



Painted Into a Corner

How a famous British artist nearly ruined his career by falling in love and moving to Dallas—which is not at all how he'd tell the story.

By PETER SIMEK
Portrait by JONATHAN ZIZZO

ONE EVENING IN 2010, I WENT TO SEE THE ARTIST RICHARD Patterson in his studio, a storefront on Parry Avenue. The buildings felt like a strip of urbanity plopped down on an abandoned concrete landscape that fell away from the front door toward the ghostly deco silhouettes of an empty, moonlit Fair Park. Through the walls, I could hear the noise from a bar a few doors down. In the apartment above us, someone was plucking single notes on an electric bass. In a corner of the studio, two of Patterson's vintage motorcycles sat emptied of their oil and gasoline. At the time, he was re-creating one of his own paintings, copying it stroke for stroke from a photograph, and the process was driving him mad.

A large canvas, 10 feet wide and 7 feet tall, sat on a huge easel. On it, there was a half-realized image of a helmeted racer on a motorcycle. The rider was a scaled-up image of a plastic figurine covered with globs of multicolored paint. From across the room, the painting looked like a photograph but for the unfinished sections, which revealed an undercoat of monochromatic taupe.

Patterson stands 5-foot-6, and today, at 51, he can come

across as a bit of an imp when he's full of energy and chattering away, flashing a puckish grin paired with a Peter Pan glint in his green eyes. But there was no sign of that Patterson on the evening I visited him. He looked weary, the crow's feet at the corners of his eyes running deep, his posture stiff, in part the result of an autoimmune disease that has wrecked his spine. I could tell at a glance that he wasn't doing well.

That Patterson could even attempt to remake such a large, technically complex painting was a testament to his abilities. Working from a photograph, he can manipulate oil paint so that his canvas becomes a perfect reflection of it. He uses this hyper-styled trompe-l'œil to appropriate images from advertising and films—girls in bikinis or blond men on motorcycles, scaled-up tiny models of plastic soldiers or toy minotaurs. The conceptual tension in Patterson's art comes from rendering the stuff of a disposable contemporary culture with the exacting skill of a Renaissance master. In both content and execution, it is a mash-up of the high and the low, highly refined cultural sensibilities and sexually charged kitsch finding equal footing on his canvas.



PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS:

Patterson moved to Dallas in 2004 and into a studio on Parry Avenue. "I was seduced by the American dream," he says. (opposite page) *Christina with Yellow Glasses* (2014)

But Patterson's process is painstakingly slow. His paintings require anywhere from 500 to 2,000 individual color mixes, and what looks like the mere fade of a centimeter-wide shadow can be the product of six or more shades of color. The thin edge of an object just a foot long can take upwards of nine hours to paint. He makes on average only four or five pieces a year.

With the large canvas in front of him that evening, he was attempting to make a painting that was a copy of a photograph of a painting that itself was made by blowing up a photograph of a painted miniature toy. Patterson's work often delights in meta-removes that bring together the disciplines of painting, photography, and sculpture, but that particular project was simply a product of necessity. The original piece, *Motocrosser II* (1995), was one of five Patterson paintings owned by the famed adman and collector Charles Saatchi, and it was destroyed in the Momart art storage fire of 2004. Another collector had asked Patterson if he could re-create the painting for him. Short on funds in the wake of the 2009 recession, Patterson had taken on the onerous commission.

The painting came to dominate his life. Every day he dragged himself to the studio and confronted the reality that he was copying himself. The process required him to retrace steps on the canvas that he'd first made as a young, rising star working in a studio in the Hoxton neighborhood of London, operating at the center of the most vibrant art scene on the planet. Patterson moved to Dallas from London, via New York, in 2004, and the painting seemed to symbolize everything that move had meant. He was on the far fringes of cultural urbanity, living in a city that isolated him from the art world he'd known. He understood Dallas as a place of cheap imitations, and his own work had begun to feel false, desperate. Like his motorcycle man in the painting—a speed demon frozen in paint—he was trapped.

RICHARD PATTERSON DOESN'T THINK I SHOULD BEGIN THIS STORY with the bit about his re-created painting. In the five years since I first met Patterson, I've interviewed him numerous times, often with an idea for a story he would later tell me he didn't want me to write. I was long ago added to a list of people in Dallas—artists, curators, real estate developers, magazine editors, museum directors, museum directors' wives—to whom he regularly writes long emails, hilarious missives that read like the kind of essays Andy Kaufman would have written if he'd had a secret fascination with fast cars, salami, and urban design.

