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Opposite: *The Eager Ones*, 1979, acrylic on masonite, 21 x 18"





*Romance*, 1983, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30"



*The Scientists*, 1983, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"

*Daydreams*, 1983, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"

*The Deceivers*, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"



*Eat*, 1985, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"

*Tonight*, 1983, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"



*The Detective*, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"





## TRAVELS IN CONSUMERIST UTOPIA

BARRY BLINDERMAN

*I am interested in desire and consumer happiness. When I started out, I wanted to paint like the artists who did the illustrations for pulp paperbacks—of romance, passion, love....<sup>1</sup> A lot of the things I was reproducing are charged with sexuality. It's like being a troubadour—seducing people, unleashing the libido.<sup>2</sup>*

WALTER ROBINSON'S IMAGERY RUNS THE GAMUT OF OUR APPETITES, and nearly everything he depicts is either for sale or for hire. Gun-toting private eyes embrace wily beauties in distress. Clothing models parade around in their workaday seasonal attire, while nude or scantily clad online amateurs proffer their services in selfies. For other tastes there are adorable kittens or plush toy bunnies just begging to be cuddled, burgers from every imaginable fast-food chain, and an array of medicinals from whiskey to aspirin. Many of these earthly delights are twice-removed from their sources, painted from a reproduction—an advertisement, merchandising circular, or book cover—with a brushy application of acrylic paint as alluring as the products they represent.

Like Monet with his dozens of Rouen Cathedrals, each painted at a different hour or season, or Warhol with his *32 Campbell's Soup Cans*, representing every variety, Robinson is rarely content to capture a subject once. He takes an appropriately serial approach to things that exist only in profusion. His technique is mechanically assisted yet individualistic: in a studio lit only by a projected image on a blank canvas, he works quickly, directly from his ethereal "model" in the most spontaneous fashion, with neither preparatory outlining in pencil nor preliminary sketches. His paintings are unabashedly photo-derived, but with neither the bombastic scale nor the confectionary iciness of work by some of his notable peers.

Born in Delaware in 1950 and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Robinson moved to Manhattan in 1968 to pursue a double major in art history and psychology at Columbia University, the very year that institution's anti-war protests led to a campus-wide shutdown. He describes the paintings he did during his student years as "bad Color Field." Encouraged by artist-critic Brian O'Doherty to write about art, he had become by the mid-1970s a reviewer for *Art in America* and co-publisher, with Edit deAk and Joshua Cohn, of *Art-Rite* (1973 to 1978), a quarterly zine with artist-designed covers recently described by critic Lucy Lippard as "populist, political, and cutting edge."<sup>3</sup> In 1978 he tried his hand at experimental film,

co-directing with deAk and Paul Dougherty an unsettling and poetic visual accompaniment to the art-punk group Suicide's minimalist homicidal ballad, "Frankie Teardrop."

As a member of the influential artist collective Collaborative Projects—along with Jane Dickson, Kiki Smith, John Ahearn, Tom Otterness, Robin Winters, Jenny Holzer, and others—Robinson exhibited his earliest "romance" painting, a vampire-Batman ravishing a death-pale blonde [1979, below], at the *Batman Show* held in 1979 at Winters's downtown

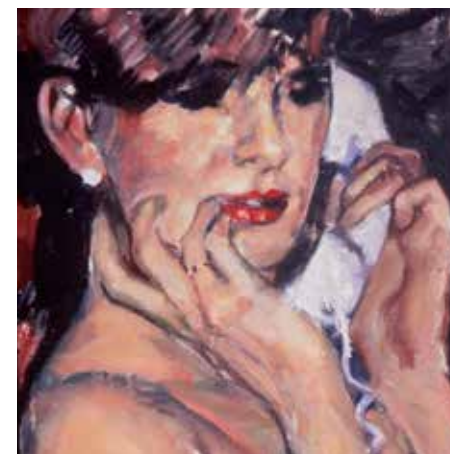


Right: *Untitled*, 1979, acrylic on masonite, 16 ½ x 11 ¾," courtesy Robin Winters  
Opposite: *Willie's Girl* (detail), 1982, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 inches





*Bidlo*, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30"



*Ellen*, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"

*Carlo III*, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"

*Karen*, 1985, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"



*Doug at Limbo*, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"

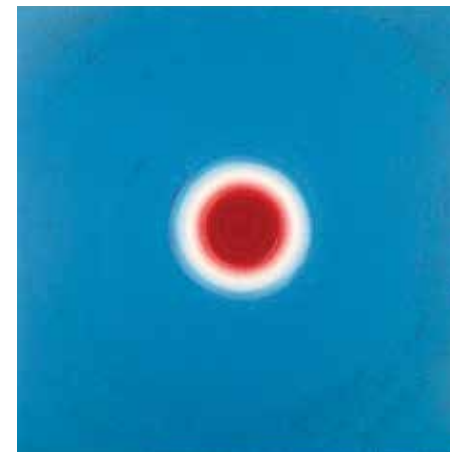
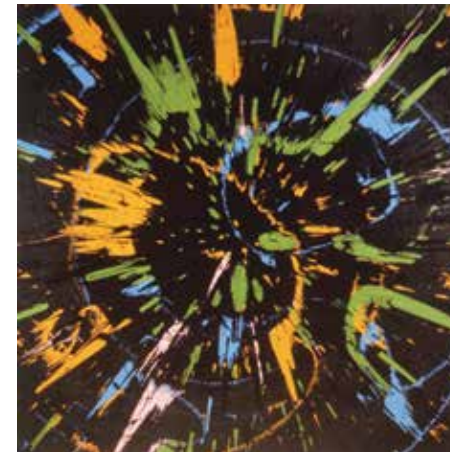
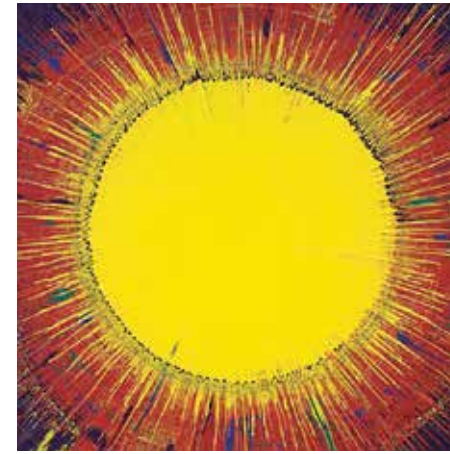
*Steve Kaplan*, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"

