone that sings along with everything else. It would, of course, be equally stupid to deny that these images of attractively proportioned young girls with their legs apart, their buttocks raised, or their panties half-way down their legs are not erotic. They are, although Salle is constantly engaged in modifying their impact and refocusing their charge. He uses a whole series of devices to achieve this end, from his subtle grisaille effect to the affectionately humorous touches in the postures, or from the failure to reveal facial expressions that are, perhaps, the key register of sexual pleasure to the frequent quotations from Art History in the figures he uses. Salle has himself observed that «eroticism is the generation's word for authenticity» and what fascinates him about this view of «authenticity» is the way it focuses on something that becomes more and more distorted the closer you get to it. This perverse exchange of identities between the authentic and the distorted intrigues Salle and allows us to understand why he sees eroticism as «an integral part of understanding the aesthetic»²⁶. It is a pulse, a perceptual trigger, or in his own words, «it is about *how you know* to single something out»²⁷. Salle uses the insets in his pictures in an erotic sense as mirrors of a woman's body. At one level it is a harmless scatological joke exploiting the bilateral symmetry, a sophisticated graffiti of the genitals where he plays with different sized formats from bigger, larger holes to smaller, squarer holes. Yet, at another level, they carry a whole series of metaphysical and metaphorical implications that com-

plicate Salle's field of references in almost characteristic fashion. The insets can be seen as «windows» with faces peering out at us as we peer through them, or as scenes of the voyeur's gratification. The images, or subjects, of the insets also tend to mirror the body's configuration: the pitchers and vases with their pinched lips; the wrinkled Giacometti heads, etc. They help set up the moods underlying the works from the grinning mockery of the face in *Marking through Webern* to the more theatrical impact of the Magritte torso thrust up against a head of hair framing a woman's face in *Symphony Concertante II*. Salle is, then, both representing the body through images and actualising it through the collocation of the insets. These works establish their own reality and never hang as merely descriptive. They are actual corporated bodies rather than works about bodies. It is here that we have the «real reality» of the painting, revealed appropriately enough through the thick skin of paint that is the surface. The insets serve, consequently, to bring the work to life. They literally transform it. Salle notes in a letter that the motivation behind all of this is «to get inside of things, inside the thing, and also to see from outside simultaneously, to be director and directed».

This fairly simple scatological joke is turned into a vehicle for other more complex readings. Salle recognises that the pleasure principle is subversive in the sense that it openly challenges repression²⁸. His concentration on the female posterior recalls Norman O. Brown's assertion that the excremental vision constitutes the symbolic essence of modern civilization. Indeed, American civilization remains in a youthful stage and its attention may well be focused on anal eroticism. There is a clear relationship between capitalism and eroticism that Paz has gone as far as calling the «excremental baroque». Salle's focusing on the bottom has its serious side: «as a matter of fact, the ass is sober-sided; the organs of laughter are the same as those of language: the tongue and the lips. When we laugh at our ass—that caricature of our face—we affirm our separation and bring about the total defeat of the pleasure principle. Our face laughs at our ass and thus retraces the dividing line between the body and the spirit»²⁹. What Paz has to say in *Conjunctions and Disjunctions*, a text that has been of great interest to Salle, offers us one way of approaching the constant play in the American painter's works between face and bottom: «psychoanalysis has taught us about the conflict between the face and the ass, the (repressive) reality principle and the (explosive) pleasure principle. I will merely note here that the metaphor that I mentioned, both as it works upward and as it works downward—the ass as a face and the face as an ass—serves each of these principles alternately. At first, the metaphor uncovers a similarity; then, immediately afterward, it covers it up again, either because the first term absorbs the second, or vice versa. In any case, the similarity disappears and the opposition between ass and face reappears, in a form that is now even stronger than before. Here, too, the similarity at first seems unbearable to us—and therefore we either laugh or cry; in the second step, the opposition becomes unbearable—and therefore we either laugh or cry»³⁰. Salle shows us that his purpose is, indeed, a serious one and that he has fully understood the import of



Paz's belief that «the other response to carnal violence is seriousness, impassivity. This is the philosophical response, as the burst of laughter is the mythical response. Seriousness is an attribute of ascetics and libertines»³¹.