Patterson is a famous painter, but he's also a good friend and one of the best writers I've ever met. It was those latter two attributes that made me think writing about him would be easy. But now I realize they make writing about him quite the opposite. No one knows how to write about Richard Patterson better than Richard Patterson.

"I think there is an identity issue," he tells me. "I am the cloven viscount, the Calvino story, where he is cut in two down the center, and he has a good half and a bad half, and the bad half is written about all the time. I'm still trying to relocate my other half."

So if you don't start with the re-created painting, where do you start? Patterson is a British artist who has been living in Dallas for 10 years, a painter who was part of one of the most seminal art shows of the last 30 years (Damien Hirst's *Freeze* exhibition), who was once



represented by one of the most important galleries in the world (Anthony d'Offay), who is collected by museums, and who has rubbed elbows with Mick Jagger and Gerhard Richter.

But that's just Richard Patterson the famous artist. There's also Dallas Richard, married to writer Christina Rees, known for rolling up every day at the Murray Street Coffee Shop in Deep Ellum in his green 1994 Jaguar XJS 4.0 Coupe. Dallas Richard will set off on incisive and riotous tirades on any number of topics: Dallas' stunted cultural sensibility, its terrible food, its superficial collector base, the crass character of its patronage, the incompetence of its drivers, the pushiness of its waiters, the banality of the contemporary art world, the idiocy of driving Lexuses, and the superiority of Jaguar motor engineering. Patterson is Dallas' underground satirist. If his wit makes you see this city more clearly, it's because it removes the plank from your eye that may have made living in this city bearable.

And if the meticulous nature of his art doesn't make it obvious, he's a perfectionist and a control freak. As I go about reporting this story, I get the feeling that Patterson is attempting to report it for me. He orchestrates scenes, sends email compilations of his own favorite quotes, and tries at one point to assign his own photographer to take his portrait. He has definite ideas about how his story should be told and how it shouldn't. He doesn't think the re-created painting should take center stage. He doesn't want the story to portray him as a cranky git, the old artist codger who goes on and on complaining about Dallas, as Dallas stands aside not quite knowing what to do with him.

"I think it should be as colorful as possible—the story," Patterson tells me on the phone after I'm way past deadline. "I have chosen to make it funny. Laughter really is my antidote for some of the things that are going on here."

You could start with one of Patterson's many hilarious tales. Like the time before he had ever shown in a gallery, and he was invited to a luncheon with a legendary London art dealer, and, trying to impress



MOTOR AWAY:
(above) Patterson painted his breakthrough work, *Culture Station no. 1, Zipper*, in 1995. (opposite) *Your Own Personal Jesus 1995/2011*, his attempt to re-create his own destroyed *Motocrosser II*

the stylish set, he wore furry Norwegian ski boots in the middle of the summer. Or an anecdote about hanging with a young, not-yet-famous Damien Hirst, who drove to Charles Saatchi's house in a black cab to drag the collector to *Freeze*. Then there's Patterson's impression of Mick Jagger getting up from the dinner table to talk on the phone with his baby sitter, which you really have to see, the way he imitates Jagger's iconic strut and mimics the rock star's accent while talking about diapers. One of my favorite Patterson stories involves Dallas collector Kenny Goss showboating at an exhibition dinner, flanked by an entourage that included his hairdresser and accountant, while an artist at the end of the table sat with his 12-year-old daughter as she scribbled in a coloring book. Some of these stories are exaggerated, some may be partially invented, but they're all funny as hell and strike hard at something true about their characters.

But then, listening to all of Patterson's stories, you realize that very few of them are actually about Richard Patterson. Rather, the way Patterson describes his journey from a quiet village in southern England to the upper echelons of the international art world, and finally to Dallas, he sounds like a character from another Italo Calvino novel, *The Baron in the Trees*. That book tells the story of a boy so disenchanted with the real world that he climbs up into a tree and spends his life living among the treetops. He becomes a reclusive ascetic, but this affords him a singular perspective on events transpiring below. In a way, this is how Patterson has lived his life, standing off to the side while watching a world of wealth, hubris, vanity, love, lust, pride, honor, and ambition blur into an absurdist smear.

THIS PART OF THE STORY STARTS WITH DONALD CAMPBELL'S 1962

Bluebird-Proteus CN7 motorcar. In its day, the Bluebird was the most spectacular piece of engineering on the planet. Rocket-shaped and impossibly long, the curving front end comes together like puckered lips, gulping air through an ovular black mouth into its powerful

Bristol-Siddeley Proteus turboshaft engine. The car had a tail like a dragon, huge black tires that were taller than its body, and a cockpit that held its driver inside like a coffin. And when Campbell drove the Bluebird on July 17, 1964, smashing the 400-mph barrier for the first time in human history and demolishing his own land-speed record, its futuristic arc of blue steel traveling at that speed must have looked like an azure torpedo violating the rules of physics that were trying to weigh it down.

