



DAN GLUIBIZZI

INTERVIEW BY **GABE SCOTT** // PORTRAIT BY **CLAYTON COTTERELL**

VOYEUR'S VOYEUR DAN GLUIBIZZI TROLLS THE THOUSANDS of erotic sites that serve as archives for couples, strangers, nudists, swingers, amateurs, exhibitionists and other forms of provocative recreation. The Portland-based artist, obsessed with the Tumblr format of imaging vaults, has a unique approach to the digital and analog world which allows him to investigate and recontextualize a swath of NSFW material and revel in the new exhibitionism enabled by the information age. His paintings present a fetishized framework of playful and experimental sexuality, stitched together with his own appreciation for art history and background in printmaking. By detaching individuals from their original context, focus shifts to the purity of the forms themselves, rather than a recreation of the act. Without a linear narrative, these forms freely create a host of enthralling interactions. Through Photoshop, projection and watercolor, Gluibizzi gives new life, expression and purpose to his subjects, with line and form serving as vehicles for his delicious, sorbet-colored smut.



Visitors
Watercolor on paper
22" x 30"
2013

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Gabe Scott: Tumblr seems to be your preferred site for compiling source material. What is it about that particular search engine that suits you?

Dan Gluibizzi: Tumblr users, especially those who make blogs featuring adult content, are wonderfully obsessive. They meticulously organize digital scrapbooks of their favorite sub-genres of pornography. Many offer the widest range of poses and body types I have ever found. If I am searching for nudes on boats there will be several Tumblr blogs, likely with hundreds of images. In the process of collecting nudes on boats I will discover some variation which will lead me in a surprising new direction.

Does the format have any influence on your composition or arrangement of subject matter?

In most of my work, I remove figures from the context of the overall image while still referencing the charmingly bizarre and discordant groupings found on the blogs. Tumblr has the option to look at blogs in an archive format, which allows most images to be seen at one time, with the least design distraction. I have made several works from entire screen grabs of Tumblr blogs in the archive format. Each scroll of the staggered grid creates a new tapestry of thumbnails, not unlike a Google image search, except that the images on a Tumblr blog are assembled with care and intention by an individual. There are billions of posts on Tumblr being continually sorted, catalogued and reposted. It is a nutrient-rich sea of images.

How many Tumblrs do you follow, and what subjects hold the most interest for you? Are there things you consciously look for when accumulating imagery to work with, or is it more of just going down the rabbit hole to see where it leads?

There was a time I was following over a thousand. Now I rarely even sign in. Following that many blogs was unmanageable. The titles rarely reflect the content, and after a while, I had no idea what anything was.

I find it is much easier to Google search: “subject + Tumblr.” I am an omnivorous image collector, from the artful to the

gross-out. Red carpet, art openings, nude beaches, silver foxes and the wedding photo booth all make for rich source material. Badly cropped amateur images of all types? To the front of the line! If you are looking for women exposing themselves in grocery stores or men sheetrocking nude, Tumblr is still the best. I search sites that appeal to the prurient interest. I gather images that show the love and sometimes sleazy camaraderie found in these varied communities. I allow for a lot of aimless clicking, but when I become fixated on a certain pose or setting, I am a focused hunter. Unlike out-of-print publications, blogs vanish forever. Snusk.tumblr was one of those, an amazing resource of amateur-posted adult content that disappeared, along with many others. All heartbreaking losses.

Pre-blogsphere, did you have an obsession for trolling random found images? Thrift stores, vacant houses, estate sales or places of that nature?

I still dig around in second hand stores and other people’s basements if given a chance. I’ve spent a great deal of my life in used bookstores and junk shops. Over a decade ago I wandered into an adult bookshop that did not have any shelves, just piles of vintage porn magazines and VHS tapes in rows on the floor. It was a treasure trove. I wish I could have bought everything. As much as I enjoy collecting images online, erotica is always better as part of an object: a snapshot, a magazine, a painting, a sculpture. As everything becomes digitized, my aim is to return some of the compelling images I find back into objects. I have boxes full of clippings and copies from decades of flipping through newspapers and magazines, collecting trash off the street and pouring over stacks of thrift store porn. And now I have drawers full of flash drives too.

