



At Feature Inc., West 25th Street, New York City. Painting by Michael Lazarus.  
Photo: Steve Lafreniere

## INTRODUCTION

### BOB NICKAS

Who in life, looking back on it, far enough along to have a distanced view, was an influence in any meaningful way? As with our closest friends, most of us can count them on one hand. We might only need two fingers. V for victory. We might only need one. The middle finger? A mentor can be also a tormentor. These lessons learned, at times the hard way, are often invaluable, even if you don't realize it at the time, or find yourself resentful in the moment. Real lessons will stay with you as pats on the back won't. Of course a greater recognition will be grasped when it's you who runs the dispensary. Once, midway through a seminar where my students, for the most part, were less than responsive to what was being offered, a more seasoned teacher reassured me: "Something you say in class today may only be of use to them years from now, will be recalled and come back to help them." In an instantaneous world, this world of immediate gratification, there is yet the possibility that knowledge may, in fact, be time-released. Think of a capsule swallowed, its outer shell dissolving slowly, a drug entering the bloodstream steadily, released over six to eight hours. Some ideas, in order to metabolize, may require six to eight years. Patience being the least of it. We aren't even aware of what's happening inside of us. And then, when it hits, had we seen it coming?

I used to joke—and, as with wishes, be careful what you joke about—that when I die it could be days before I actually go, as if saying to the end: "Can't you see I'm busy? I can't be bothered just now." Working, distracted, preoccupied as always, I simply wouldn't have noticed that I'd gone. Hopefully, for the neighbors' sake, even if the new yuppies in my building aren't exactly neighborly, the windows would be open wide.

Had we seen it coming? As with the end of an era, so-called, by the time

## DARINKA NOVITOVIC CHASE

*Artist*

When I got out of school at SAIC in 1979 I didn't really know a lot of people in the art world. I wasn't too connected. But I joined West Hubbard Gallery, a co-op. Co-ops actually were a huge part of the scene there. N.A.M.E. Gallery, A.R.C., Filmmakers Cooperative. I was in a lot of group shows, of course. Chicago then was a bit behind the times. So in 1980 I curated a show called *Alter Ego* at West Hubbard. I included [younger Chicago artists] Jim Brinsfield, Angela, Michael Zieve, Deven Golden. It was a time of change, a lot of different kinds of work and was really fun. I remember there was *The Times Square Show* in New York, and there were some shows like that in Chicago. It was just in the air. Huge commercial spaces that were empty and that people would do gigantic shows in. One of my favorites that I was part of, was one that Billy Miller curated called *Possible Worlds*.

There was a lot of synchronicity. Dancing, performance art. It was just very easy and a lot of people were working. A pretty cooperative atmosphere. The music and the filmmaking and the art world were more intertwined. I remember years later Alex Katz telling me about the '60s, how it was so different because it was one art world in New York. The poets and the painters and the dancers, they all sort of knew each other and collaborated, and it was never about money yet. And actually, when Hudson opened Feature it still wasn't about that. It was still innocent in that everyone was making art and didn't think they would get rich.

I first saw Hudson at Randolph Street. He was doing a performance there and I went. He had his pants off and his top on, and he was acting like he was riding a horse across the stage, with his penis bouncing up and down. That's my very first memory of him. He was presenting interesting things there. And then he decided to open his own space. And honestly, I don't remember the conversation when he said, "Do you want to show with me?"

At first he had a one-year contract. One page of it was what the gallery was about, and the second page was what he was going to do for you and what he expected from you. Which was great, because it was very clear. He expected you to give him artwork, but it was more like, "Once I choose you, you give me what you want." He wasn't going to monitor it.

People signed up with the gallery, and it had a commitment to you and to your career. The contract said that you would have a one-person show, and that there would also always be a group show at the same time. So at that point, with so few artists represented by Hudson, you would always have some work on the walls. Hudson was an artist himself, and I felt comfortable with him. He was more of a contemporary to the younger artists. That's also what Mary Boone did, I think. They were all young.

I remember him coming to my loft for a studio visit. Although I don't recall the specific conversation, he was encouraging about my work, but he was also encouraging to me as a person. He was very... I won't say romantic, but he was very sweet.

*You felt like he understood the work?*

Absolutely. And also, he added to it. Because Hudson had a unique way of speaking. I think he got what I was doing, but also... I didn't always get everything that I was doing. He would see something that I wouldn't see. He saw a softness, for one.

