

# The Dinnerstein Enigma

Philippe Grimbert

Every collector has had the experience: over the years he becomes one of the objects of his own collection. No longer the possessor, but the possessed, he succumbs to his countless finds lined up in rows, crowded together on shelves. Later on, well after he is gone, when we contemplate his life's work, his own face will be added to the long list of treasures that he himself will have accumulated.

A life—when one takes the time to pause in the ceaseless flow of days and look upon one's own destiny—is it not indeed other than a collection? A collection of memories, of emotions, of special moments, carefully stored in the way we return precious objects to the attic of memory where we regularly return to caress them with a loving glance. And if a glance is, in effect, so fundamental, it is because the profound events which mark our path inscribe themselves deep within ourselves in the form of images.

A triptych always evokes the feeling of an overture, and Simon Dinnerstein's is no exception; its panels reveal a life unfolded in three dimensions, like the three divisions of time to which each one of us must necessarily submit: past, present, future. The entire space onto which this vast window opens leaves no room for void, giving the vertiginous impression, in depth, of many paintings within a painting. It is indeed an entire exhibition which displays here its many canvases but within a single frame, offering to our eyes photography, memory, and symbolic imagery delineating the existence of the painter himself. The past spreads itself before our very eyes, and the childhood of both art and artist, present all at once in the marvelous innocence of children's drawings and also in the evocation of canvases by the great masters, always present at the origin of the painter's vocation. The present: Is the author of the *Triptych* himself an element within his own collection, in the company of his family? It is also the place of its own creation, with its windows framing a landscape unknowable as real or interpreted. It is the letters, the notes, the writings, all these inscriptions through which reality becomes symbolic, transmissible, capable of being assimilated. The future, so far as it is concerned, is surely contained not just in the promise of the child on her

mother's lap, but also in the enigmatic object, a work in progress on the worktable, surrounded by an additional collection of tools that will conspire together to further its own development. The solar disc, mysterious shape engraved with inscriptions, is the opacity of the work itself; it's the saint of saints in the intimate temple of the artist; being so true that the creative act eternally remains a mystery not just for the onlooker, but also for the creator himself.

And since the word *mystery* is upon us, let us think of one of the masters of literature, Edgar Allan Poe, particularly in one of his celebrated short stories: "The Purloined Letter." A document avidly sought after by seekers, which despite the scouring of a residence from top to bottom, remains undetected despite their efforts and for a simple reason—because it is not in fact hidden but rather, on the contrary, because it is in plain sight, which paradoxically renders it invisible.

Would not Simon Dinnerstein's *Triptych* be such an exhibition of "purloined letters" with the presence of its images saturating the field, revealing as much as it conceals the profound nature of a work of art and a life?

*Translated by Philip Lasser & Michele Thomas*