

# Museum of fine arts essay

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Jim Dine Jim Dine was born in Cincinnati Ohio (then a quiet river town), during 1939, of a middle class Jewish family. His father owned a paint and plumbing supply store, and his grandfather owned a hardware store. His mother was loving and his childhood memories are pleasant ones.

He took his first painting classes at the Cincinnati Art Academy, while in high school. He then went on to attend the University Of Cincinnati, the school Of the Boston Museum of Fine arts, and Ohio University where (in 1957) he received his BAA. Dine moved to New York City, in 1958 and immediately came involved in “ Happenings” (although it should be noted Dine rejected this term, preferring “ painter’s theater”), performance art staging with Claes Oldenburg and Allan Capron. By early 1959, he was a principal member of the Judson Group (a group of artists which gathered regularly at the Judson Gallery) along with Tom Wassermann, George Seal, Robert Rauschenberg, and Roy Lichtenstein. In 1959 Dine experimented with Conceptual Art, he made his first prints and performance pieces, and combined paintings and objects. In *Five Feet of Colorful Tools*, Dine manipulated tools with a childlike aggression; he spray- painted and spilled paint over tools such as those from his grandfather’s hardware store. A yellow canvas is the background, for a series of polychrome tools, with shadows of bright spray-paint. The *Car Crash Series* is a grouping of prints and performance art, which commemorates the death of his friend (he may have even been involved in this accident).

White painted found objects adorned an enclosed space, Dine all silver with red lipstick scrawled anthropomorphic cars on a black board for approximately fifteen minutes. He broke the chalk, obsessively trying to communicate or explain, but only grunted (an example of his seeming

inability to talk about his work, which I'll address later). A third example of his early style is his highly emotional and personal in content combination paintings and objects: groups of self-portraits, a collagen painting series of heads and a green suit assemblage. The portraits, which were not really portraits but symbols of the self, evoke children's art. Trapped in a mute suffering the mouths are usually covered or deleted, their eyes calling out a silent unvoiced plea.

Unlike his colleagues Dine reaches toward literacy. In a commentary piece on how his deep-seated phobias make him isolate himself, his message becomes ambiguous and he leaves conflicts unresolved; the pants in Green Suit are tattered and only a bound penis survives uncut, some have called it rude, crude, even childish. These are perfect examples of Diner's lifelong preoccupation with the human form, found objects, and symbolism; the use of suits and tools is a long-running theme for Dine; the vigorous brushstrokes echo the Abstract expressionist once with painting as a medium for articulating the self. Dine constructed his first environment (the House), presented his first stage performance (the Smiling Workman), and produced mixed media collagen works in 1960. The House, was part of an exhibition he did with Oldenburg called Ray-Gun, the walls and ceiling of the gallery were eradicated by painted cloth, fragmented objects, slogans, crumpled paper, and hanging bedsprings. Scattered throughout were cardboard signs reading " breakfast is ready" and " go to work"; Dine said the juxtaposition of these and other phrases along with surrounding domestic wreckage revealed the potential violence inherent to a home.

This was amplified by the various body parts lost or hidden in the chaos. This collection of fragmented figures and discarded articles along with tattered elements is abbreviated in *Bedspring* (which was either inspired by, or part of, *House*): an assemblage of discarded clothing, bedsprings, and other trash from the New York City streets. *House* and *Bedspring* draw on the grit of everyday for impact. Dine's first stage performance piece: the *Smiley-Workman*, consisted of Dine writing " I Love What I'm Doing, HELP! (on a large canvas).

Dine then proceeded to drink red paint (tomato juice), which he then dumped (the remainder of) over his body; he concluded this by diving through the canvas (which represented a literal transgression from the reality of the painter to the artifice of painting). Jim Dine also produced an oil painting/collage entitled: *Nanny's Tie*. Aluminum paint covers every inch Of a huge piece of cloth, which was molded into a massive necktie and mounted to the canvas: this was covered in aluminum paint as well, adding to the monumentality of it. During the period from 1961-1965, Dine worked mostly in oil paintings, producing several series of work most of which revolving around specific themes. In 1961 Dine produced *Hair* and *Blonde Hair*: oil paintings on canvas, which consisted of images of objects (often with their " name") each focusing on a single " thing". *Hair* is a funky variation, consisting of numerous black and brown curling brushstrokes, on a tan background, coupled with the word " hair". Whereas *Blonde Hair* is more minimalist: a yellow monochrome, composed of slightly wavy brushstrokes (for texture and differentiation). The presence Of the body remains strong,

even though Dine moves away from literal figurative images, especially in works which include actual clothing: Red Suspenders and Orange Tie.

In 1962 Dine underwent psychoanalysis, which greatly influenced his work from then on. A series of tools represents Diner's memories of his grandfather's hardware store where he worked in his youth. A series of rooms, such as Child's Blue Wall, involve the viewer physically in Diner's remembrances, using paintings of the walls and real lamps and fixtures jutting out toward the viewer.

Dine began using painters palettes in 1963 and 1964; the messy palettes stand for the confused arena of the soul. Dine produced series of Bathrobes starting in 1964 (the bathrobe symbolizing himself, "the clothes make the man") that seem to anticipate inhabitation. In 1966 Dine went on a two-year hiatus from painting, he began making sculptures of tools, furniture and boots, he also moved to London during this time. In 1968 and 1969, Dine produced many large-scale sculptures, and Name paintings.

As his sculptures became larger, his interest in manipulating the pace of the viewer became more pronounced, Five Chicken-Wire Hearts (The Heart represents his wife Nancy) is a good example of this. Dine created Name Painting #1 in 1969, it was an autobiographical portrait using only the names of every person he could remember meeting (up until 1965) in chronological order; Name Painting #1 predicted a whole genre of "writing art", which was yet to come. The 1960s were Jim Diner's signature period; he produced most of his more popular work during this time period. Jim Dine is a pop Artist, who rejects the title bestowed upon him, he moves between

expressionistic distortion and stylistic refinement; “ He was in the ‘ ass’s, an expressionist who, through some jurisdictional error, was granted a visa for entry into Pop country, from which, using it’s methods, he passionately strove to get out (Brian Doherty)”.

During his “ great decade”, Dine attached himself to the idea of self-exposure, as a means of passage for the possibilities of expression. Jim Dine began his lasting pursuit of themes of the self, body and memory through a widely varied range of mediums.