What does it do to the brain of a 5-year-old boy to see the enormous, phallic Bluebird in front of a little row house as he held his mother's hand and walked up the lane to the town center to buy fresh haddock from the fishmonger? Town councils might consider passing ordinances to protect the young citizenry from such a sight.

"I thought that every town had a Bluebird," Patterson says.

That Patterson grew up a neighbor of Donald Campbell, who kept his Bluebird parked in his driveway in Leatherhead, Surrey, is one of those biographical tidbits that you can either toss off or swallow whole. You could say that car is responsible for Patterson's lifelong fascination with British racing culture, with the heroic masculinity of its daredevil drivers, with the sexuality suggested by the guttural rumble of a Triumph motorcycle's engine. You could say that car put the notion in his head that there's no line between exquisitely crafted automobiles and the best sculpture. You could say the car led him to expect the very best from the everyday.

But for that Bluebird, however, Patterson's childhood was unremarkably English. He was the second of four brothers who grew up in a middle-class home and attended good public schools. He showed a propensity for painting in his teenage years, and attentive teachers directed him to art school. He landed at Goldsmiths, University of London, in the mid-1980s. The number of soon-to-be-famous artists in the school was staggering: Liam Gillick, Sarah Lucas, Mat Collishaw, Gary Hume, Angus Fairhurst, and faculty that included Richard Wentworth and Michael Craig-Martin. But it was a Goldsmiths student three years below Patterson, Damien Hirst, who would brand the scene and shove it into the international spotlight.

Even while still at university, Hirst displayed an intuitive, preternatural knack for exploiting the art world's appetite for showmanship and sensation. He was only in his second year when he organized the famed *Freeze* exhibition in 1988, an art show in a warehouse in



the London Docklands featuring artistic nobodies whom Hirst promised he would make stars.

"I think he is one of those people who genetically doesn't experience fear," Patterson says.

Hirst was right. *Freeze* is credited with launching the so-called YBA (Young British Artist) generation. Not long after *Freeze*, an art-collecting feeding frenzy gripped London, and many of Patterson's friends and classmates, including his younger brother Simon, who had followed Patterson to Goldsmiths, signed with top galleries. But Patterson found himself in a rut. He was slightly older than the other YBAs, and after graduating from Goldsmiths, he couldn't figure out how to continue his artistic practice. He told people he had given up art, but he couldn't pull himself completely away.

"It was a bit like a bad drug addiction," he says. "I kept going to these openings, and I couldn't stop thinking about it. And, worst of all, it really got under your skin when someone did something that was half good."

It was around this time that he began to date another Goldsmiths artist, Fiona Rae. "Fiona lit a fire under my ass," he says. He rented space in a building on Hoxton Square, in East London, where his friend Gary Hume already had a studio. And Rae, who was already represented by Leslie Waddington's gallery, introduced Patterson to the high-class art set. Waddington held a regal position in London's gallery world, having made his name showing modern masters such as Josef Albers and Frank Stella. Running with Rae and Waddington meant bumping into people like Leo Castelli at lunch and trips to Paris and New York. Patterson went shopping with Waddington's wife in her black Bentley. "It had this incredibly leathery leather, like it was from Georgian time," he remembers.

It was clear from the beginning, though, that if Patterson was going to be in a relationship with Rae, Waddington expected him to become a successful artist. "That was the subtext," Patterson says. "I had to do something to buy my way into this new society, to earn my place at the table, literally. And my stomach was constantly tense."

Then, in 1995, Patterson created his breakthrough painting, a piece called *Culture Station no. 1, Zipper*. Fifteen feet by 5 feet, it is a large-

WINNING STREAK:
Klint van Toorjerstraap (2014) is representative of Patterson's freer, faster body of work.

scale painting made of multiple panels, mostly monochromatic canvases arranged in a geometric configuration. But a center piece is a perfectly re-created photograph taken from a 1960s motorcycle ad. A girl in a white bikini stands with her perky rear to the viewer, hands on hips, looking back toward a man on a motorcycle whose face, in Patterson's appropriated version, is cut off by the edge of the frame.