Your academic background focused primarily on printmaking and art history, yes?

Painting and printmaking. I have an artist’s understanding of art history with hot-spots of deeper knowledge around favorite artists and movements. I grew up in my father’s painting studio and there were always stacks of art books



everywhere and piles of *Art in America* magazines around the house. As a family we visited galleries, museums and artist studios. Marcel Duchamp's *Étant donnés* in Philadelphia captured my imagination at an early age. I think my exposure to figurative art as a child guided many of my choices throughout art school.

My first job in New York City after six years of art school was as a security guard at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This experience was an important extension of my art education. Though grueling, standing quietly for thousands of hours reflecting on the art in the galleries solidified my desire to create objects. During my time as a guard, I was able to fully recognize the importance and satisfaction of having direct, one-on-one familiarity with actual works of art.

It was during art school that I developed a passion for learning about the lives and relationships of artists. From the banal to the lurid gossip, I have always found it energizing to know about their personal lives. It drives me crazy thinking about Yayoi Kusama organizing Joseph Cornell's collage materials or Stanley Spencer keeping a painting wrapped and hidden under his bed.

How would you explain your relationships with photography, printmaking, painting and drawing? At what point did you begin your shift towards watercolor?

Looking back, art school felt compartmentalized. Painters worked on canvas. Commercial artists used computers. Photographers were in the darkroom and printmakers wore aprons. I wanted to be a painter but felt most comfortable in

On Division
Watercolor on paper
88" x 73"
2014

opposite (from top)
Red Archive
Watercolor on paper
22" x 30"
2014

Six Happy Couples
Watercolor on paper
22" x 30"
2012

an apron. Though I am not a printmaker now, the methodical process of printmaking I learned in graduate school was an important part of learning how to make art. Photography has always been a primary source material. It was the projector that really got me thinking about how photographic source material could take my drawing away from an idiosyncratic style. I like thinking about the steps of how an image gets into one of my pieces. A photograph is taken, maybe on a smart phone, uploaded, shared, reposted, downloaded, manipulated, transformed and arranged, printed, projected through hundreds of lumens of light, drawn with graphite on stretched cotton paper and painted. I became passionate about works on paper from my time working in galleries, museums and auction houses. I loved handling all kinds of art objects, but it was the up-close and personal contact with amazing unframed drawings and watercolors that got me hooked. I wanted to go to my studio and make my own. I am still chasing that feeling.

What was it specifically about your printmaking process that guided you towards your current method of translation?

In intaglio etching, there are two phases: the making of a printable plate and the printing of that plate. I thrive in a methodical, procedural approach to art making. I think of the time spent collecting images, sizing, altering and creating digital compositions as if I am making the plate. Drawing from the projected images, and then layering washes, feels like printing.

Do you view each completed work as a "print" and do you still see fundamental components of your printmaking style in the finished product?

