



Terri Hallman

Exclusive Interview with Terri Hallman April 2007

Q) At what age did you first start to "paint" and what was the subject matter?

A) As far back as I remember I was always drawing. I grew up in a house with 4 sisters and my mother - so my subject was faces - usually women, and horses. (I think they were "male".) A lot of childhood photos catches me with my sketchbook and disconnected from the activity around me. I can see from those photos by age 6 or so that I had already found that place (mentally, psychologically) that I go to now when I work, or my head was up and facing towards the sky, looking inward rather than towards the viewer.

I only drew - pencil, graphite - until about age 25, I tried painting just once in high school when an art teacher wanted me to try. I didn't like it so I never tried it again. my drawing progressed, typically, into photorealism and I became interested in drawing textures like cloth, leather and wood, etc. making them as realistic and tactile as I could. College made me stop drawing and being so safe and anal.

Q) Have you always painted figurative work?

A)The majority, yes. I find faces endlessly interesting, not necessarily the face structure but displays of some kind of emotion on the face, gestures and gestural, good, bad, darkness and joy - it's all fascinating to me. I've read, and read, a lot about psychology and physiognomy these are my interests. The figure and face is also just a subject for me to practice and develop interests I have in line, positive/negative space, movement, colour and endless others.

Q) What were your early influences and were you exposed to art.

A) Books, museums galleries) I grew up in a small town and wasn't exposed too much art until college. I remember being blown away by Jonathon Borofsky and any artwork that showed frantic-ness or rapid movement, everything influences. Everything I've seen and done has been absorbed.

Q) Any other "arty" people in family (brothers, sisters etc)

A) My mother and one sister had some skills but neither developed it

Q) Art training.

A) An art school - Minneapolis College of art and design. It jarred me into seeing things in ways than I had not been used to (coming from a small town it brought the concept of abstraction into my life and a lot of disorientation. People need that more. I definitely did, the thing I like to say most about art school is that it doesn't teach you how to be a good painter, designer, and sculptor. It just makes you get a lot of the garbage over with faster.

Q) Did you ever want to do anything else and did you.

A) I worked as a designer through and after college. I liked it a lot but did it only for a few years. I took on some more menial work just to get by as an artist. I've worked as a framer and I worked for a signage business for a few years, I loved it, unfortunately, I often got fired from these jobs. I don't work well for others if I don't like the way they do things.

Q) What drives you?

A) Fear of dullness, well... yes

Q) What do you most like about your work?

A) It's really me, I believe I keep it real

Q) What do you hate about your work?

A) Its temperamental, how I'm feeling each day will show through, it means I have to keep my life up and invigorated in order to work well. I need to be working well in order for my life to be working well. I need to keep my life satisfying in order for the work to be good. And I need to be producing good work to be happy..la de da my life and work are welded together, I have to keep tight control of this.

Q) As above about other people.

A) When they don't say what they really mean.

Q) Explain a bit about the technical process you go through to achieve your work.

A) later

Q) Favourite colours.

A) Usually my favourites are red and yellow, the stronger and more saturated the better, I always have a secondary colour love at any given time, right now it a sort of blue-jeans blue, because my work is layers of colour on top of each other, combinations of colours next to each other or showing through are interesting to me, mixing a new colour or finding new pigment is driving fuel for work.

Part Two

I might be skipping around

Q) Favourite artist(s).

A) I don't usually like to answer this question because there are far too many.



Q) Favourite music, writer, film of all time.

A) I listen to all and every music, I have to love the music I'm listening to while I work so I am endlessly searching for new things I haven't heard, I guess trying to list names for any of these groups feels wrong to me, I have too many favourites, lately I put in Kirasawas "dreams" dvd during my down time and I've been watching "the devil and Daniel Johnston" repeatedly, they are both very satisfying to me.

Q) What makes you laugh, cry.

A) I have some friends with great wit, they make me laugh, I cry whenever my feelings get hurt, but only for a few seconds.

Q) Most embarrassing moment.

A) You first

Q) What does it mean to you for people to love your work?

A) It's great, but I feel pretty separated from the idea of this, I have a musician friend that said it best, he said that if he ever made it really "big" you'll find him in his basement playing his guitar.

Q) Does it bother you if people do not like it?

A) Not at all, it bothers me if a person thinks their opinion would affect something I've worked so hard on and feel so right about.

Q) Explain a bit about the objects in your paintings, what do they symbolise.

A) I have an idea that my few constant symbols and/or words cover nearly everything, since my work is generally a reflection of my state of mind or events in my life, I will sometimes (organically) put one of them in a piece, I should first mention that the beginning of nearly all my work starts with a stick figure - similar to child drawing, this is the first vantage point that I am stemming the piece from and it also is a place of "unknowing" I will give a list of a few symbols. The bird on the shoulder represents the trusted companion. this began from a friend of mine that had several birds, they were so incredibly fragile and their entire life hinged on how carefully she cared for them, yet they were completely trusting of her, this signifies a solid association.

The house is about security and base, "home sweet" is a more dynamic and feeling perspective of this. The running horse represents unencumbered freedom and strength, also movement the writing (most of the time) on my work is rarely meant as literal, the words may be important at the moment but as the piece transforms they are often forgotten, it is often, also, more about handwriting (the shapes of the letters or words - as it expresses) than the words themselves. The apple is about structure, base and core (no pun intended) its form is basic, to me it's rather static and un-dynamic there are also many metaphors that the apple has been used for and it belongs in that group.

The pear can around as a spin-off from the apple, is about beauty and warmth, the shape, colours and taste are widely varied and , to me, much more elegant and beautiful than the apple. I tend to think of the apple as noun or verb and the pear as adjective and adverb.

The pea - which I rarely use - is a sort of solitary nothingness, its just a circle-form without any other distinguishing features, one amongst many. I usually use it in black and white also - which strips it of its only description - green.

I think one of the most constant things used throughout my work is the separation of line and mass (or form) it reinforces the transience of the moment and lapse of time, it signifies movement.

Q) Happiest time.

A) I tend to be rather manic, my happiest times happen often

Q) First exhibition.

A) I was naïve, I thought it was important. I can say now that it was right near the moment I started to plunge into destitution.

Q) Aspirations for the future both personally and with your work.

A) Im not sure where I picked this up, but its taboo to speak of this.

Q) What do you do to relax?

A) I sleep at night

Sorry for these one-liners, Sheana. I'm not able to connect to some of the questions.

Q) Plans for this year.

A) I've been stewing about sculpture for a long time now, trying to find materials or processes that seem right for me, this year, I'm hoping to make it work better.

Q) Who do you admire most in the World?

A) My cat, she's got it easy and doesn't know any better.

Q) Who would you like to have dinner with?

A) Tony Greenberg, a man I've never been able to pin down.

Q) When and how do you know when a painting is complete.

A) This has always been obvious to me, the same way you know when you're finished in the shower, all the parts are done.

