

ARTISTS TALK

EDITED BY GERALD A. MATT

WITH A FOREWORD BY MICHAEL KIMMELMAN

in time. This particularity manifests itself in different ways in each of the installations. The portrait of Bob Marley is invested with a strong sense of national pride as this is expressed by the Jamaican fans who pay tribute to their auratic compatriot, but also by a quiet melancholy, an unspoken awareness of the fact that Marley's rags-to-riches story is exceptional rather than the norm. The Italian Madonna fans were delighted to be given the opportunity to appropriate and translate the greatest hits of Madonna (who has made a point of playing with Italian references and Catholic iconography in her work). Their over-the-top makeup-layered and prop-heavy performances indicate a relationship to the mainstream media and the culture of fifteen-minute fame that marks them as very different from the relatively unaffected Bob Marley fans, or from the stripped-down and extremely minimal performances of the predominantly British John Lennon fans.

GM: *The different stars you have portrayed represent not just different styles of music, but also different lifestyles, different notions of community, a variety of different possible utopias, each of which you investigate using a consistently disciplined conceptual framework. Footage of the frontally shot fans is played back on a series of monitors, which are presented in minimal and geometric formats. Raimar Stange has compared your approach to portraiture to that of the photographer August Sander, whose life-long social portrait Citizens of the Twentieth Century was initiated in the 1920s and left incomplete at his death. What are your thoughts on this relationship?*

CB: Stange claims, in his essay about *Working Class Hero*, that the shift from Sander's working citizens to my fans marks a broader historical shift, a shift as he describes it, "from the cult of production that characterized modernity to the postmodern eclipse of production by the culture of consumption." I think he's right to locate the series of portraits in the context of the shift from a culture of production to a culture of consumption. What matters most within such a shift, is the way in which the individual is affected in his/her relationship to the world, the way in which such a colossal shift redefines the relationship between individuals and the larger social constellations within which they exist. The portraits are, in one sense, an attempt to track and document these kinds of relationships at this moment in time. They reflect the ever-increasing impact of the culture industry on subject formation in an age where lives lived on-stage have the capacity to radically influence and determine those lived off-stage.

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GLENN BROWN

IN CONVERSATION WITH

GERALD A. MATT AND KATARZYNA USZYNSKA

GERALD A. MATT AND KATARZYNA USZYNSKA: *In his book Die Welt als Labyrinth [The World as a Labyrinth], Gustav René Hocke understands art history as a bipolar system of classical and Mannerist elements, and defines Mannerism as a recurrent attitude, reappearing in Surrealism—an idea which Umberto Eco accentuated by relating it to Postmodernism: for him, "Postmodernism is not a trend to be chronologically defined, but, rather, an ideal category—or, better still, a Kunstwollen, a way of operating. We could say that every period has its own Postmodernism, just as every period would have its own Mannerism (and, in fact, I wonder if Postmodernism is not the modern name for Mannerism as metahistorical category)." Do you feel close to the attitude described by Eco, to this kind of Kunstwollen?*

GLENN BROWN: For me, both Classicism and Modernism are politically motivated purist ideologies. They rely on a religious sense of right and wrong, an ideal. I was taught by some, what could be termed, old school Modernist artists. Their classes were a little like a sermon in that you were informed of the doctrines of abstract art, and asked to reach deep inside yourself and push your work still further to an abstract nirvana. My eventual reaction was to find this comic, but only after being affected by it.

I can't say that I think Postmodernism is an ideal position for me, in so much as war is not an ideal state. Postmodernism and Mannerism are reactions to something, a tearing away from the master doctrine, they are a constant traumatic state of being, a

virtual battlefield. I don't want to represent this trauma, this continual uneasy question mark and lack of faith, but I do because I don't know the alternative, I don't have 'the' answer, but I am inclined to want an answer of some sort. If Mannerism represents a distortion of the classical truth then it is also a fault line away from the ideal.

