Jeffrey Dennis

A SELECTION OF PAINTINGS: 1985-90

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December 8, 1991 to January 5, 1992

Weatherspoon Art Gallery, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

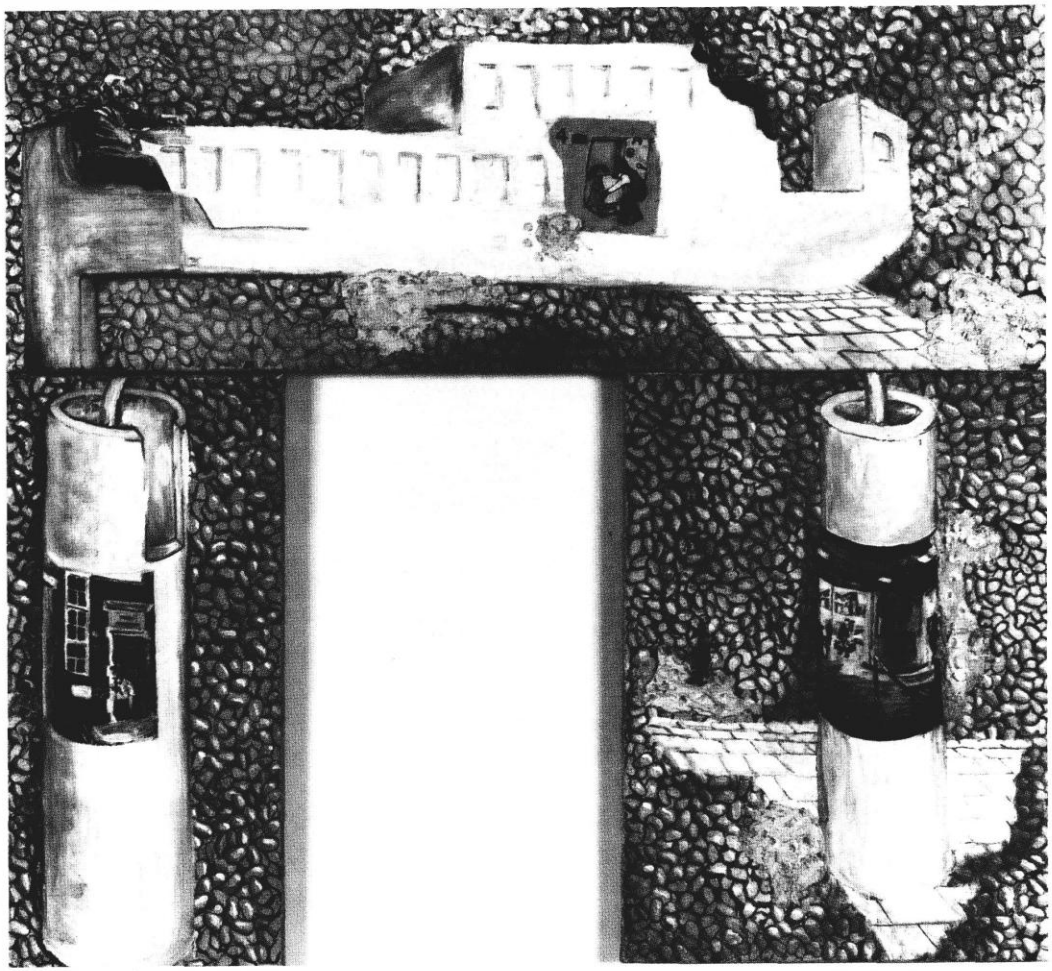
FOREWORD

Jeffrey Dennis' paintings are about mystery. They are packed with any number of incidental narrative mysteries; fragments of stories, visual clues, dramas pending or past. But they are also about mysteries of time, memory, art. With its myriad references, its striking array of carefully judged narrrative content, Jeffrey Dennis' work invites interpretation. It seeks to be read and decoded. His imagery has always had an historical cast, functioning in terms of political, cultural and personal history. His deliberate, technically exact methodology hints at profound private significance in the things and events depicted, but the work is so emphatic and pervasive that we don't find it necessary to disentangle the individual strands of the stories that make up any particular picture. The mystery is part of the work's chemistry.