"As soon as I'd drawn it out, I had this huge surge of confidence," he says. "Once I realized I could reproduce an image, I realized it could all be part of this synthesized language that gave it this post-postmodern homogeneousness, which felt right."

Word got out about the painting. People wanted to visit his studio. One night at a party in Gary Hume's studio, Patterson found himself dancing with a brown-haired woman.

"I hear that you've done this really interesting painting," she said. "Can I see it?"

Patterson said no, which he thought made him seem cool. "If she had been really great-looking, I probably would have said yes," he admits. "Because everything back then seemed to turn on that kind of patheticness."

Later that night, Rae asked him what he and Sadie Coles had been talking about.

"Who is Sadie Coles?" he asked.

"That brunette you were dancing with," Rae said.

"Oh, she wanted to see my painting," Patterson said, flushing, and he told Rae he hadn't let Coles into his studio.

"Jesus Christ! She works at Anthony d'Offay," Rae shouted.

At the time, Anthony d'Offay was perhaps the most important gallery in London, with an artist roster that included many of Patterson's idols, such as Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys, Roy Lichtenstein, Anselm Kiefer, and Willem de Kooning.

"And I thought, fucking hell. That's so typical of me," Patterson remembers.

Within a few weeks, though, Patterson had finagled a second meeting, and Coles suggested an exhibition in the d'Offay project space that following September. It was the hottest slot on the calendar, and Patterson would share the bill with German painter Gerhard Richter. And just like that, Patterson's art career went from hanging in the wings of success to charging straight at its center with the breakneck speed of a Bluebird-Proteus CN7. New York dealers such as Larry Gagosian, Mary Boone, and Luhring Augustine were calling. There were parties, celebrities, sports stars, vintage motorcycles, the best restaurants, and a white Triumph racing jumpsuit—a replica of the suit Evel Knievel appropriated into his stunts—with "Patterson" spelled across the back in big block letters.

"You lose friends, and you think you're gaining new friends," he says. "And I had become this slightly nightmarish Ricky Gervais character. You catch yourself saying these things, like, 'I'm so tired and I have to go to another one of these bloody events, and fucking Ed Ruscha is there, boring as fuck, and so much Champagne. I can't drink any more Champagne, I'm so sick of it.'"

THERE'S A LONG TRADITION OF ARTISTS GOING OFF INTO THE WILD-erness to find their muse: Gauguin's jaunts through Tahiti in the 19th century, Peter Doig's resettling in Trinidad in the early 21st century. "In a sense, it's a bit of an art world cliché," Patterson says. "It's Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* thing and also the Werner Herzog thing, the steamboat in the jungle. But with Doig, it always looks like he's on holiday. So much is romanticized. I was like, 'No, fuck you. If you want to experience the real heart of darkness, try moving to Dallas.'"

Patterson began to think about leaving London right about the time the Dallas Museum of Art offered him a *Concentrations* exhibition in 2000. He and Rae had moved into a Corbusier-inspired high-rise, with floor-to-ceiling windows that offered a spectacular view of

the center of London. Downstairs, there was a choice of two motorcycles: a 1968 BSA Spitfire MkIV and a 1997 Triumph T509 Speed Triple. There was a long waiting list for his paintings. Charles Saatchi was buying his work, and he included him in the celebrated *Sensation* exhibition. But in the haze of success, he and Rae were drifting apart. “The dynamic in our relationship changed so sharply,” he says.

When things became particularly tense between the couple, she kicked him out, and Patterson moved into his studio in Hoxton, which didn’t have a bathroom. One night, he found himself lying in the bathtub in Gary Hume’s studio under a little barred window that looked out into the dim alley, listening to two men beat someone up in the alley. London was in the midst of an economic boom, but Patterson felt like his London was slipping away. The art world had brought him money and fame, but it had stolen friends, the love of his life, and something of himself. Maybe, he thought, it was time to leave.

The thought of Dallas as a destination never crossed his mind, but when he came to town for the DMA show, someone in Dallas caught his attention—Christina Rees, then the *Dallas Observer’s* art critic (who would go on to work at *D Magazine*). There was something immediate and intellectually intense about the chemistry between Rees and Patterson. As it turned out, the young art critic was already planning to move to London, and within months the two were living together back in London.

The first few years of the century were particularly difficult for Patterson. His father passed away, and Anthony d’Offay abruptly closed his doors. Patterson was left without a London gallery, represented only in New York by James Cohen, who had worked for d’Offay. The new couple decided to move to New York. They arrived right after 9/11, and New York no longer resembled the city Patterson had loved to visit. They moved from the East Village to Chelsea to Brooklyn, but never quite settled. Finally, in 2004, Patterson and Rees moved back to her hometown, finding a house on a quaint sidewalk-less street a few blocks from White Rock Lake.