KATARZYNA USZYNSKA: *The art of Mannerism unmasks the deception that is inherent in external reality. It was important to the Mannerists to grasp things in their inconsistency and complexity, to explore the fundamental qualities of things, and thus to reveal the ambiguity of truth—in a sense, to use illusion as a means of bringing about disillusionment. Does that approach seem close to your own?*

GB: Art, to me, has never felt like a depiction of reality. It is always about developing any number of understandings of reality. I view all paintings as a language to be used and shaped to help comment on what I feel about the world. I am learning how to construct all these artificial devices together to form a coherent and interesting image. We each have our individual view of the world, so what becomes interesting is when an artist manages to communicate their own perspective, in a manner that seems both real, familiar and articulate, yet alien at the same time.

KU: *The Mannerists perplexed their viewers with inversion and trompe-l'œil effects, with unusual metaphors and bizarre humor. Inversion, breaking the rules and simply turning things upside down are techniques that you like to use in your work. Do you like to perplex the viewer?*

GB: As the saying goes: travel broadens the mind. That is to say that having one's feet off familiar ground makes one think in different or alternative ways, ways that are more similar to another culture than one's own. I often feel troubled looking at my paintings; I am not sure what I should be looking at. Do I concentrate on the smooth surface finish that the paint makes on its surface or the flat compositional way that one's eye moves over the surface from color to color, from shape to line to shape? Do I develop the artificial brush marks as they curl illusionistically around the perceived object, so these fake brush marks appear real and luscious? Or do I work up the paintings main object so that it has mastery of the illusion of space around it and becomes almost real? I try to worry over all these things at once, and hope that the viewer will somehow come along with me and be happy to worry about these conflicts too. I find it hard to think of other people enjoying the results if I am not perplexed by what I have made.

GM: *Your sources of inspiration include pictures by various painters, however, ranging from the old masters like Rembrandt, El Greco and Jean-Honoré Fragonard, and the Symbolists*

William Blake and Henry Fuseli to Surrealists such as Salvador Dalí. What do you find so fascinating about the different epochs and styles? How do you choose your models, what does the selection process look like?

GB: I do not arrange my library of art images chronologically. Books and paintings are purposefully portable objects. Even paintings made for particular settings can and do get moved. Books have no respect for time and place, so, for instance, an image of an Albert Oehlen painting can turn up next to an El Greco painting and their similarities can become apparent. My understanding of art history is of course historically ordered, but I try my best to break any sense of progression by the way the books lay open on my table and floor, and the way the files of images are arranged on my computer. I encourage the images to converse as I dream of how they will change. Images sit around for months or years until they have fermented and metamorphosized into something belonging to me; only then will I start to paint them.

GM: *Though your pictures frequently have a striking resemblance to their models at first sight, they present themselves differently upon closer inspection. The abstract Auerbach portraits' impasto turns out to be an illusion, a trompe l'œil; Pierre-Auguste Renoir's Bouquet of Roses sees different color variants, and Jean Honoré Fragonard's Fair-Haired Child is turned upside down—the silhouette of Song to the Sirene in our Dalí exhibition becomes mammoth. You seem to make these painters' originality your subject and question it at the same time.*

GB: The originality of Auerbach, Renoir and Fragonard is their subject. The woman, the flowers and the child are all fleeting subjects—once the paintings were finished, the subjects changed and were gone. It is that act of representing the living moment that is essentially original and cannot be repeated or copied. That is the subject of my paintings, my inability to stop time and therefore avoid death. Their subjects were living entities. Fragonard's *Fair-Haired Child* (his son) is now probably little more than soil. I find that fascinating and beautiful and I am trying to get my head around it. My paintings do, in some sense, attempt to be avatars. They bring a failed attempt closer in appearance to the original moment of conception.