So he had his first show, which was Richard Prince, and a group show that I was in. The opening was a Sunday in the afternoon, and everybody was really excited to be there. Some of the amazing things that had been bubbling up here and there... somebody had finally organized it. It was as if they'd said, "This is what it is, and we're going forward."

*Looking at the announcement now, there was remarkable variety. Your paintings, and work by Peter Huttering, Rene Santos, Sarah Charlesworth, Jim Brinsfield, Sherrie Levine. And then the next month you had a solo show there.*

ciation of Artists Organizations [NAAO].

Yes, all of those. He was super engaged.

*And suddenly in 1984 he decided to open Feature, a for-profit gallery?*

I wouldn't say suddenly. He had talked about it to me for quite a while. The committee model of the non-profits that he'd been working with was tiring him. You have to remember that he was so disciplined in his approach to work—I used to to call him the Art Marine. He was also far-reaching in his sympathies, and much that interested him was not being shown in Chicago. Committees always lag. Hudson wanted to move forward more quickly, and at his own discretion. Hence... Feature. His friend Bill Olander in New York was also an influence on the decision to do it, introducing him to a coterie of younger artists that he recognized as important and that he strongly wanted to promote.

*How do you remember the Chicago Feature?*

It was in an immense warehouse building, and you had to wind your way up stairs and through long corridors to get up to the gallery itself. Inside, it was an average-sized white box with high ceilings. It opened on April Fool's Day 1984 and soon enough became a popular art haunt by word-of-mouth, a destination. The first year or two was especially exciting. I don't think Chicago was quite prepared. [laughs] Charlie Ray showed the bathtub filled with black dye and had his *Spinning Spot* piece embedded in the floor. Koons showed the equilibrium tank with basketballs and Nike posters. There was Richard Prince's joke series. Challenging young Chicago artists too. Black light paintings by Darinka Novitovic Chase and Tony Tasset's various objects and installations. These sublime Richard Rezac sculptures. Startling and hilarious word paintings by Kay Rosen. I remember that at her first show a friend told Hudson he felt like he was on acid and could no longer understand language. Hudson liked this. "Success!"

Feature also did readings. Dennis Cooper was flown in, and Gary Indiana



Clockwise: Jeanne Dunning, February 1989; Jeff Koons, September 1985; Kay Rosen, October 1988; Raymond Pettibon, June 1990 (All New York City, except Jeff Koons)



**Q & D**

Q: *How far is it now due to be making comedy, not art.*  
 D: So I am, at times humorless.  
 Q: *Whence the change?*  
 D: It's only a shift in emphasis, but it makes all the difference in the world. Back when I was consciously identifying myself as an artist, there was a comic aspect to the work which many people missed as cynicism. I never understood what they meant by the accusation, because I always felt entirely sincere, but I didn't look a whole lot for me to understand the exact object of my sincerity. At a certain point I understood that I was really performing a kind of conceptual, conceals comedy, not a conceptual art. Rather, I stopped being concerned about whether or not it was actually art at all. I freed myself to behave as I was interested to behave.  
 Q: *Oh, you're right, you are humorless about it.*  
 D: Sorry.  
 Q: *If you're practicing a conceptual comedy rather than a conceptual art, why do you continue to exhibit in art galleries?*  
 D: Is there any other institution at present that would accept the objects and images produced by such an endeavor? Anyway, galleries are extremely useful institutions and are subjected to too much disparagement by young artists. These days it isn't so difficult to find galleries who are actively interested in testing the nature of their own endeavor, and they welcome someone like me.  
 Q: *What do galleries allow?*  
 D: That's a screwy question.  
 Q: *I'm a screwy man.*  
 D: True. I use galleries for two reasons. One: Only by engaging the gallery can one access the non-fiction imagery they frame —

Lisa Beck  
 opening Wednesday 27 May 6-8 pm  
 Feature 484 Broome St. NY NY 10013  
 through 27 June 1992

**THE LAYMAN'S PRACTICAL  
 GUIDE TO INTERROGATION**

ILLUSTRATED

ROUGH DRAFT

**JAMES WELLING**

Selected

B. Wurtz  
 buttons, part 1

**Hairy Forearm**  
 Gary Barry, Naomi Ben-Shahar  
 Bruce Broman, Lorenzo De Los Angeles  
 Jon McCafferty, Jeff Ono  
 Tyler Vlahovich, Gavin Wilson

