

**David Salle's Biography Research Paper**

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David Salle, *Pavane*, 1990. Acrylic, oil, and graphite on three joined canvases, 72 x 90 inches (182.9 x 228.6 cm). © 2023 David Salle / VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy of the artist and Skarstedt, New York.

David Salle was born in 1952 in Norman, Oklahoma.<sup>1</sup> He grew up in Wichita, Kansas where he spent his childhood and teenage years exploring the art world by enrolling in art classes provided by a local art organization. He continued his art education at the California Institute of the Arts, where he obtained his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1973 and Master of Fine Arts in 1975. During his time there, Salle studied with John Baldessari, an American conceptual artist, who profoundly influenced his work. After college, Salle relocated to New York City, where his

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<sup>1</sup> "David Salle," Encyclopedia Britannica

works came to public attention in the early 1980s. David Salle is a Pictures Generation American painter. These artists are known for creating artworks that reference the mass media while expanding the components of art to include social criticism by a new generation of viewers who are saturated by mass media. He participated in the *Pictures Generation* exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2009 along with other well-known artists such as Cindy Sherman and Robert Longo. The show was curated by art critic and historian Douglas Crimp, who created the show in a way that would allow viewers to explore how images shape our perceptions of ourselves and the world.<sup>2</sup>

David Salle takes a distinct approach to art making. First, he takes photographs of objects or models he wants to incorporate into his artwork. Next, he attempts to choose one single photo and base his work on that. Instead of just gluing the photo into the artwork, David Salle paints it himself, so that the image is incorporated into the painting's world. According to the artist, his intention is to eliminate any narrative from his work. The process starts with one image to which he adds a second image and then another until the work feels complete. Although the work does not have a narrative, it does have a meaning. The images are fragments that are carefully placed together to form the artwork. His choices of images are intentional and each image relates and connects to another in some way.

The artist draws inspiration from everyday culture, advertisements, and art history (such as Bernini and Velazquez.) Salle belongs to the Post-modernist art movement and trends-relating to Neo-expressionism.<sup>3</sup> The artist often mixes modes of representation and appropriated ready-made motifs in a single canvas. One such painting is *Pavane* (1990.) On his canvas, Salle employs the post-modern technique of pastiche to imitate the characters and styles of the work of various artists. In addition, he employs the artistic practice of overlaying images. He takes images out of the original context and recontextualizes them into more complex ensembles.

Salle used acrylic, oils, and graphite to paint on three joint canvases. Salle has composed his painting, *Pavane*, into four elements: the woman facing the front, the woman facing the back,

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<sup>2</sup> "The Pictures Generation, 1974–1984," The Metropolitan Museum of Art

<sup>3</sup> "David Salle Paintings, Bio, Ideas." The Art Story

the dialogue bubble and the background. A clear distinction that the viewer may instantly notice is that the background is colored, while the images of women are black and white. Salle uses different colors on purpose to separate the past and the present, with the colored background being the past. In the colored background, the viewers notice that women are wearing long robes that cover their entire bodies. In the black-and-white images, the viewers notice that the women are half-naked. Salle attempted to demonstrate to the viewer how the portrayal of women in media has shifted from past to present. In all types of media, women are often portrayed with unrealistic body standards and wear revealing clothes. With time, women became more oversexualized in the media, which Salle reflects in his artwork.

By painting the dialogue bubble, Salle shows the thoughts of the two women to the viewer. The dialogue bubble, however, is empty. The women in these pictures do not have any thoughts. This artistic choice is intentional, as Salle attempted to convey that society often perceives women in media as objects rather than individuals with their own thoughts.

The artwork encourages the viewer to think and create connections between separate elements. To understand it, one does not have to be an artist, just like one does not need to be a musician to understand music. David Salle encourages his audience to observe his work, find connections between every element of the artwork, and draw their own conclusions based on their experiences with the media.

## Citations

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