His paintings declare themselves to be paintings. They are beautifully built up of tiny, precise brushstrokes and patches of color. The technique is intricate though not precious; each mark leaves its own impression, isolated from its companions, as if the pictures are constructed of any number of detailed, interlocking fragments slotted impeccably together. He often allows a moldering or fading of the images along their edges, so that the very substantial spaces he has created peter out disconcertingly and undermine the illusion of depth. The gentle disparities of content and abrupt changes in scale fracture the apparent logic of Dennis' pictorial space. The collision of the ordinary and the extraordinary creates a surrealistic fusion of images. Despite the obvious references to the Northern Romantic Tradition, Dennis' apparent inclination toward extravagant gestures is curbed by a very English understatement. Instead of apocalypse, there is a sense of unease. Reality has been scrambled, compacted rather in the manner of Alain Renais' film *Providence*, where an ailing novelist jumbles fantasy and reality in his mind, sifting through plots, with the film becoming his imagination in action.

Consistently, the cast of characters, the props, the stages they all inhabit are manipulated with the limitless protean flexibility of a movie set. Dennis shuffles them at will and implicates each character in historical, emotional and erotic dramas. Everything in these pictures has, for Dennis, a personal significance and, through his scrupulous desire to record and understand he lends a meditative weight to normal things, circumstances and objects that we usually take for granted. His calculation and skill, the delicate disjunctures of his surrealism, the understated passion of his images, all these elements give his work substance because he speaks through it to illuminate the ordinary.

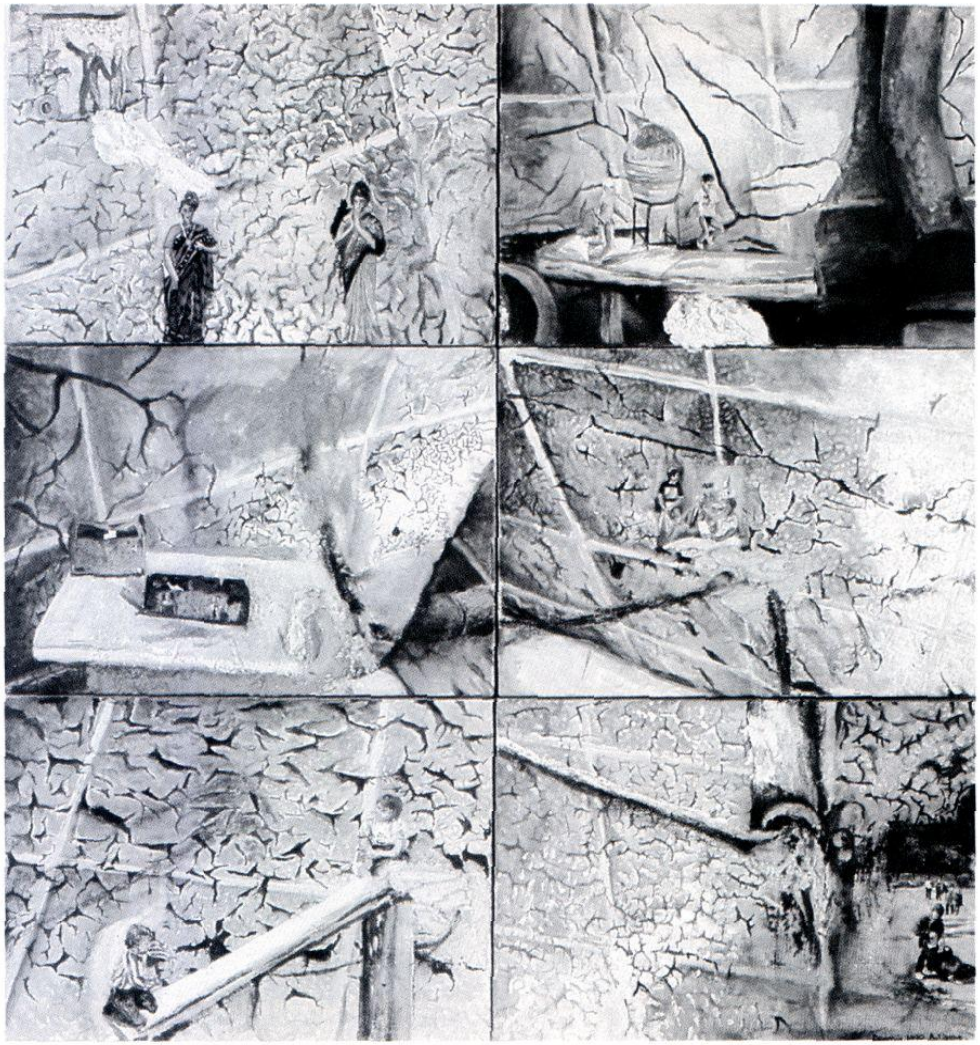
Trevor Richardson,
Curator of Exhibitions