GM: *Your conceptual approach and eclectic manner suggest that your work is close to post-modern appropriation art. Despite all those models you draw on, your nearly ritual-like brushwork reveals how you solemnize the act of painting, which makes you achieve an unmistakable originality. Is this a deliberate trick or another cliché you employ in order to reject it? What is the purpose of this contradictory procedure?*

GB: I remember quite some time ago trying to make paintings like Georg Baselitz. It

did not take me long to realize that the painterly gesture is a fraudulent act. Painting is acting, or rather it is the trace left after an act of acting the part of a painter. Baselitz acts like Baselitz because the audience likes him to. His big beefy paintings are what are left behind after he has acted his part. I don't claim that he is not being in some part himself 'original' when painting, just that I think he could act differently if he wanted, if the audience would like it better, perhaps. Being self-aware, he knew that he could alter his performance. Just as a regional accent is adopted so one's peers can better understand the speaker, it could be otherwise: one could adopt other accents or figures of speech, perhaps for comic affect. This petit fraud fascinated me because I could never tell whether or not I was being myself when I painted. I tried being myself, but it always looked like someone else. Originality is so hard to find. I thought the best option was to study another artist's acted gestures, without trying to act their part so that I might discover which role I best suited. I am still looking for the perfect role, but I don't expect to find it soon.

GM AND KU: *The hyperreal world of your landscapes, in which familiar proportions are abandoned and larger-than-life details abound—an approach combining atomization and monumentalization—makes us also think of the Surrealists, of Salvador Dalí and his dream visions, for example. You confront us with Dalí's Autumnal Cannibalism from 1936 in a distorting mirror. Is this a dream within a dream? Why are you so fascinated with Dalí's Surrealism?*

GB: I was interested in Dalí's work for film, especially Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound*. The film is in black and white, and Dalí also works to the proportions of a cinema screen. When I realized that the other great painting of the Spanish civil war, Picasso's *Guernica*, had the same proportions and scale as a Cinema-scope screen, I wanted to join the two great paintings together. *Oscillate Wildly* tries to be my dream of Picasso and Dalí together in a film clip. I read that children, like myself, brought up watching black and white television have a tendency to have black and white dreams. In other words, if I am to analyze my unconscious, I must consider my dreams to be television/cinema productions that are directed, produced and lit by others.

GM: *You value perfection and technique very highly in your painting. In addition to that, you are also interested in the history of painting. Do you see certain affinities between yourself and Dalí?*

GB: Returning to my studio with a friend (Nick Fudge) after seeing *Surrealism: Desire Unbound* at Tate Modern in 2001 was a depressing moment. It was clear to both of us that my paintings looked woolly, blurry and plain. Dalí's paintings had opened our eyes and sharpened our senses. I said, "but what about Richter, photography and the

materiality of paint?" Nick scoffed at Richter, who was only a usable model if one did not want to paint, which I plainly did. The problem was, we had both seen the Dalís: the beautiful, intense genius of Dalí that makes photography redundant. It was the sheer clarity of his paintings and drawings that was undeniable. No photograph can be as sharply and aggressively in focus. You don't just see, you feel and smell and recollect his paintings like you have put glasses on for the first time after years of blurry, watery sight. They are sharp, accurate renditions of things you know but have never seen before, as they only existed in your, and Dalí's, mind. Paint and ink become precision materials for a forensic surgical examination of the human condition. From that day on, my paintings changed. They became sharper, harder, more cruel, more hyper-super-surreal, less soft and blurry and with less Richter blurry bullshit—altogether more Dalí. In other words, they engage the eye in a conversation with paint that relies on sophistication, not faux stupidity.