*Tessa*, 1985, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24"





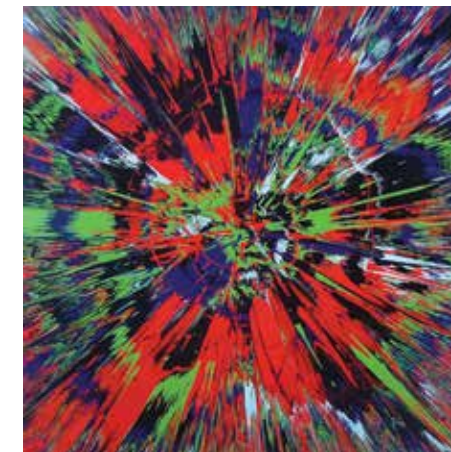
*An Air of Malignant Hatred*, 1986, enamel on canvas, 36 x 36"



*Divine Weakness*, 1986, enamel on canvas, 36 x 36"

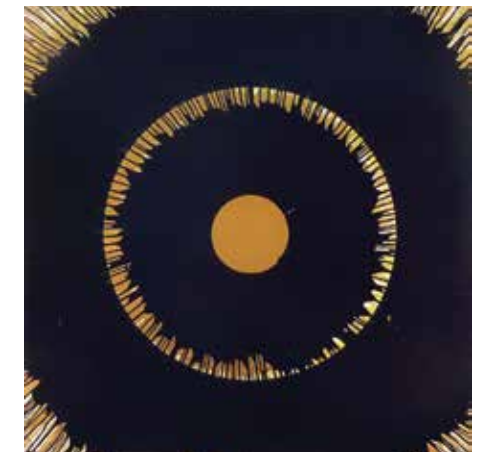
*Black Spirit*, 1985, enamel on canvas, 36 x 36"

*The Spirit of Technology*, 1985, enamel on canvas, 36 x 36"



*Self-Interest*, 1986, enamel on canvas, 36 x 36"

*Identity*, 1986, enamel on canvas, 36 x 36"



*Physical Bravery*, 1985, enamel on canvas, 36 x 36"





*Lands' End Lovebirds*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 40"



*Lands' End Swimming with Confidence*, 2014, acrylic on linen, 36 x 60"



*Lands' End Odalisque*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 58"





## 1950–1976

With mother and father, ca. 1952.

New York City, ca. 1976. Photo by Peter Grass.

*Art-Rite* #3, cover by Richard Tuttle, 1973.

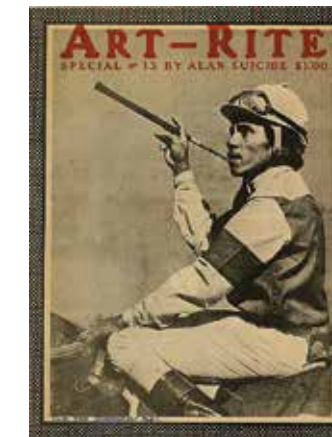


## 1977–1979

*Art-Rite Special #13*, cover featuring Alan Suicide, 1977.

Detail of Polaroid: Edit deAk and Lisa Rosen, ca. 1979.

Video still from Alan Suicide's *Frankie Teardrop*, co-directed by Paul Dougherty, Edit deAk, and Robinson, 1978.

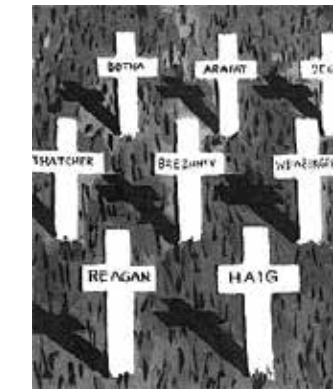


## 1980–1984

*Times Square Show*, 1980. Above door, l to r: *A Kiss Before Dying*, *Kitty Foyle*, and *Untitled (Married to Murder)*. Lower right: Kiki Smith, *Severed Limbs*.

Untitled painting exhibited in *The Positive Show* at ABC No Rio, 1981.

*Reagan as Blind*, Colab's Ritz Hotel Project, Washington, D.C., 1983.



Colab mural at Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago. Robinson: bottom center, 1981. Inset: image source. Ira Levin's *A Kiss Before Dying*, 1953.

Press release for first solo exhibition at Metro Pictures, NYC, 1982.

Detail of invitation to two-person exhibition with Duncan Hannah at Semaphore Gallery, NYC, 1984. Photo: Gregg Smith.



Opposite: May 1984 Centerfold of *East Village Eye*