The art world can understand a European artist moving to New York, but no one understood Dallas. Some speculated that Patterson was drawn to the kitsch culture of cowboys and cheerleaders and the other sexualized manifestations of American consumer culture that often turn up in his paintings. “I’m the guy who likes flashy cars, so they thought I wanted to come here and drive monster trucks,” he jokes.

But what drew Patterson to Dallas was what draws so many people to this city: its space and sense of possibility. It was a place where the rigor and rules of the art world didn’t hold artists tightly bound. Patterson was attracted to the idea of disappearing in a city on the periphery of the art world. “I thought that making art in the most unlikely place in the world might make things clearer,” he says. And he wanted to make a decision for once in his life that wasn’t dictated by the demands of his career. “You felt owned,” he says of signing with a big gallery like d’Offay. He had already lost one relationship to his art career, and he didn’t want to sacrifice another. In Dallas, Patterson could have a large studio. He and Rees could buy a little house, maybe have children. And they could keep a few exquisitely crafted British sports cars in the driveway.

“I was seduced by the American dream,” he says.

But Dallas is a city of more than space and dreams, and soon after he arrived, he began to understand the place where he had landed. The first difficulty was the climate, how oil paint behaved differently in the Texas heat and humidity than it did in London.

“Climate seems a small thing, but the climate could be so hostile,” he says. “And it was speeding up the way the solvent evaporates out of the paint. The oil starts to cure very quickly. Because of that, you are always working against time, and that is hugely stressful.”

In an odd twist, Patterson had attempted to leave behind the break-neck pace of the art world, but time had only become a greater pressure. Just before he’d moved to Dallas, Patterson had signed with a new London gallery, Timothy Taylor, whose namesake had worked with Leslie Waddington. Patterson hired assistants, found a big studio, and tried to speed up his painting process. But it all only ended up slowing him down.

“I just wasn’t making enough work to supply both galleries,” he says.

In addition to struggling with his painting process, culture shock hit him hard. In London, he says, if you’ve shown a bit as an artist, you naturally get swept up in a self-propelling art circuit: dinner parties, exhibition openings, and museum functions attended by other artists, dealers, curators, and collectors. In Dallas, Patterson encountered a scene in which curators, artists, dealers, and collectors from out of town were whisked to museums straight from the airport before a cocktail with collectors and a chaperone back out of town.

“It took me a while to realize there was a pay-to-play culture in Dallas,” he says. “I used to joke that [Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth chief curator] Michael Auping has a private underground passage that took him by hover boat all the way to New York.”

Patterson’s feeling of ostracization wasn’t helped any by his natural candor, a British mixture of self-deprecating humor and satirical wit that takes a knavish delight in poking at social taboos. Dallas society, by contrast, prizes politeness and boosterism. Right off the bat, an auction

snafu between Dallas collector Howard Rachofsky and James Cohen over the sale of one of Patterson’s paintings made his relationship with the cliquish Dallas collector community awkward. Then came the period Patterson refers to as his “save Dallas phase.” Rees opened Road Agent gallery in 2006, and Patterson became absorbed in the planning—architectural sketches, real estate, parking codes. Thinking

about how to locate and operate a gallery in Dallas got Patterson thinking about how Dallas functions as a city and how it supports its culture.

He began writing emails that ripped into Dallas politics, culture, economics, urbanism, architecture, food, and, of course, cars. He railed against Dallas collectors and patrons, chastising what he saw as their self-serving philanthropy. He criticized Dallas galleries for not helping artists’ careers. He often referred to the Dallas Effect, his postulation that anything that belatedly arrives in Dallas (like an art fair) does so at precisely the moment it is no longer an interesting idea everywhere else.

“The entire patron class operates in this way,” he says. “Don’t ask questions, or the whole thing may collapse like a house of cards. Just be grateful that we have a museum at all.”

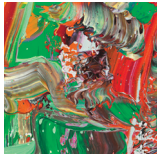
A collector once asked him if he ever started a sentence that didn’t begin with “The problem with Dallas is ...”

Patterson responded: “The problem with Dallas collectors is ...”

If Dallas’ patron class didn’t embrace the British artist upon his arrival, things got less friendly as time went on. And then they got surreal. Kenny Goss opened his British-themed art space in 2007, and now a city Patterson already saw as a crass conglomeration of facsimiles, false pretensions, and superficial consumerism had an art center dedicated to the very art movement he had helped create.