One of the dominant tones, then, that produces aesthetic satisfaction in his work, is this undercurrent of erotic play that becomes a syntax for dealing with controlled violence, fatuousness, day-dreams or domesticity. *Epaulettes for Walt Kuhn*, for example, is an ironic homage to Kuhn's epauletted majorettes who live all parades with their swirling canes and tight-fitting military tunics. They show us puritan prudence at its best or worst. Whatever is implicit for Kuhn becomes explicit for Salle: the majorette loses everything but her jacket. She does not become, however, overtly erotic, and neither do the two upside-down proffered bottoms that accompany her. I recall a remark of Salle's in this respect: «there are things in my paintings and there are things in the world and the two things are not the same—even though one might look like the other. Nudes in paintings are not the same as nudes in the world. It is their relationship that is interesting»³². Although it is obvious enough that little could survive as healthily erotic after the image of the dead fish (a Flemish still-life) that straddles the upper section of the picture. The small insets of the two fifties light fittings and the mule, all favourite Salle images, activate the surface, creating a three-dimensional effect, illuminating the ground, and cancelling out relationships. The images carry sexual symbolical values but Salle makes nothing of them. The «dripping» quote is a piece of calculated artifice that leads to the lower frieze where it finds its echo in the epaulettes. It is almost slapstick but Salle does not mind even a bad joke if it is elegantly told. It is a fairly dark and disturbing picture, but it also leaves us with the impression of Salle smiling from the side-lines as the smoke clears. His work has been attacked by the feminists but, at root, I believe there is nothing anti-feminist about these images. To the contrary I would argue that Salle is fully aware that the way in which we now raise questions of gender and sexuality, subjectivity and enunciation, or voice and performance are unthinkable without the inclusion of the impact of feminist critique.

It is curious to observe how attracted he feels towards the painters of the post-Depression years—to Kuhn, Soyer, Marsh, or Hopper. What is it that appeals to him about the sentimental scene painting of American low life, of the barb-

13 DOUGLAS SIRK. STANDBILD AUS «INVITATION TO LIFE», 1959
Frame from «Invitation to life»



14 NICHOLAS RAY. STANDBILD AUS «BIGGER THAN LIFE», 1956
Frame From «Bigger than life»



er's shop, the cinema, the vaudeville? Does he feel a certain sympathy for the abandonment of European avant-garde experiments and the return to a native American subject-matter? Is there an ironic recognition of these «decent» people in the small towns with their white-fence values holding desperately onto all they have got? Is he touched by their efforts to revive academic tricks? Or are they, as I prefer to think, simply elements of an american patchwork, examples of artists who have tried to capture the particularity of that experience? This is something that certainly matters to Salle: to reveal the nerve not through the meanings of the images but through the way they present themselves, to capture the restlessness, inventiveness, and capriciousness of his time. Glamour, visual extravagance, and style are clearly of major importance to Salle. By style he means something that is both promiscuous and visually elegant. This quality of promiscuity he finds in Pop Art, along with a certain covetousness that denies us access to the mechanics of presentation. Salle is not in the least bit interested in Pop culture but he is interested in design and sophisticated presentational methods, in how and what we choose to communicate. He finds this same elaborately constructed visual world in the work of the directors of the splendid black and white melodramas –Sturges, Fuller, Sirk etc. Sirk's *Imitation of Life*, for example, left a powerful impression of him: «what was compelling was how strange they look, how incredibly beautiful the visual component is! What that implies is a sense of deliberateness to make a visual world— a very strict visual world that is composed of certain very clearly premeditated elements. There is almost always a sense of a very deep space or broad space in a Sirk frame»³³. It is, in fact, a film about dissatisfaction, flight, the impossibility of escaping our condition, and about the desire to imitate a need for introspection. Sirk has himself acknowledged, and it is an affirmation that recalls Salle, that he is involved with the *melos* of American melodrama, with the musical structure that flows under a story and allows one to express something well beyond narrative possibilities. Both artists use violent images as *counterweight* to sugary excess. The story becomes, then, a pretext, a support on which to hang his fascination with

man's insincerity or his overwhelming sense of despair. Sirk refers to this film as a «weepee» and draws our attention to the fact that the title magnificently conveys the idea of «looking through a glass darkly». «Everything» he says, «including life is inevitably separated from you. You can neither reach nor touch the real. You see only reflections. If you try to seize hold of happiness itself, your feelings find nothing but the glass. There is no hope»³⁴. The melodrama is a genre that attracts Salle precisely because it is larger than life —an artifice to present the most dramatic incidents and emotions of life at one's own pace and with one's own timing.