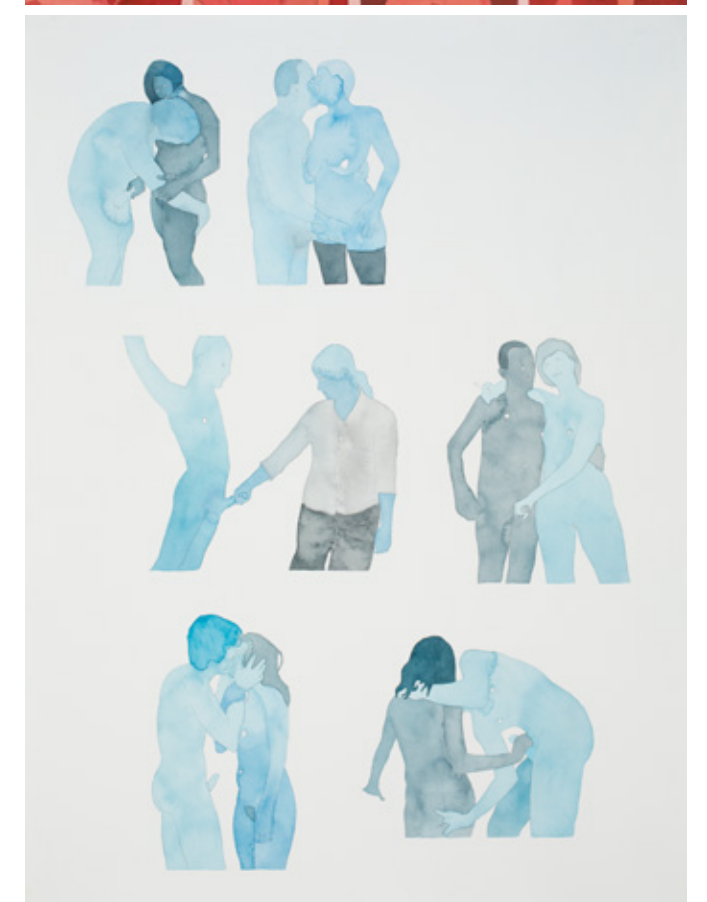
Not at all. I only make unique works, but yes, making plates and printing plates had a big effect, especially color over line. It's always fascinating and humbling to look back at student work or work from just after school and see how so many issues and themes remain constant, even as I incorporated new solutions. I loved having piles of test prints around for collage material and as the beginnings for drawings and paintings. The same is true now. My studio has stacks of boxes filled with abandoned watercolors ready to be made into new compositions. I suppose the digital projector is like a printmaking press now.

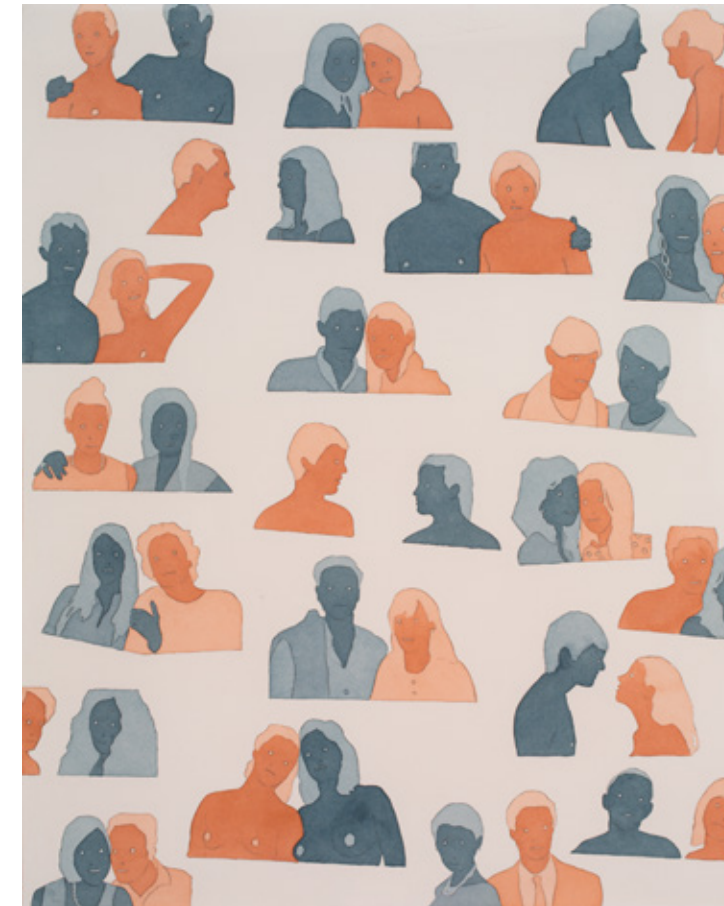
When choosing imagery to study and generate, which holds more interest, the anatomical form and its configuration or the act depicted?

Both are important as I compose images. There is a direct relationship between the form and the act. Often couples are the starting point. I seek out images of canoodling couplings and frolicking nudes. Both innocent hugging and indecent groping can create exciting compositional possibilities.

The eyes of many of your subjects are obscured. What do you think of the axiom, "The eyes are the window to the soul?"

