

IF TIME PERMITS

I found a 1953 catalogue from the Dulwich Picture Gallery. It was in my local community library book sale for 20p. It numbered and listed the entire collection with subject and artist from 1 to 627. I began painting in 2013 with the goal to make them all. 627 paintings and/or things. Actually there are a few extras in the list and a few missing where the catalogue jumps so there is actually 616 works listed.

I wasn't sure if I was making paintings or objects initially. I was interested in the borders. Where we stop looking at a thing and look at an image. Where an image becomes an image and no longer just paint or a mark. Where written language interferes with imagination or defines direction.

I fell in love with this little book which catalogued the collection and listed subjects. Landscape with Church, Sketch of a Girl, Vase with Flowers, Peasants Eating Mussels. I pictured remote landscapes with fading light, empty recesses of village churches, peasants eating mussels.

I began with scraps of found wood and I cobbled together supports, painting the entire structure with thick layers of oil and enamel paint (anything I could find or buy cheaply). I would build up layers and then strip them back by sanding until they were smooth surfaces, removing any raised marks. It was an odd thing to do. To remove marks I had just made, but I was interested in this mark making and removal and the tiny traces left behind. And then by adding more to those traces what layers started to build. Painting I suppose. I am thinking now of this interview with Per Kirkeby where he said 'We build upon ruins'.

Number 1, *Cupid*.

I continued to find scraps of wood as I walked to and from the studio and for months became obsessed with these things. Building and removing layers and reaching some point of satisfaction or completion in each. I numbered them as I made them according to my found catalogue.

The paintings kept changing. My interests in painting kept changing. I painted thicker, then thinner. I became more interested in marks and not surface textures. As time passed the project became a side project to larger scale canvas works and other artistic pursuits.

For a long while I was solely working on canvas and the wood works were put aside, boxed away and even re-purposed into other sculptural works. I felt some kind of despondency towards the little wooden monuments and my time wasted on them. There was an insignificance about them. I wanted to see big things, big paint. Maybe it was just the masculine painter trying to break out and show off his giant painterly erection. Whatever it was, I wasn't happy.

Recently, I found the little catalogue amongst my books and it sparked a bit of interest in me to pull a few of the works out of storage. Coming back to them, I liked some of them. Definitely not all of them. With some new knowledge in painting and less self-confidence than ever in my ability to be a successful painter, I started again.

I wanted to make them better or totally destroy the ones I hated in disbelief I even made them. I began reworking old ones and starting fresh ones. I stopped painting edges altogether, stripping back some of the old ones to reveal the scrappy wooden edges. I became interested in only the surface, the front, the marks, the paint. It was no longer the object that fascinated me. I kept finding scrap pieces of board and continued marking them.

I started framing some. To isolate the paintings. They were little time tunnels. Pauses. Moments of contemplation, often struggle, sometimes even completeness or perfection. I put little batons on some because the frames became too controlling to the material itself. I kept painting. I keep painting.

My interest in painting continues to shift. 616 paintings is a lot. I might get there. If time permits.

David Turley, 2015