



DOVE BRADSHAW
Paintings on Vellum

Stalke Gallery
Copenhagen
By
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A child threw a book of drawings in the trash piled in the hallway of a New York City apartment building. By chance Dove Bradshaw found it. Rather than being discarded, the drawings became a source of imagery that Bradshaw continues to explore and transform.

How does an artist find a source deep enough to sustain a creative output for a period of years? Often it is an accidental discovery. Jasper Johns found the flag in a dream; the flagstones came to him in a fleeting glimpse from a car. Marcel Duchamp telescoped the process of the object entering the artist's iconography by presenting the *objet trouvé* itself as the art work, transformed by the act of selection.

The images Bradshaw found were those made by children. Outsider art—that of children, tribal cultures, the untrained and the insane have yielded motifs to artists since the advent of

modernism. Bradshaw expands from appropriation, in which the artist takes possession of an image, to communication with the children who provide the drawings.

Children are a disenfranchised group in our society, given no voice and treated as the property of their parents. Bradshaw confirms the children's participation in the work, giving them a voice. She does this by returning to the elementary school classes where she holds discussions with the children and shows slides of her paintings and the original child's drawings. Finally she gives the school a painting from the series completing the exchange.

In her discussions with the children, the literalness of their thinking is evidenced. They perceive Bradshaw's painting, and their drawings as discrete entities. In one class, upon viewing one of Bradshaw's paintings, the teacher nudged the child who had done the original saying, "there is your drawing." The girl responded, "No it's not, it's Dove's painting." There was no confusion; the child saw her own drawing as a different and unique production.

Bradshaw thoroughly examines each selected drawing by making a series of paintings based on it. She passes it through a screen of filters by altering the color scheme, paint application, scale and framing. Until recently she left the works untitled, but her latest paintings have titles taken by chance from popular songs and James Joyce's *Finneganans Wake*. The abstract language of Joyce serves as a counterpoint to Bradshaw's abstractions.

Bradshaw's purely formal manipulations have led to surprising results in the paintings titled *frockfull of fickle (I-IV)* in which the colors black, red and green have produced an image that reads as a racial stereotype. This image shocks and confounds us by challenging us to confront our own hidden racism. The issues of race and class arise in the work since each child's drawing originates from a specific set of personal and cultural circumstances. The diversity of sources is expanded through Bradshaw's numerous variations. She began the series two years ago working from the found book, but later she solicited drawings from elementary schools. She asks the children to make portraits of their families, which are nearly always labeled, adding text elements. She also asks for abstract designs and writing exercises. Bradshaw has received drawings from schools in Austria, Denmark, Italy, Kenya and the US, including Manhattan's Upper East Side and Harlem. Friends give her drawings and she continues to find lost or discarded ones.

For Bradshaw, that which is lost, hidden or silenced becomes the source of meaning and beauty.

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