

1 DS: “I sense a strong kinship in your work to Bloomsbury; to its time, its aesthetic, and its atmosphere. If I knew nothing about you, I might think you were English, or a decided Anglophile. There is a whiff of Merchant / Ivory movies, of Howard’s End and Remains of the Day in your work. Ishiguro’s latest book Never Let Me Go, seems to overlap with the world of your pictures. Is any of this of interest to you?”

CR: *“True, there is a lot of nostalgia in my paintings. It has been attributed to England, France, the Weimar Republic, New York of the 20’s or even South America {men with hats and moustaches}. It seems hard to pin down, and that way everybody can have his or her own associations.”*

2 DS: “Your figures don’t seem to owe anything to or to be derived from photography. Or, if they have photographic sources, the figures seem wholly transformed. Do you use models, and if so, do you work from direct observation or with some intermediate process?”

CR: *“I do not work from photography or life models. The figures are painted from daily observation, memory or imagination. Also, art that I look at is an inspiration. At Cal Arts I spent most of my time in the life drawing room. Animators draw short poses to train observations and to develop a repertoire of poses to use in animation. This helps me a lot now. Using the picture plain as a stage, I can move the figures around, without feeling inhibited by reference material or predesigned studies. I can react to the picture and the composition develops as the painting evolves. The figures are designed to work in painting, not in real life.”*

3 DS: “To continue the theme of kinship and also of precedent, I sense a long, idiosyncratic list of forebears most of which would not be mentioned in the same context. Not in chronological order, here goes: Carrington, Late André Derain, Puvis de Chavannes, David Hockney, Balthus, Stanley Spencer, Neo-Classical Picasso, Courbet, Elmer Bishoff, David Park, and the whole Bay Area Figurative Movement of the late 50’s.

This is a list of artists who for the most part have very refined neo-classical sensibilities. In some cases, they’re artists who went their own way and risked marginality. Your work presents a very confident synthesis of a number of these strands of neo-classicism. How did you arrive at this affinity for the idealized scene?”

CR: *“Besides an intuitive affinity there are quite a few things about classicism that appeal to me: Per definition the classicist is aware of the tradition of painting. He deliberately chooses a style and to work within that tradition. That way, he can keep a critical distance to his own work. He is using a given vocabulary to create his own language. What he does is explicitly artificial. Originally inspired by antique reliefs, classicism is always aware of the two dimensionality of its picture plane. It is reflecting its media by creating space within the flatness, without denying the flatness. For me, this is one of the major interests in painting. Rather than giving an impression of reality, classicism attempts its reconstruction building a parallel world not only to be read with your eyes, but with your mind. Almost all the artists on your list were of great importance to me at some point. I love the weight in Courbet and Picasso. Neo-classical and cubist Picasso are not a contradiction to me. When I was a student, interested in figurative painting and not really well informed, David Hockney*

*was one of the few contemporary artists to look at. I love his double-portraits from the 70's. Balthus' La rue was a starting point for my imagery, as was Beckmann's Vor dem Maskenball or Seurat's La grande jatte. Stanley Spencer was a major discovery for me. His subjectivity {Church of Myself}, use of different styles for different purposes, distortion of space and figures and his use of patterns influenced me a lot. After looking at these artists, I went back to their sources, discovering Puvis de Chavannes and finally Poussin. Now, the time around 1800, where the classicist formula is confronted with the ambiguities of modern life and the irrational, is the most interesting to me. Artists as diverse as Füssli, David, Goya, West and Runge come to mind."*

4 DS: "In what way is your work different from illustration, and do you care about it one way or the other?"

CR: "One of my introductions to great art was a Bible in pictures given to me by my grandparents. Masterworks of painting illustrating stories of the bible. Some of my favorite paintings illustrate literature like Füssli's Milton and Shakespeare gallery contributions.

Book illustrators like Tenniel {Alice in Wonderland}, Doré or contemporaries like Topor, Hans Hillmann and Volker Pfüller had a strong influence on me.

On the other hand my works do not have a literary background. They don't start with a story but with an image. Although suggesting a strong narrative, if asked about the story of a painting, I would have to make it up, like every other viewer. Hopefully, there would be many possibilities. Ultimately, I would like to do something that doesn't need any outside explanation at all. To me, a lot of contemporary concept art is illustrative in a bad sense."

5 DS: “Your work seems to be confident in its only passing relationship to Modernism. Do you think about it consciously?”

CR: *“I try to stay true to myself, whatever that means. Although the artist can decide what he does, he doesn’t have as many choices as people think. I like the english expression ‘to whom it may concern’. I’m working ‘for whom it may concern’. I don’t have to convince anybody.”*

6 DS: “If you made abstract art, what would it look like?”

*“Maybe I should be an abstract expressionist, drink beer and get into fights at bars.”*

7 DS: “Some great art is made in response to a limitation or inability; Frank Stella wanted to paint like Velasquez but he couldn’t, so he painted black stripes instead. Is there something similar in your development? What’s the art you identified with when you started defining yourself as an artist?”

CR: *“Like Stella, I can’t paint like my heroes. My limitations and inabilities are part of my work. When I was ten, my first idols were Toulouse-Lautrec and George Grosz.”*

8 DS: “What’s the thing you have to fight to keep out of your work? What’s the thing you have to fight to get into work?”