It hardly needs pointing out that Salle makes use of numerous cinematic devices —the zoom, panning, close-up, splicing, montage, etc. But, perhaps, even more important than all of these is the way he treats the surface and the attention he gives to light and colour. In his interview with Schjedahl he comes succinctly to the point: «the films are almost always shot in a very high key in terms of light and colour. And there is deep space and strong use of verticals in the composition of the picture: these give a sense of the sugary surface of the reality of American life, and the structure of the drama, the text, is the underside of that same world. The way that he was able to make one manifest through the other I thought was quite brilliant and really unparalleled»³⁵. Salle similarly makes us complices to sliding surfaces that are alluring and seductive as long as you ask no questions, where the skillful use of simultaneity immediately complicates the image, and where as soon as we begin to unravel the distinct elements we become lost in a maze of questions, and conflicting emotions. *The Burning Bush* is an ironical contemporary twist on the biblical image as a woman looks through her legs at us and busily thrusts her sex into our noses. We cannot really be too sure as to what Salle's own stance is towards the image. Is it sexually aggressive or domestically affectionate? In any case he quickly leads our attention towards what seems to be an inexplicable figure of a Prussian officer hurrying off with some stolen (?) clocks, while the smaller repeated figure of the same image, as if from a sequence in a Keystone Cops film, takes us back to the sexual focus by occupying all the neuralgical points. He also, almost as an afterthought, leads us to another nude with her head thrown back over her shoulders. She is relaxed, caught unawares, and has no direct relationship with the viewer. To the right there are two more equally unrelated images but the tone has changed, more meditative and distinctly more poetic. The frieze of circles arches round her, framing her momentarily, while the passage of abstract brushwork stands as yet another metaphor of the «burning bush». We travel across a changing space that is filled with reverberations, qualifying encounters, partial resolutions, and restless confrontations. Salle creates this climate by giving, as he notes of Sirk, a major role to light and colour: warm red, lurid orange, brilliant white, and hesitant grisaille. As we might expect Salle finds in Sirk the qualities he most cares for —extreme attention to detail, a total control of effects, and highly discrete method of manipulating high-powered emotions. He asks us to consider a series of facets that have obvious connotations with his own work: «there is

an extreme edge to the costuming, lighting, coloration of the set— the use of artifice that I am sure by viewers at the time was not noticed and was not intended to be noticed. It struck me as exemplary —an exemplary degree of self-consciousness and control— visual control on the part of the artist in calling your attention to how he felt about the subject matter without there being any apparent intrusion of interpretive morality into the context. There are also a number of black-and-white films, and perhaps in the black-and-white films the extent to which Sirk was visually poetic is even more apparent in the use of light and shadow and composition to give meaning to certain elements of the drama of the text. I think these are the kinds of things that are very important in my work and are similarly not noticed, or at least are not recognized or felt... That is to say that what I would consider the artfulness of things in some cases is really invisible, or it becomes visible in a particular and unusually slow way»³⁶. Salle's own particular form of «artfulness» includes showing us a new way of scanning images through intense organization and control right down to the last retinal flicker. Responsibility here literally means answering for the world he creates. He is director, actor, spectator without ever asserting his presence. In one sense it is american «entertainment» at its best in terms of its scale, ambition, and rhythm, yet, at the same time, it has all the lightness, elegance, and structuring will for order of eighteenth century French Art. Are Salle's women contemporary readings of Boucher or Fragonard where the body itself, rather than imaginative titillation, is the scene of action and the vehicle for a more complex communication? This is, I insist, a deeply American work in its constant struggle to outdo itself, to see if it can get away with just one more move.

In his more recent work Poulenc has given way to Mahler but even in these moments of extravagant hedonism one senses the overriding presence of the guardian eye, the hungry glance, and the flexed muscle. For a consciousness, such as Salle's, that informs itself in all directions, everything becomes problematic and inconsequential. Aesthetic order represents the intellect's struggle to survive, its effort to impose something durable against an increasingly broad flood of simultaneous inconsequences, while continuing to recognize their validity. Salle's image of a light-bulb is a convex mirror. It deals with nature, surfaces, interiors, the eye, or relationships between art and life. It indulges in distortion. Salle collects these distorted reflections of a world that has no stable centre. He allows things to haphazardly accumulate but insists that they find their place. His works are meditations on their making.