GM: *Many titles of your works such as Dalí-Christ (1992, after Dalí's Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War from 1936) point towards your models. Which impressions and tensions might result from juxtaposing the two works?*

GB: I painted *Dalí-Christ* 18 years ago while I was a student, so its relevance to me now is somewhat limited. Though I think it was a very important painting for me to do. I did however have the chance, whilst exhibiting at the Tate in Liverpool, to see *Oscillate Wildly* in close proximity to *Autumnal Cannibalism*, its source. I was shocked and dismayed to discover that after years of hailing Dalí as the 'second coming,' my painting looked better in some ways than the original, which was rather small and dull brown. I found this discovery very melancholic and sad.

GM: *There are other works—one might even say a series of works—that relate directly to works by Dalí. Would you comment on that?*

GB: Dalí was such a great borrower of styles. To think of his work without Yves Tanguy, De Chirico, and Max Ernst who all preceded him is unthinkable. I borrow tricks from paintings such as *International Velvet* (2004), *Seventeen Seconds* (2005), *Debaser* (2009) and *Christ Returns to the Womb* (2009), but most especially from Dalí. Psychoanalysis developed a language for us to dream in and thus to produce paintings in—in the style of the Surreal.

GM: *One of your works shows flowers in the place of a head. Is this a head that turned into flowers or are we looking at flowers that will turn into a head? By the way, this is a motif we can find in Dalí—included in the Vienna exhibition.*

GB: The flowers will not turn into a head nor will the head turn into flowers. The flowers do not replace a head, nor the shoulders replace a vase. Yet we are looking at a portrait. Like Dalí's *Flores Surrealistas* (1938), my works *Architecture and Morality* (2004) and *Debaser* (2009) are portraits of a figure with flowers as a head. That is how they are, and will stay. It is not a trick of light transformation, though it is monstrous. Dalí painted a woman in this happy condition, while my figures are more androgynous. They are not thinking, or looking like flowers—they are thinking and acting and feeling like flowers think, feel and act, because that is all they can do. It is perhaps a sad, stupid, idiotic state or it may be a euphoric ecstatic state of heightened clarity. It depends on how you look at it. Surrealism makes the subconscious real and tactile, not transient as smoke, where even metamorphosis becomes a physical reality. To believe otherwise would diminish its power.

GM: *The mutated female body in your work Misogyny (2006) reminds us of Surrealist depictions of women as limbless, prostheses-like beings. These manipulated and disfigured bodies have been interpreted as projection surfaces for a Surrealist artist's fears and desires. Are fear, desire, or emotions in general reflected in your work at all?*

GB: I have been accused of making expressionless paintings without real emotion. There is a tendency to consider Expressionism as the only carrier of true emotion; I would refute this. If my paintings are cold and lifeless, then I feel this absolutely, with strong emotion. I can't help throwing in a little black humour, which means I paint emotions that perhaps I don't feel but that I can imagine feeling. Or perhaps I do feel but don't want to. I see the figure in *Misogyny* as a god, a colossal icon of power, not a helpless limbless thing. Both women and men are treated to all sorts of humiliation in my paintings, and often the figure is androgynous, which perhaps is a humiliation too.

GM: *The viewer standing in front of one of your pictures has a riddle to solve. You emphasized in various interviews that the solution depends on the beholder's knowledge and conscience: people have to fall back on their understanding of the cultural milieu, on what is familiar to them and on what they have learned. To what extent do you address the viewer's unconscious?*

GB: The viewer's unconscious memory is as learned as their conscious memory. To what extent the viewer has a knowledge of art history is perhaps a salient point, but even then I have seen hundreds of thousands of paintings in my life, not many of which I can consciously recall, but most of which have ended up in the soup of knowledge that I call my mind. For a viewer not to have experienced painting's rich and exotic history, even if they cannot recall a single work, would be a pity. Then again, perhaps life itself is potentially such a rich visual experience that painting's addition

to reality is relatively unimportant. Whichever it is, the viewer must bring his or her imagination to cast its shadow over my work, in order to make sense of the nonsensical creations I try to create.