**THE LAYMAN'S PRACTICAL  
 GUIDE TO INTERROGATION**

ILLUSTRATED

ROUGH DRAFT

**Charles Ray**  
 Self-portrait

opening Sat 12 May 6-8 pm

**FEATURE**  
 484 Broome St. NY NY 10013  
 Tues-Sat 11-4 pm · 212/941-7077  
 Exhibition continues through 9 June

Clockwise: *the Mud Club, Winchester Cathedral & Lake Nairobi*, October 1992; David Robbins, November 1991; B. Wurtz and *Hairy Forearm*, January 2000; James Welling, April 1988 (All New York City, except James Welling)

Clockwise: Lisa Beck, May 1992; Tom Friedman, October 1997; Charles Ray, May 1990; Hirsch Perlman, October 1992 (All New York City)

Oh, collectors loved him. Until his stern, withholding side would come out. [*laughs*] But, for example, certain collectors learned quite a lot from him. They would talk to him about art, what it meant, and he would show them things and relate those to things they already owned. They so loved and respected him. However that's a complicated relationship, because they also supported him by making regular purchases. And that can get confusing. I myself learned so many ways of looking from Hudson. Much of the way that I look at art is because of what was shown—and how it was shown—at Feature.

## DENNIS COOPER

*Writer, critic, and filmmaker*

Feature was my savior. At some point in the mid-'80s I started writing for *Artforum*. I was doing reviews for them, like three every month. That's when I started getting involved in the New York art world, and had the mentorship of the notorious Christian Leigh and sort of that whole scene. I thought it was very interesting, but I could not relate to it. It was so extremely, you know, money and fame and all that. So Hudson was a total relief. Not only did he show nothing but great work—I mean, the gallery itself—but also his attitude toward art and the art world was... you know, instantly he was my great hero. And he's always been a big hero to me.

My memory tells me I knew him first as a performance artist. Not that I'd seen his performances. I mostly knew about him because of reading about them in *High Performance* and things. Then I heard from artist friends in L.A. that he was doing a gallery in Chicago. Everyone was very high on it. I met him when he came to something I did in New York. I guess it must have been a reading at Dance Theater Workshop. He was just there, and he came up afterward and said, "Hi, I really liked your stuff, we should know each other or something. Let's meet up."

When Feature got to New York, I hung out there all the time. I mean I went there *all* the time. For a while in the '90s I lived pretty near, so I just spent a lot of time at the gallery hanging out with Hudson, going to openings, and so on and so forth. I was never disappointed. I didn't always understand exactly why he liked something. But he had such an extremely pure and focused vision of what he wanted. So I spent time with the work and was always persuaded in some way or another to what he saw in it. First of all, he never showed anything that wasn't extremely rigorous and strange. But sometimes it would take me a while. I remember not really understanding why he liked Kay Rosen at first. Why do you like this? Or why do you like Lily van der Stokker? It just looks kind of silly to me, but then I'd sort of get it, and then I'd spend some time with it and I'd be, oh, actually this is hugely more interesting than I thought. And then he started showing Tom of Finland and all these other people like Raymond Pettibon. People who had not been shown in the art world before. He would contextualize these people in the art world, and that was really something.

Plus he was tremendously generous, and he was obviously supportive of my work. He let me do that "Farm Boys" theme for an issue of *Farm*. You know, he directed me to a lot of stuff, but he wasn't necessarily very open to the things I tried to get him to like. [*laughs*] He had his thing, and his thing was his thing.

*You were going to put together a show at Feature.*

Yes. At one point I was going to curate a show there. And it was going to be the only show he was going to let anybody else curate for him. But of course it did not happen because he did not like anything I wanted to do. So it started falling apart because literally he was like, "No, I won't show that. No, I won't show that." [*laughs*] I was, like, okay okay.

*You could see a little of that with his desk being visible when you were in the gallery, but his still seeming unapproachable.*

I look around and I don't see any box. "You see?" he says, and points to the sofa against the wall. And sure enough there it was, rolled in a ball. Because they were Lucky's chenille stents. You could stretch them out again, right? He's basically fumbled the whole thing together in a ball. It made it very easy for me, because I could just put it in a plastic bag and take it with me. I didn't even need a box.