CR: *“The hardest thing is to find out when to stop working. When is a painting finished? It is a fine line to get the density and detail I want without overworking it. I try to rethink the work as many times as possible during the process. How can I take my ideas as far as possible without creating a formula?”*

9 DS: “Sometimes you can see in someone’s work a failed version of itself. Or, put another way, you can sense the presence of a master who must be bested, but who dogs the work. For example, in Kiefer, I feel Horst Antes lurking just outside the edges of the picture. Is there something like that in your work?”

CR: *“I don’t think there is something like that in my work, although I might not have the distance to really tell.”*

10 DS: “Your work feels arcadian, pastoral, nostalgic. They are nocturnes, not symphonic. What are the picture’s state of mind, in your head? {Like when somebody describes you as melancholy, but you don’t think of yourself that way}.”

CR: *“My work is often described as melancholic or even sad. To me there is also a lot of humor in it. The paintings are quite funny in a tragic-comical way. The arcadian idyll is never safe, it is a panic-stricken one. What is often read, as an affirmation of traditional painting is full of skepticism to me.”*

11 DS: “How would you rate your scale of aesthetic ambition?”

CR: *“I want to make something beautiful. That includes the beauty of ugliness. Out of two possibilities, I usually feel more comfortable with the bolder, often clumsier one. I am not trying to create a style.”*

12 DS: “Your figures, from what I’ve seen, are all young. Do you think they will age, as you get older?”

CR: *“The blank faces are more open to projection. Age brings conflicts, stories and anecdotes to the painting I am not sure I want at the moment. Maybe I will find a way to work with it in the future.”*

13 DS: “What did you learn from animation? Can you imagine returning to it? Put another way, your pictures have a strong frozen moment quality, yet I can also imagine the instant before this one, or the instant 20 minutes hence.”

CR: *“Animation taught me to draw and observe. I can imagine the paintings in movement but sometimes it feels as if the different figures in a group composition represent different poses of one figure moving around the room. Or one figure seen from various angles. Animation itself involves so many technical and mechanical steps, that I can’t really imagine going back to it. I think the scale of my large canvases still reflects the longing for the big movie-screen and the way I think about a show could be compared with laying out the dramatical steps of a movie. Like an actor, the animator plays the roles of the characters he draws. I’m thinking the same way of my figures. I am the one taking positions in my paintings. I strongly identify with my figures, male and female alike. Another thing I learned from animation is discipline. Animators work a lot.”*

14 DS: “Do you make a distinction between the pictorial and the presentational in painting? It seems to me that your painting is strongly pictorial, and a lot of work that I’ve seen is primarily presentational. Some painting, like late Picasso is both. Is this something you think about?”

CR: *“I’m thinking of my paintings as a construction of reality, not a representation or impression. To say it with Braque: The painted image of an apple is of course bound to an idea of a real apple but it was never supposed to represent a real apple. Its reality lies in the fact that it is a painted apple, not a painting of an apple. My paintings often seem hermetic or even reiectina. On the other hand, some of the writing in the*

*metic or even rejecting. On the other hand, some of the writing in the painting etc. addresses the viewer directly. I'm installing the paintings as an environment to draw the audience into my world."*

15 DS: "When Picasso saw de Kooning's work, he supposedly said, 'Oh, I see melted Picasso.' Is your work the melted version of something?"

CR: *"Sometimes I suspect myself of trying to paint a whole Louvre of my own. Almost like I have to treat every subject ever treated in art history. Maybe that's what I'm doing: The melted version of the Louvre."*

16 DS: "What is the function of underwear in your figure groupings, of clothing in general?"

CR: *"I'm betraying my own paintings with it. Someone wearing underwear is not a 'nude' anymore, it's someone undressed. The figures are more vulnerable, but it also has something comical about it. I like to keep things simple: Women wear skirts and long socks, men suits or simple pants. Like the way Brecht clothed his actors in grey suits, I try to stick with a simple vocabulary. Also with the props: simple chairs, tables, bottles, plates, cups etc."*

17 DS: "What are your criteria for when you've made a good picture?"

CR: *"I try to find an equilibrium where the image is just there, but also just about to fall apart. A critical point that never really satisfies makes you nervous and keeps you looking. A good picture should have lots of mistakes. It's hard to describe. It's a feeling. Little things can spoil it easily. It should work on more than one visual and intellectual level."*

18 DS: "I feel that your color strongly amplifies the mythological overtones in your pictures. How do you think about color?"

CR: *"I use color very intuitively. Almost like coloring book red, green, blue and yellow my choices are often quite trivial. In the process I have a tendency for red-green complementaries with lots of browns and accents of bright local colors. I want the paintings to have a certain glow. I feel that some of the newer paintings have lost atmosphere, but gained dynamics by the use of brighter, more dissonant colors."*

19 DS: "Do you have any use for photography?"

CR: *"I have a small collection of old travel and architecture books that I use as inspiration for my street-scenes. I also collect old family photo albums, bought at flea markets. There are a lot of images I'd like to work with but haven't found a way yet. Right now, I feel inhibited by photographic sources. I like to make things up."*

20 DS: "Are you an only child? A sociable fellow or a loner?"

CR: *"I have two sisters and one brother. I'm a sociable loner."*