GM AND KU: *Your picture The Tragic Conversion of Salvador Dalí (after John Martin) from 1998 definitely has an apocalyptic impact. How would you describe the relationship between the two painters and its reflection in your work? Monumental science fiction landscapes and hyperrealistic representations meticulously rendered to the last detail endow your pictures with a filmic atmosphere. Viewers become immersed in them as if they were confronted with a movie on a screen. What do you find so fascinating about the utopian fantasy pictures by painters such as Chris Foss or Adolf Schaller?*

GB: That was my big problem: how can one make science fiction paintings in an age of film? But how can science fiction films survive in an age of video games? The illustrators that I referred to in my paintings have all, it appears, disappeared. Their extraordinary inventiveness seems no longer to be useful in the computer age. So what was the point in my work? Looking at a painting is not the same as looking at an illustration or a film; it is not a fleeting moment. The eye must work a little longer and in a different way. One studies a painting, not slowly necessarily, because our eyes and brains can work at such great speed, but long enough to take in the view. The composition is all-important, and unforgiving. The scale is in relation to the human body, unlike film and illustration that have no correct scale. Painting is such a precise technology. Try printing or reproducing a painting mechanically and you realize all precision is lost; its copy is a pathetic, dead thing. The color, glazed or flat, is lost. Razor sharp edges become a blur, and beautiful gradations of colour become monochrome. Painting cannot easily be replaced and can still be an extraordinary spectacle if viewed in the flesh. I always think of Kandinsky's large paintings, or De Koonings best Women paintings as science fiction—escapes from the real into gravityless unreal worlds of high drama.

GM: *You are known as a painter, and now you are working with photography as well. As a result, photographic works can be seen in the exhibition Le Surréalisme, c'est moi! whose unclear contours and blurrings resulting from enlargement evoke a world of images somewhere between abstraction and dream, pictures that are being shown in direct proximity to Dalí's dream set for Hitchcock's Spellbound and his painting The Eye. Do you feel comfortable in that proximity?*

GB: I like the discomfort of the proximity. How can one ignore film and photography. As I have said, I find painting in many ways to be a superior, more direct medium, but photography is undeniably powerful. The recent photographs I have made have been

black and white. Indeed, *Oscillate Wildly* 1999 is black and white because of early film, and its shape is that of 'Cinemascope'. It is Dalí for the 'big screen.' The blurred images *Love II* and *If God Exists then Everything is His Will II*, both 2011, are less influenced by Dalí than depictions of parts of his work. They are the antithesis of his acute painting method, but that is why they aren't paintings. They are woolly and colourless because that is what photographs do best. You must look at them from Dalí's paranoiac-critical method even if they are not made using it. They are Rorschach test images in that you see what you want, there is no right or wrong interpretation, which is very un-Dalí. *Two Personages in Love with a Woman* (2011) is again colourless because it uses photographic methods. We tried printing it as a photograph, but it became too soft. It is an inkjet print. Tiny jets spray ink onto the paper. The ink sits on the surface of the paper, the lines are sharp and the black is hard and dense. The image had to look cruel, not soft, this was important. The print is an amalgamation of Dalí, Picasso and Miro's great works on the Spanish Civil War, with Frans Hals' depiction of Dalí, the caballero overseeing the tragedy.

KU: *Your amorphous figures, which are part of various realities, have been stretched, shifted or enlarged until they have lost their iconographic identity, and thus seem to be timeless and allusionless in their apparently empty environment. Your unidentifiable science fiction conglomerations create a feeling of being in a no-man's-land, and the empty backgrounds of your portraits leave the impression of a faceless, undefined space. Where are the figures and places of your works located? What time period can be assigned to them?*

GB: I love the idea of painting as a form of time travel. To look at a Vermeer is to be taken back in time. Unlike literature, one has the actual object that has traveled through time to look at. We see the hand of the artist in the painted surface all but unchanged by time, whilst the subject is dead and gone, destroyed by time. This is why I liked my science fiction paintings to have a timeworn feeling. I used a palette of colors that was more redolent of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than the future. In that sense, they represent time warps. The feeling I wanted to capture whilst painting the Pope upside down had less to do with the 17th-century and more to do with 1950s pulp sci-fi illustrations. Reading a painting of mine is a very subjective thing, it all depends on what historical baggage the viewers have at their disposal.