Salle might be called a «classical postmodernist». He is classical in his rage for order and postmodern in the way he questions centralized, totalized, hierarchized, closed systems. He questions but he does not destroy since his work is finally about selection and interreference. He listens, watches, and registers the world ex-centrally, off-centre, off-tone. He acknowledges the human urge to make order, while pointing out that the orders we create are just that: human constructs, not natural or given entities. He requires a visually sophisticated audience, ludically disposed —an audience that can recognize Ribera's club-footed urchin, a

Freud portrait, a Rops whore, a Watteau or Dix drawing, or a Gericault limb! The same sophisticated reponses that are required for the interreferential games are needed for the overall reading. *King Kong*, for example, can be read as an ironic comment on the behavioural patterns of contemporary society via the Hollywood-style onomatopoeia on the couple's behinds. The blue Kokoshka figure is either recalling or being recalled. Yet such an interpretative process really does not take us very far. The work is, finally about aesthetic experience and about the nature of aesthetic satisfaction. The letters of King Kong create a characteristic chiaroscuro effect; the blue figure establishes a shallow depth and an optical tension with the lettering; and the addition of the light and the table is totally effective provided we do not try to explain it away—effective in the way it echoes and concentrates the dominant colours, and in the glaringly aggressive play it produces between lettering and light-bulb. It can also be taken as an exaggerated body metaphor, a twisting of any trace of simple affirmation. Salle clearly enjoys the crass over—simplifications, the uncomplicated vulgarity, and the transparent falsity of fifties style—when plastic becomes part of the transplant industry!

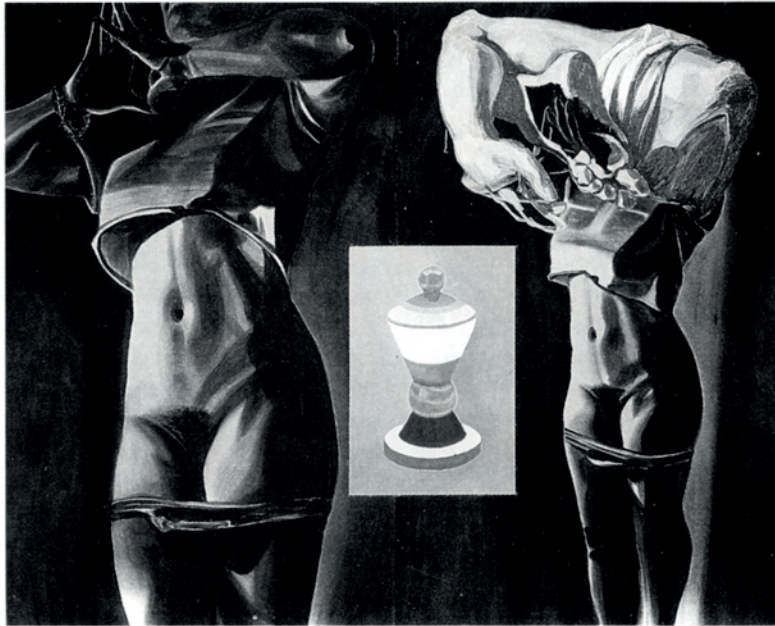
Tennyson was produced a year later but it is clearly related. On this occasion the quoting system (appropriation is an unfortunate term since Salle is in no way engaged in the procedures and arguments that interest other postmodern artists such as Levine or Steinbach) refers to Jasper Johns—the title of one his works, the heavy pigmented brushstrokes, and the wooden replica of the plaster ear from one of his *Targets*. The figure on the beach would hardly have met with the approval of the Victorian poet whose name marches so firmly across him! Salle obviously quotes him with some amusement, since although he may have approved of his galloping rhythms it seems unlikely that he would succumb to the floral rhetoric. It is, then, once again a question of aesthetic balance, of things finding their place: an echoing of tones, a locking in of horizontal and vertical readings, a slight but effective framing, and a play between surface and a plunging diagonal perspective. Salle keeps us moving, on edge. Something is going on and we are involved.

His use of images is characteristically postmodern discourse in that it reveals how we construct our versions of reality. He foregrounds both the constructions and the need for them, stressing the contexts in which images are produced and the overwhelming, yet exhilarating, stench of contamination. Salle's concern is always transformation, additional readings, never sheer appropriation. Postmodernism does not deal with the disjunct world of modernism but with one that is beyond repair, dependent on randomness, contingency, and multiplicity. Salle, like a character in Federman's definitively postmodern novel *Take it or Leave it*, adores discontinuity and difference. He instinctively recognises that «we are difference... our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, ourselves the difference of masks. That difference, far from being the forgotten and irrecoverable origin, is this dispersion that we are and make»³⁷. The discourse underlying his work, the way he questions the world, his stance to reality, is never «either/



or» but always «both/and». There is a constant overlapping of critical, philosophical, and pictoric discourses as being culturally healthy. The assertive Modernist desire for authority and closure is dismantled in favour of a more plural approach that willingly indulges in all forms of intellectual play. What Salle so acutely questions are the assumptions of how we make meaning, of how we put it together.