“Then there’s actually a center of YBA where CONTINUED ON PG. 108

“I wanted to see what it is like to be an artist who is not on the life support system that the art world actually is, what happens when you unplug yourself from it. I realize that you die.”



RICHARD PATTERSON

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they sell mugs with Union Jacks on them,” he says. “It’s just so unbelievable. I mean, the ludicrousness of it all.” Patterson admits that dealing with the stress of keeping up his artistic practice and adjusting to Dallas’ peculiar culture made him a bit manic. “I mean, you go to these parties, and Kenny gives you these massive vodka tonics, and everyone is blind drunk. I was probably losing my mind. I had become a bit of a crazy person. I felt like a movie actor stuck in a bad sitcom job, but Dallas is the sitcom.”

When he first moved to Dallas, his New York dealer, James Cohen, told him he was making a big mistake, but Patterson ignored him. He was tired of listening to dealers and making decisions based on his career. “I wanted to see what it is like to be an artist who is not on the life support system that the art world actually is, what happens when you unplug yourself from it,” he says. “I realize that you die. That’s what actually happens.”

WHEN PATTERSON FINALLY FINISHED HIS re-creation of *Motocrosser II* in 2011, he realized that he hadn’t re-created his painting at all. There was something about the terrible process—the belabored effort, the humidity of Dallas, the way he had changed as a painter in the 15 years since he’d originally made the work—that felt ineffably present in the rendering of the image. This was a new work of art, and so it needed a new name. Patterson called it *Your Own Personal Jesus*.

With that nightmare project behind him, he suddenly found himself free. The unfinished pieces he had started before taking up *Your Own Personal Jesus* no longer appealed to him. He needed to make something that felt immediate, that flowed freely, that spoke with a new voice. It was around this time that Jan van Toojerstraap was born in an email drafted by Patterson and sent to friends, including Jeremy Strick, director of the Nasher Sculpture Center.

Strick had arrived from Los Angeles to head the Nasher in 2009, and he began to make the kinds of connections that Patterson had for years said Dallas needed: inviting artists to museum dinners, forging friendships with the patron class and artists working in the local scene. The two became friends, and Patterson served on the Nasher’s program advisory council. Strick’s inbox was a safe space for Patterson to let loose.

If any of Patterson’s friends thought the

artist had cracked, Toojerstraap looked like the last straw—a half-witted, sex-crazed Dutchman who sends impossibly long emails written in such terrible, broken English that some are hardly readable. In the very first of these emails, Toojerstraap introduced himself as a Dutch national temporarily relocating to Dallas. “I hoping it will be a great place for plenty of experimentation with soft drugs and really hard core porn,” Toojerstraap wrote. “Like we have in the really leading liberals Dutch schools.”

Toojerstraap was set up for disappointment. What he instead discovered was a city that escapes the capacity of his warped Continental sensibilities. Through his eyes, Dallas takes the form of an absurdist porno Candy Land, filled with sex parties and societal faux pas, populated with caricatures that feel part Terry Gilliam, part Fred Armisen, part Sacha Baron Cohen.

“Here was a really fantastic Gesamtkunstwerk with the really great motorbike for having three-way rides on in the traditioning of Wagner and Anselm Keiffer,” Toojerstraap wrote about visiting the Goss-Michael Foundation. “But the ladies with plastic boobies who keep them for the whole time in the dresses, just put their drinks on the really great art sculpture by Patterson Patterson because they think its a table or a ploojer bed or somethink funky.”

The character emerged at a particularly low point for Patterson. He was incensed by an incident at a Goss-Michael opening where drunk Dallas society types left their wine glasses on Patterson’s sculpture and one woman stepped on Sarah Lucas’ neon coffin, breaking it. Toojerstraap was a knee-jerk reaction to the philistinism that Patterson witnessed.

“At this point, I had seen all this terrible stuff going on,” Patterson says. “And Toojerstraap spontaneously came to me that the only way of expressing this extreme frustration was with some sort of innocent-sounding guy.”

Not long after Toojerstraap’s birth, Patterson’s painting began to lash out with new freshness. The way forward was offered by a work of art Patterson had completed in 2009 called *Portrait of the Artist as an Older Man*. It is a mash-up of disembodied breasts and scaled-up smears of abstract paint framing a slightly scowling face stolen from a work by the Italian Renaissance master Giovanni Bellini. His new work continued this bridging of abstraction and photorealism, and possessed an energy that fed off the delight Patterson was taking from indulging in the sensuality of his paint. He also made some works under Toojerstraap’s name, using the alter ego as an excuse to branch out into text-based work and conceptual art. He created

a video montage attributed to a second alter ego, Marianne Leflange, with footage mined off YouTube that reads like a 30-minute litany of his most personal influences, juxtaposing Jacques Tati slapstick, motocross racing, a Milan Kundera interview, Russ Meyer breast films, and an English boys choir singing in a gothic cathedral.