It's hard not to believe in that. The use of small circles for eyes was partially inspired from the film *The Children of the Damned* and the original *Little Orphan Annie* comic.





from left
Morning Crew
 Watercolor on paper
 2015

Late Summer
 Watercolor on paper
 16" x 20"
 2014

Adventures, Adventures
 Watercolor on paper
 2015

By using small circles for the iris, I attempt to avoid the uncanny valley that I find can happen when drawing from a projected image. There is a significant amount of anonymity that occurs by not fully drawing and painting eyes. I want the subjects to be specific but remote. I am delighted, however, by the amount of humor and soulfulness that is still readable.

In reference to the eyes, when I look at works such as *Long Happy Summer*, your color washes and gradients appear as overflow of the spiritual energy contained in that “uncanny valley.” A ray of light floods through a deteriorating landscape or disperses over a basin with a pulsating vitality. The mysterious energy renders the eyes vacant, but intact, while it circulates and fluctuates throughout each of the human forms. Does your coloration follow any sort of emotive protocol? Do certain palettes relate to certain emotions you project through your subjects?

I spend a great deal of time looking at the images I collect, composing and then drawing the contours of their bodies. I print out a large version of the groupings and have it around the studio as a guide. While I draw, I speculate about the lives of these folks. Are they happy? What are they doing at the very moment I am drawing them? I get emotionally involved.

During the composition process, I begin thinking about color but rarely make color decisions. After a drawing is finished

it hangs out in the studio for a while, often for days and weeks before I paint it. I allow for more intuitive directions. I intentionally mix ugly colors and then attempt to balance them while painting. The stress of always feeling like I need to fix the color folds in well with my connection with the figures I am painting. I want them to stand out, fit in and play well with their partners. I feel responsible for them.

What is it that dictates your composition and arrangement styles, the photographic contact sheet versus free-floating forms? Your more recent work seems to bust out of the box a bit, literally and figuratively. Was the grid format more of a phase or a product of the environment that you embraced?

There are certain poses I am always sorting through: exhibitionists, nudists and embracing couples. Often one pose will start the process for a composition. A lone figure or an entangled couple will determine the next figure, and so on. I compose thinking about grids or groupings. While making the collages that become the paintings, I sort through tens of thousands of thumbnails. During collecting sessions I scroll through countless grids of disparate images. I allow these grids to flow in and out of my composition process.

Do you feel that you are now experimenting more with perspective in positive and negative spaces, and measurements of distance and perspectives as opposed to



images that are more of a direct reference to their sources?
 I am always considering new approaches, and they are not mutually exclusive. The possibilities for pattern and rhythm when composing paintings are on my mind as I collect and arrange images. I strive to create consonance and dissonance both by what the subjects are doing and how they are positioned in relationship to one another.

A purely hypothetical time machine question: have you ever considered how your current and more illicit work might have looked in the '50s, '60s or '70s? Considering the erosion of the social and behavioral taboos over the course of those three decades, how do you think your work would look if you could be transported back to that era, while attempting similar examinations of human behavior like exhibitionism, fetishism, voyeurism, nudists, swingers, bongs, etc.?

I wish I could know. Goodness! Reactions to my work would vary so much depending on location and the experiences of the viewer. I imagine that fewer people saw the contemporary art that was being made in their time. Today, even a casual art audience will see as much as the

fully committed art enthusiast. There were free-thinkers in the '50s, '60s and '70s and the social and behavioral taboos have not necessarily eroded, though they have changed. The current audience has broadened, but there were always engaged artists and collectors who would all be extremely jealous about the vast quantities of images we have at our fingertips.

It's fair to say I would connect with fewer people but I think I would find like-minded folks. These communities may have been underground compared to today but I am sure they were well known by artists. If I could do any time traveling studio visits, my first stop would be the studio shared by Paul Cadmus, George Tooker and Jared French, circa 1949. Pop artists would not be surprised in the least by the art of 2015. In fact, they might take credit for the world we live in today. It's all Pop art now, right?

JUX

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from left
 Dusk
 Watercolor on paper
 2015

Four Couples
 Watercolor on paper
 2013