## G.B. JONES

*Artist, musician, filmmaker, and zinemaker*

It all happened in a very strange way. From what I can remember, sometime in the early '90s Dennis Cooper got in touch with me and said, this gallery owner in New York wants to see your work. I thought, "Yeah, right." I didn't believe him. But then I told Johnny Noxzema [*friend and zine collaborator*] and he got really excited, as he always does. He said, "Okay, we'll take a trip. We'll all go down [from Toronto] to New York. We'll visit the gallery and take your work down and see what he says." So me, Johnny, and a couple of friends drove down to Feature and met Hudson. Dennis had maybe given him a copy of *J.D.s* [*the foundational queer zine produced by Jones and Bruce LaBruce*] or told him about it, but that's where he knew of me.

*I like the idea that he first saw your work in a zine.*

It's amazing. He saw a xeroxed fanzine—not a magazine, but a fanzine. Amateur, unprofessional, fanboys, fangirls, fan art—it had negative connotations for a lot of people. That too was really exciting, that he would say, "You know what, those arbitrary descriptions don't mean anything to me. I'm looking for something exciting." I had not experienced that, especially in terms of galleries and the real quote-unquote art world. At least in Toronto. I had no experience with the art world in New York. I

had no idea of what to expect. The fact that he was so nice and so enthusiastic was incredible.

*You showed him your Tom Girl drawings. He must have loved their reverse-gender take on Tom of Finland, who he also showed.*

Yes, and I'm trying to think of how many I even had at that point. Not many. You see, I only did them for *J.D.s*, and there had only been eight issues. I probably had at the most twenty drawings. That was it, my entire fine art career. [*laughs*] I was more concentrated on photography at that point, and film. The drawings were just a sideline. But when I showed them to him he, immediately said, "Yeah, these are good. I think I can use them." Again, my reaction as per usual was, oh, he's just being polite. I'll never hear from him again. So I went home. But the next thing, he's contacting me and saying, "You better do some more drawings, because you're going to have a show here with Tom of Finland." I was a bit stunned. So I had to spend the next few months drawing constantly.

*The summer of 1991. I remember how groundbreaking that show was.*

I'm glad we're talking about this stuff, especially for the kids. Because I don't know if they can even fathom. How can I explain it? The world has changed so much. When Bruce and I started *J.D.s*, and then Caroline Azar and I started Fifth Column [*early queer-core Toronto band*], in a certain sense we thought we've got nothing to lose. We can do what we want, say what we want, and live the way we want. We don't have any money or a record deal. But it wasn't typical or common then to be openly queer and be musicians, filmmakers, even zinemakers. If you were a serious filmmaker or a musician you stayed in the closet. And then you walk into Feature and you're confronted with, you know, my drawings and Tom of Finland. A very confrontational queer show. That was not happening in the art world at that time.

*People were startled that Hudson showed Tom of Finland with no irony.*



Hudson and “Feature Creatures” for *i-D* magazine, 2003. Top Row: Nancy Shaver, Jimi Dams, Jim Pedersen, Alexander Ross, Judy Linn, Richard Kern, Martin Bland, Lisa Beck. Middle row: John Torreano, Lucky DeBellevue, Sam Gordon, B. Wurtz, Alan Weiner, Michael Lazarus, Jerry Phillips, David Moreno, Jason Fox. Bottom row: Gary Batty, Jesse Bransford, Hudson, Bruce Brosnan, Lorenzo De Los Angeles, David Shaw, Richard Bloes, Dike Blair, Bill Komoski. Photo: Rainer Hosch

...and Richard Kern. Yeah, I do not want to speculate why he did not show more photography.

*What stands out to you about the gallery in its successive eras?*

I loved all the Roy McMakin furniture that he used. And I loved that at the West 25th Street gallery, the stairway to the office area, which I guess had once been a loading dock, was disconnected from the rest of the gallery. I liked that it could be moved away, which made a sort of moat separating the display area from the business area so, if needed, you could lift the drawbridge. Once when I was there, looking at photographs, or looking through something else, I realized Hudson was on the phone with an art supply store ordering chipboard. I was thinking, “Why is he doing that? Why doesn’t someone else do that?” I was just kind of amazed at his willingness or maybe compulsion to do that. I mean, he had people working for him.