Through Toojerstraap, Patterson began to find a way for the social criticism he’d expressed for years in his emails to work its way into his paintings. He sought to push back against cultural politeness, not just in Dallas but in the larger culture. He wanted to attack the self-policing and conservatism that are written implicitly into the rules of the art world, to paint for the sake of painting.

“If that is the prevalent culture, you can’t be Picasso anymore,” Patterson says of the political correctness of the market-obsessed art world. “Look at late Picasso. It is supreme objectification for the sake of a pure painting opportunity. I didn’t want to make art that was satirical. I wanted to tap this expressionistic style, like a proper German expressionist, in a politically dangerous way.”

A review in the London newspaper the *Independent* of a 2013 career survey exhibition at Timothy Taylor Gallery affirmed his new direction and placed it in the continuity of his broader career. “While many of the YBA generation have churned out nihilistic bric-a-brac and snidely humorous kitsch, these paintings are alive,” the critic wrote.

ON TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2014, A NISSAN ALTIMA ran a red light in Deep Ellum and t-boned Patterson’s 1994 Jaguar XJS. Patterson blamed the accident on the incompetence of Dallas drivers and Governor Rick Perry. He likened his beloved Jaguar to a Royal Navy cruiser and called it the Flag Ship for the Arts. He promised burial at sea. The Jag was to be rolled off the flight deck of the *HMS Ark Royal* into the North Sea while the London Symphony Orchestra played Ralph Vaughan Williams’ “Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis.” The car was a total loss, and he wrote an obituary for it.

“British racing green Jaguar XJS 1994–2014. It will be survived by its owner, Sir Richard Patterson, Lady Christina Rees, Trixie Rees-Patterson, Murray Rees-Patterson, and Wallace Rees-Patterson,” he wrote, referring to his wife, dogs, and cat. “To the last I could smell the Coventry factory floor. The lathes’ white cutting fluid, polished aluminum, the hat swarf, the tanned hides from the trimming shop where various pale factory workers and shop fitters with slightly crooked teeth set about expertly grooming the car to go forth into the world with purpose, poise, and restraint.”

Patterson concluded that the only way for-

ward was to purchase a new Jaguar F Type Coupe, but now an upcoming exhibition at Timothy Taylor Gallery that November had a new, ulterior purpose. Without his Jaguar, he was stuck driving a tiny, gray Fiat rental in Dallas. When he traveled to England, he would go to Lincolnshire in northeast England to check on his 1969 Porsche 912 Coupe, which was undergoing extensive restoration at the world-famous Gantspeed Engineering. The car was his steed during his last years living in London, and he was considering bringing it back to Dallas.

Patterson thinks the trip to Gantspeed could be an important scene for this story, which is how I wind up making the trip to London for the gallery show. I'm curious to see the city through his eyes.

Even though it has been 10 years since Patterson has lived here, upon arrival I am immediately swept up into his scene. We lunch at Scott's, a restaurant where Patterson bumped into Damien Hirst the day before. We drink Champagne and eat raw oysters and smoked haddock. Patterson walks me around Mayfair, takes me to Waddington's gallery, and poses in front of a storefront Jaguar dealership just off Berkeley Square.

"See? You don't need a giant concrete parking lot to have a car dealership," he says.

We end up drinking pints in the street in front of the Guinea Grill, a 600-year-old pub, with a crowd that includes young men in suits straight off of work standing shoulder to shoulder with construction workers from a nearby work site. Patterson is quick to note how un-Dallas this blending of blue and white collars is.

Later that night, the exhibition is crowded. I see Michael Craig-Martin and meet Richard's brother Simon, who jokes that his parents were a little worried when two of their four boys decided to pursue careers as artists.

The exhibition is risky for Patterson. Not only does it include prints of his large-scale photorealist works, but there are also new abstract paintings and Leflange's video. Many of the paintings depict Rees framed by abstract paint. "Lots of Christina," a London dealer says when I ask for his take. In fact, Patterson created too much work for the show, and the gallery decided not to include an encouraging new series of works, abstract-y portraits of figures that are then photographed and blown up as prints. He identifies the figures as relatives of Jan van Toojerstraap's.