KU: *The practice of changing perspective and an emphasis that is shifted to the fragment is something found in the Mannerist period but also again in modern and contemporary art, as can be seen in Gerhard Richter's work Nose from 1963, in which an enlarged facial detail achieves an astonishingly disconcerting value in its own right. In your piece work in progress, the apples become giants on a superhuman scale—the "ordinary" still life turns out to be a landscape. The fragment, a detail of the picture, repeatedly serves as a model for your*

paintings—a body part such as a foot or a fist becomes independent. Why are you interested in the fragmentary, in the disintegration and deconstruction of images?

GB: On certain occasions, such as suffering from the delirious effects of a bad case of the flu, I have had a sort of dream. It is very delirious in nature, a sort of spicy semi-conscious form of dreaming. I always have the same thing happen. It is half vision, half feeling, half premonition, and 150% real. I see and feel large spheres with a texture akin to rubberized sandpaper. I always feel this is very important even when well again, though I cannot explain why. I asked other people about similar experiences and concluded that there was something shared and fundamental occurring. One person described a giant ball of mud that constantly moved, the feeling of being run over by giant car tires. One's sense of scale goes awry. As if the whole experience was taking place at the level of atoms, while strangely being on a planetary scale also. I do realize how boring stories of other people's dreams become, but, as I said, I feel this is quite a fund-amental thing. So if my apples have an odd sense of scale, an overly developed texture, and an odd, unnatural color, it may have something to do with this.

KU: *Your heads shift between real and abstract shapes, which have often already lost their features and contours and are transformed into pure color. What is it about these intermediate conditions that so stimulates you?*

GB: That no-man's-land between figuration and abstraction has always been the place I want to reside in. To be between states, in flux, subject to change, animated, is to be in a constantly excited moment. The figures are very often of indeterminate sex. They appear as children but have the skin and attitude of someone ancient. The paintings appear to be constructed of large and lavish brush marks while still having no apparent brush marks at all. Some refer to particular paintings as "beautiful and good enough to eat," others may find them repellent and difficult to look at. If one is to present paintings that are a mass of contradictions, I find it takes time to balance these contradictions. The aim is to do this as precisely as one can.

KU: *Your figures often remind me of bodies in the process of decomposition. In your work, you repeatedly make reference to literary sources, such as The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde. While Dorian Gray's person remains untouched by his excesses and dissolute life, his face in the painting becomes grotesquely ugly over the years. The confrontation with it leads to catastrophe. Have your figures put catastrophe behind them?*

GB: The American artist Ivan Albright painted the picture of Dorian Gray for the 1944 film adaptation of Wilde's book. Like many of the British Pre-Raphaelite painters, he had an over-anxious zeal for detail, very often at the expense of a painting's

overall compositional success. Albright's figure is grotesque and ugly, but so is his painting method. The detailed squirms of paint that cover every centimetre of the man and the room around him seem to be a gross misunderstanding of what it is to make a good painting. Such an ugly vision could only have been created by an artist who, through naivety and obsession, seemed not to be overly aware of how difficult it was for anybody other than himself to look at one of his paintings. Of course, I do not mean to ignore the book, which is probably the closest literary description of what I wish to depict. After all, it is Dorian's mind that is said to be on display in the final hidden painting, and not his outward appearance, and to me that is the sign of a great portrait. Frank Auerbach and Willem de Kooning's "Women" paintings come to mind.