PEARLY GATES

oil on canvas

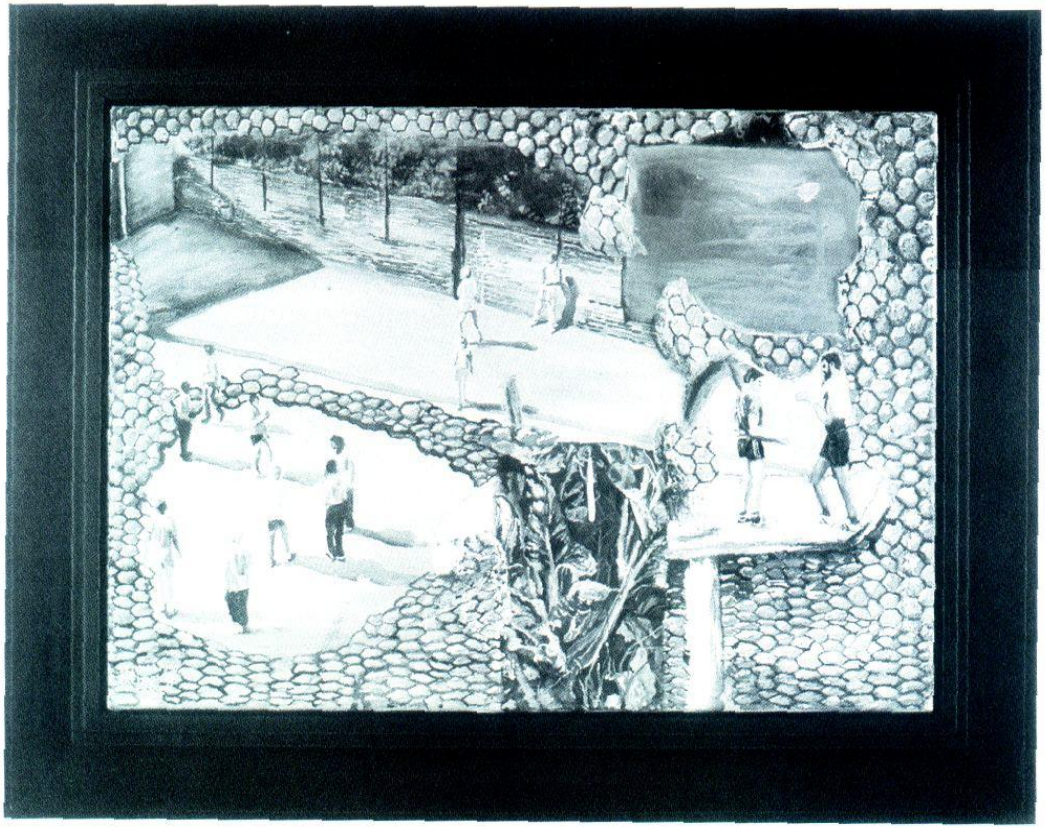
31" x 34"