The world both determines and is determined by consciousness. The way we look becomes what we see. Salle's cool intelligence, his moments of irony or cynicism, his analytical distance, or his flashes of calculated capriciousness, are responsive visions, the necessary strategies of noninvolvement. He has paradoxically created a style, some critics might call it a high-gloss finish, out of the fact that he did not particularly believe in one. It is a style that seems implicitly to admit that to describe is to ironise, and that to do so stylishly is to convince. There are, of course, numerous devices that have come to characterise his work—veils and transparencies, the submission of space to a bombardment of images, the use of block prints or silhouettes that serve as pin-pricks of narrative or point of emotional attention, or the wide-ranging systems of quotation—and they are all consequences of his dialectical involvement with the nature of meaning and with the appropriateness of submitting a visual culture to a charged visual questioning³⁸. These works carry the awareness that the net effect of thought about language «with its rejection of essence and such founding principles of history as causality and sufficient reason, has been to evacuate history from discourse. And with this evacuation the very idea of reference becomes problematic»³⁹. It is a recognition that helps us come to grips with his complex use of images from the past, such as the Magritte portrait in *Symphony Concertante II*, the Landseer dog in *Jar of Spirits* or the Velasquez one in *Yellow Bread*, the Kokoshka figure in *King Kong*, or the Noguchi lamp in *Sextant in Dogtown* etc. These images are not degraded but they are unanchored. Yet their presence, instead of being weakened through a separation from context, becomes increasingly more assertive and problematic. They correspond, perhaps, to that insatiable craving of the modern consciousness for detective stories that answers the need for a kind of experimental amorality in a culture doomed to live amidst an excess of conflicting ethics and rich ambiguities. Salle, however, is complicating a plot that offers no relief and no convenient denouement.



The fragment seems one of the most convincing representations of the way the contemporary consciousness accumulates and understands experience. It is indicative of the way we live comfortably amidst rapid change and the partially glimpsed or understood. Salle's use of imagery is massively promiscuous and willingly includes images that range from cigar-box musical instruments to a photo from the Spanish Civil War, from an image in a guide book to Naples to an Olive Fife photo of a Halloween Contest, or from the search for an image analogous to the sound of a saxophone to one of his own photos of a nude in a posture that serves as a scurrilous reminder to the Miller's flatulent intentions should we trouble to reread his story in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales!* His use of these fragments evidently does not produce a narrative but it does lead to a creation of fictions, not fiction in the sense of an addition to reality but fiction as a model of the world. Salle claims suspensiveness, a willingness to live amidst uncertainty. He is interested neither in assimilation nor appropriation but rather in the passionate needs that grow from contingency. These fragments are, at one level, acts of criticism that insist on the need for continuous questioning. His is an art of unrest—unrest brought, as it were, to classical resolution. In short, he proposes a new syntax, that includes the circulation of losses, parataxis, and the introduction of new single meanings across a discontinuous hiatus.

If we are looking for signs of how Salle deals with that «emptiness at the core of being» that Liebmann refers to, we can, perhaps, find one of the answers in a remark of Campbell Tatham «if it all seems uncertain... if we come to survey emptiness without and emptiness within—I need not despair: we can always create a new role, initiate a new performance, conduct a renewed transformance, amid the endless series»⁴⁰. His concentration in recent works on the nude figure, on the body as location, on sexuality as the mode of questioning characteristic of our time, brings this emptiness to one of its most painful grounds. Salle shows us

that he knows how to orchestrate these shadows, helping us to recall that phrase of Nietzsche: «Perhaps truth is a woman who has reasons not to let her reasons be seen»⁴¹. Truth, for Salle, means organising what is happening.

17 DAVID SALLE. ZEICHNUNG NACH EINER VOLKSKUNST-FIGUR, 1988
Drawing from folk art figure



18 VON DAVID SALLE FÜR «MARKING THROUGH WEBERN»
BENÜTZTES BLATT
Working-page used by David Salle for
«Marking through Webern»

19 DAVID SALLE. PROBEDRUCK, 1988
Etching proof



0 DAVID SALLE ARBEITSFOTO FÜR «SYMPHONY CONCERTANTE II», 1987
Working photograph for «Symphony Concertante II»