KU: *As much as you love color and the act of painting itself, your compositions and the whole idea of your representations have been given a lot of thought. How do your concepts develop, and how do you implement them? How does *Roses in a Bowl* by Henri Fantin-Latour become *The Angel of Mons*?*

GB: One of the interesting things about reproductions of paintings in books is that one tends to look at them horizontally rather than vertically. As I often leave books open so I can look at a painting for a while, the correct orientation of the reproduction becomes less important. The image is easily observed from any angle. Such was the case with *The Angel of Mons*. I liked the roses on their side so that the bowl of roses looked more like a wreath. The security of the table on which the roses sat was also discarded in favor of the Velázquez-like infinite ground. It seemed to me that the roses should be painted on a scale that gave them more of an overblown sense of threat. As flowers, along with children and rural landscapes, are thought to be the most accessible subjects for paintings, I thought it was a good idea to make the painting virtually all green. Green paintings are always the most difficult to sell, so I am told, especially when the green is of a deliberately unpleasant acid hue. When one takes a closer look at the painting, things other than flowers start to emerge. The painting took months to paint because I kept changing it, adding color or leaves only to take them off again. Like with all my paintings, I did not have a clear idea of how it would end when I started. I hopefully have a feeling that I want the painting to capture, but often that goes for a walk too, and only when I feel the painting has a personality all its own, and often one that I feel is a bit of a stranger to me, do I conclude that the painting is finished.

GM: *For Dali, the eye is of central importance. In *The Eye* it even becomes a kind of space ship. Scenarios involving space ships and extraterrestrial worlds also play a role in your work, and eyes also seem to be in motion there.*

GB: I like to depict the eye, but sometimes its anti-depiction becomes necessary. Eyes are poked, blinded and diseased, so that the viewer is able to gaze without being gazed upon. This is a very selfish, nasty and misogynous game of Picasso's, and not at all like the generosity of Dalí, who liked to be seen to see. He liked nothing better than to watch his lovers without being loved himself. To me, all orifices are much the same, whether they hear, shit, eat, piss or see. We come into this world helpless, in a mess of bodily fluids and solids, and leave it much the same way. I relegate the eye to a lower status than Dalí, though it is clearly of great use. I try to engage the viewers' eyes as much as possible to best hold them to the painting. I fear that if they noticed they were being watched while peeping at my various holes, all might be lost. Poor timid viewer. I have spent weeks of my life painting windows. The space ships and floating cities I have painted are covered with tens of thousands of them. Thousands of tiny windows hanging in space, each filled with thousands of tiny eyes. All looking, searching, observing what lies outside. But they are never seen. My spaceships have eyes, guilty eyes, seeing but unseen.

GM: *Your pictures are characterized by great precision, a remarkable painterly expertise, and an enormous meticulousness. It often takes you quite long to finish a work. Could you tell us something about your working method? Friedrich Nietzsche maintained that "our historical education leads to the death of every culture." Past, present and future directly collide in your pictures, their chronological and historical connections being confused and blurred. Ultimately, they end in chaos and are not recognizable to the viewer anymore. Are you telling the viewers that they had better get rid of historical modes of reception, and offering them a new way of looking at pictures?*

GB: A culture is made of its history, it reacts in accordance with its past experiences. I see that an historical education, or perhaps more to the point a multi-cultural historical education challenges the here and now of culture, and that is the excitement, destruction and rebuilding of it. Defining a culture is rather like describing clouds; it is the continual movement that is its greatest value. Nietzsche was no postmodernist. I have put myself in Plato's cave, only able to view the world from the shadows cast on the wall. This is history and it is all I have, I am only able to make a judgment after the event. But I can say for certain that the shadows will change and that I will never fully understand what they represent. I know that history is written by its victors, and is by definition always wrong, and this is perhaps Nietzsche's point. If culture is defined by its history and history is an impossibly moving target, then change and misunderstanding are its defining creations. I feel like I have talked my self out of the activity of painting, because in the end it lacks animation. Perhaps I want the paint to stay wet forever, and to never actually finish.