Toward the end of the opening, the actor Adrien Brody strolls in. It turns out Brody is a friend of one of Patterson's collectors, and he will be joining us at dinner after the show, which is being hosted by Timothy Taylor's wife, Lady Helen Windsor Taylor, a member of the British royal family who stands 38th

in line for the throne. I think for a moment about a typical Dallas art opening and wonder if all of Patterson's criticisms are just a little, well, unfair. Dallas will never be London. Later, I ask Patterson what it is like to come to London these days as the guy from Dallas.

"There is a Catch-22," he says. "In order to be respected as an artist, you have to be respected in the city you function in. But Dallas is a city that can't do that. It looks to New York for that validation. So when I show in London, I'm this artist from Dallas who is not respected in Dallas."

The next morning, Patterson heads to Gantspeed to check on his Porsche. I receive an email with an attached photo of a windmill. "We drove past this windmill on the way through Boston—it seems to be quite well known—the Maud Foster windmill," he writes. "Possibly Jan's birthplace, although mysteriously, I didn't see a blue plaque on the side of it to commemorate Jan, as is normal. Maybe because Jan is still alive."

Back in Dallas, I'm past deadline on the story, and Patterson is still sending emails, pages of diatribes from Toojerstraap, collections of his favorite things he's said over the years, and background on his various cars and motorcycles. He is still concerned about the shape the story will take.

"I have this feeling that Tim [Rogers, *D Magazine's* editor] thinks that I'll go buy the new Jag and that's the end of the story," he says. "I'll have this ugly duckling who comes out thing. But this is just where I happen to be in this moment at this time."

At this moment, Patterson isn't an emergent duckling. He is living in Dallas much like he has for the past 10 years, quietly making art and occasionally popping up at openings and landing in someone's inbox. He is right that the story shouldn't end by concocting some false re-emergence from his exile into the limelight of the international art scene. Still, I can't shake the idea that this moment feels like precisely the right time for Patterson to get out of Dallas. His career has stabilized, he is still selling paintings quickly, and he has started a number of promising new bodies of work.

Late one night in his study after we get back from London, I ask him if he is ready to return. He tells me he feels like he needs to "paint my way back to London," but later admits that the move is more contingent on his relationship with Rees. "We could just move back to London now," he says. "But sometimes I want to leave, and it doesn't work for Christina. While sometimes she wants to leave, and it doesn't work for me. But it's okay, because what's good for her is good for me."

It strikes me that if Patterson really is, as he says, Calvino's cloven viscount—the man

split in two, whose best half is ignored—then the only way to end this story is to write about that half. In the hundreds of pages of emails I've received from him over the years, in the tens of thousands of words, amidst all of the stories about how he used to bring women to orgasm just by racing them around London on the back of his Triumph and tales about his great-great-great uncle Ned, who was the last survivor of the Charge of the Light Brigade (which is true), and the invented fantasies of Jan van Toojerstraap, never once has Patterson mentioned that in his quiet life in Dallas, he cooks ground chicken and basmati rice with parsley purchased at Whole Foods nearly every night for his Royal Musky Terrier (a breed of his own invention) Murray, whose name is tattooed on his wife's forearm. Not once has he written about how he is such an attentive, caring parent to these animals that he ground up Viagra and put it in his dog Trixie's food when she was dying because the drug is believed to improve heart circulation and quality of life. Someone else, a friend of his, told me about all that.

He probably wouldn't want me to write about how, in the hours before his London opening, he and Rees called their pet boarder from the basement of Timothy Taylor to check on their animals. When they discovered that their cat Wallace had isolated himself and was refusing to eat, they were so worried about the little creature that they considered cutting their trip short to fly home.

If Richard Patterson had told this story, he wouldn't have included these little bits, because he knows that creating iconography and myth—the collateral of his artistic process—is as much an act of omission as it is inclusion. Kindness shown to the animals and people in your life is not a quality we associate with the figure of the heroic, daredevil racer. But that's where I believe we have to end the story, because Patterson's art, for all its virtuosity, appetite, and ambition, is itself an act of exploring the limitations implicit in the silliness of human desire. And for all its flirtation with the lofty heights of success, Patterson's career has been a measuring out of limitation.

He knows now that you can't really remake a painting of a motorcycle racer that was burned up in a fire. You can't remake the culture of the city in which you live. But you can cook dinner for your dogs, and you can make a home for them with your wife. That's the real painstaking labor of life, a work that is the product of continual making and remaking.

And you can do it wherever you happen to live, even in Dallas. **D**

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