ANTIGONE

oil on canvas

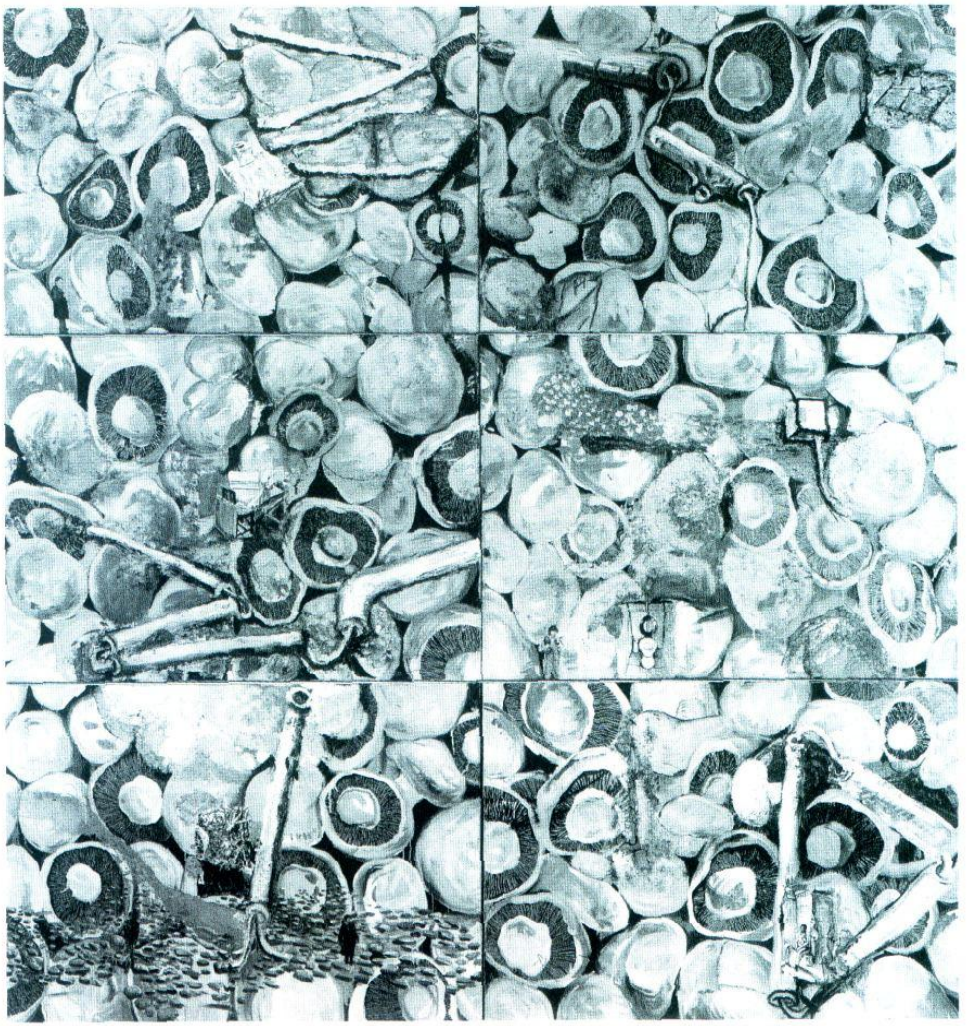
34 1/4" x 28 1/4"



THE WORDS OF THE COACH

oil on canvas

23" x 40"



DIARY OF AN IDLE MAN

oil on canvas

89 3/4" x 85 3/4"

LIST OF WORKS

1.
The Anatomist, 1990
oil on canvas
90" x 84"
Courtesy of Salvatore Ala Gallery

2.
Antigone, 1990
oil on canvas
34 1/4" x 28 1/4"
Courtesy of Salvatore Ala Gallery

3.
Attempted Resurrection in Leytonstone, 1990
oil on canvas
28" x 48"
Courtesy of Salvatore Ala Gallery

4.
The Compound, 1989
oil on canvas
14 3/4" x 20 1/2"
Courtesy of Salvatore Ala Gallery

5.
Diary of an Idle Man, 1989
oil on canvas
89 3/4" x 85 3/4"
Courtesy of Salvatore Ala Gallery

6.
Days of the Saints, 1990
oil on canvas
30" x 18"
Courtesy of Salvatore Ala Gallery

7.
The Glassblowers, 1985-90
oil on canvas
23" x 40"
Courtesy of Salvatore Ala Gallery

8.
Pearly Gates, 1990
oil on canvas
31" x 34"
Courtesy of Salvatore Ala Gallery

9.
Water Story, 1987
oil on canvas
40" x 30"
Courtesy of Salvatore Ala Gallery

10.
The Way Inside, 1988
oil on canvas
89 3/4" x 85 3/4"
Courtesy of Arthur G. Rosen

11.
The Words of the Coach, 1990
oil on canvas
23" x 40"
Courtesy of Salvatore Ala Gallery

(All dimensions are in inches, with height preceding width)

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Colchester, England, 1958
Lives and works in London

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1990 Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York
1988 Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York
1987 Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York
1986 Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
Galleria Salvatore Ala, Milano
1985/6 Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York
1985 Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York
1984 Galleria Salvatore Ala, Milano
1983 Tom Allen Centre, Stratford, London
1979 University of Essex, Colchester
5 Dryden Street Gallery, London

SELCTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1991 *A View of London*, Salzberger Kunstverein, Salzberg
Out of Limbo, Fundacion Luis Cernuda, Sevilla
Contemporary Painting, Wake Forest University Art Gallery, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
1990 *The Theory and Practice of the Small Painting*, Anderson O'Day Gallery, London
Sign, New Academy Gallery, London
The British Art Show, 1990, McLellan Galleries, Glasgow
Leeds City Art Gallery, The Hayward Gallery, London
1988 *Whitechapel Open*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
Figuring Out the 80's, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne
Inside/Outside, The Castle Museum, Nottingham
Object and Image, City Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent
1987 *Kosmic Iconoclasm*, ICA, London
1986 *Force of Circumstance*, P.P.O.W., New York
Correspondentie Europa, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
Jeffrey Dennis, Alan Green, Alison Wilding, Third Eye Centre, Glasgow
Prospect '86, Frankfurter Kunstvereins im Steinernen Haus und der Schrim am Romerberg, Frankfurt
Small Format, Lang & O'Hara Gallery, New York
A Look at Painting, R. C. Erpf Gallery, New York
1985 *Walking and Falling*, Plymouth Arts Centre, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, and Interim Art, London
Between Identity and Politics, Gimpel Fils, London, Darlington Arts Centre, Gimpel Weitzenhofer, New York
Summer in the City, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham
Nuove Tramme dell'Arte, Castello Colonna di Genazzano, Italy

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Catalogues published for solo exhibitions

1988	Tony Godfrey	*Jeffrey Dennis: Paintings*, Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York
1986	Stuart Morgan	*Jeffrey Dennis: Recent Paintings*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London

Catalogues and Brochures published for group exhibitions:

1990	Tony Godfrey	*The Theory and Practice of the Small Painting*, Anderson O'Day Gallery, London
1987	Sheena Wagstaff	*Kosmic Iconoclasm*, ICA, London
1986	Peter Weiermair	*Prospect '86*, Frankfurter Kunstvereins im Steinernen Haus und der Schrim am Romerburg, Frankfurt
	Stuart Morgam	*Correspondentie Europa*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
1985	Rachael Kirby	*Whitechapel Open*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
	Achile Bonito Oliva	*Nuove Tramme dell'Arte*, Castello Colonna di Gennazzano, Italy, published by Electra

SELECTED REVIEWS

1991	Roberta Smith	*Jeffrey Dennis*, New York Times, January 11th
	Roberta Smith	*The New Yorker*, January
	Tom Patterson	*WFU is Presenting Disjointed Exhibit*, Winston-Salem Journal, February
	Faye Hirsch	*Jeffrey Dennis*, Tema Celeste, March/April
	Ingrid Schaffner	*Jeffrey Dennis*, Arts Magazine, April
	Tony Godfrey	*A British Painting for the 90's*, Arts in America
1990	Edward Lucie-Smith	*British Art Show*, Modern Painters, January
	William Feaver	*When is a door not a door?*, The Observer, London, January 2nd
	John Russell	*Taking a Narrow View*, The Times, London, January, 26th
	Andrew Graham-Dixon	*Pupils of the Cool School*, The Independant Magazine, January 30th
	Tim Hilton	*Home Groan*, The Guardian, January, 31st
	Giley Auty	*Glasgow's Own Goal*, Spectator, London, February 3rd
	Bruce Bernard	*The Young Pretenders*, Independant Magazine, June
	Tony Godfrey	*The British Art Show*, Burlington Magazine, September
1989	Roberta Smith	*Jeffrey Dennis*, New York Times, January 13th
	Tom Bellor	*Jeffrey Dennis*, The West Side Spirit, January 30th
	Margaret Moorman	*Jeffrey Dennis*, Art News, March
	Robert Mahoney	*Jeffrey Dennis*, Arts Magazine, April
1987	Stuart Morgan	*The Decline of the Knitted Sock*, Vogue, January
	Paul Groot	*Correspondentie Europa*, Artforum, February
	Matthew Collings, Stuart Morgan	*True Brit: An Enquiry into National Character*, Artscribe, March/April
	Barry Schwabsky	*Spotlight Jeffrey Dennis*, Flash Art International, May

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It gives me great pleasure to present this exhibition of paintings by Jeffrey Dennis. Its realization was made possible through the combined efforts of a number of individuals. Foremost among these was Alissa Friedman, Assistant Director of the Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York, who gave generously of her time and energy in securing the loan of the works and in locating documentation to complete the catalogue. I would like also to extend my thanks to Mr. Arthur G. Rosen, who permitted us to borrow a particularly fine work from his collection for the duration of the exhibition. A special note of gratitude is also due my colleagues at the Weatherspoon Art Gallery, especially assistant registrar Nora Kuper, who facilitated the shipment of the works to Greensboro, and to gallery preparator Jack Stratton, who installed the work with his usual efficiency and skill. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the artist and to the British Arts Council, who awarded Mr. Dennis a travel grant enabling him to attend the opening of the exhibition. To all the above, my sincere thanks.

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