*What are your feelings about the business side of the gallery?*

You know, I’d sit around with other artists and they’d all complain about their dealers, and I really couldn’t complain about Hudson. Of course it’s a business relationship and there’s going to be ups and downs. If I start nitpicking or going into things that annoyed me, things I wanted that I didn’t get, or blah blah blah, it just seems like sour grapes. My career is my responsibility, it wasn’t his. If he could move some product, great. But it was up to me, and I respected that. Also, I don’t want to come off as too much of a complaining loser. [*laughs*] But if we had problems, he would address them. Also he did do this one amazing money thing for me. I sold some photographs through someone else, another dealer. And that dealer decided that they were not going to pay me the nice amount of money owed me. I told Hudson about this, and he said, “Okay, I’ll pay you the money.” I don’t know what his relationship to the other person was, but Hudson bellied up the money.

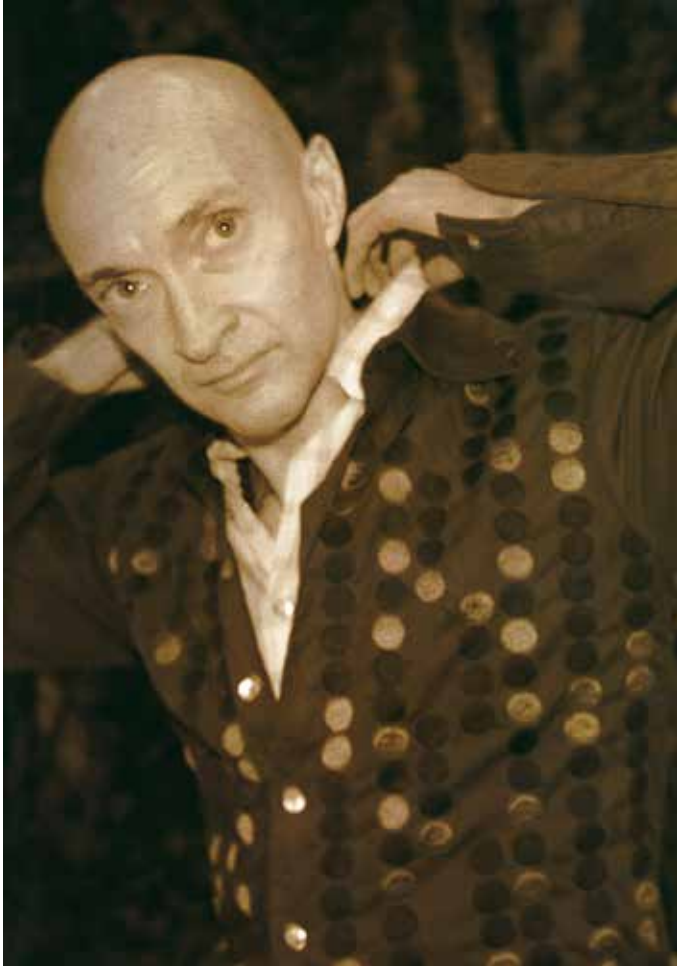


Photo: Judy Linn, 2005

## AN INTERVIEW WITH HUDSON

### DIKE BLAIR

Dike Blair: *What exhibitions are you looking forward to?*

Hudson: *Recent Autodidacts. Oh don't be an asshole, silly; it's just a circle. The East Village and the YBA.* Some women artists of the last twenty-five years, however not those who have been most celebrated, with essays and interviews which focus on differences between male and female art-making and art. An exhibition of noted artists' works considered to be failures or atypical. And two small, amusing exhibitions: Richard Prince re-photographs and Alex Katz paintings 1979-1988, as well, paired abstractions by Gerhard Richter and Howard Hodgkin. All up in that Imaginary Museum in my mind.

*What do you think about what museums are doing these days?*

They need to flee from hipness and the current notion of art as fun, and ditto for artists, galleries, and collectors. Museums are the big news these days, as their actions and changes deeply shape the art world. There should be a critical examination of such things as their reorientation toward mass entertainment and the scale of huge, and the expanding power of their education departments and their pervasive audio tours, which seem to churn out like-minded fact-followers rather than observant eyes. Whatever happened to the museum as a place of study, aesthetics, and the subjective, or the quiet time wandering about a museum deep in thought or ecstatic with emotion? Perhaps museums should institute one silent day weekly. Also, why are museums collecting works by artists who have had fewer than three or four one-person exhibitions? And finally, curatorial positions should be created for those with training outside academia.