

*Doug Cason*

ONE HECK OF AN ARTIST AND ALL AROUND NICE GUY

KATHRYN KELLEY

*Doug Cason*

ONE HECK OF AN ARTIST AND ALL AROUND NICE GUY

I walk in and lose my sense of the present, moving back in time several hundred years. I sit in a comfortable old chair draped with a rich purple throw surrounded by old books. Am I in a study? As my eyes focus on the objects about me, I realize that what was old has been made new. A beautiful sense of the now and the antiquated merge.

Upon the surfaces of the old books are paintings in miniature. They depict narratives derived from the text embossed on their spines—not the internal story, but a story blended from the spine text, research and the artist. To my joy, the artist urges me to touch them, hold them, open them. As with any book, the works were intended to be handled. And of course, I do. They are so enticingly small and delicate. It is only by holding them close, cradling them to my chest, that I discover the incredible

*Doug Cason*

ONE HECK OF AN ARTIST AND ALL AROUND NICE GUY

detail of the paintings and the depth to which the narratives are developed. Then as with any ancient book, I tenderly begin to leaf through its interior. Each line of text is marked out with small circular pen strokes. Some texts are marked out letter by letter, some word by word, and others line by line. The texts that have been marked out letter by letter and line by line are quite beautiful. I wonder about the time and patience of the artist's hand moving across each old yellowed page. It is as though the narrative painted on the cover has rewritten the story.

Juxtaposed to the shelved texts in the room and hanging in the entry corridor are old portrait photographs of unknown individuals. They appear to be from the 1940s and 1950s. As with the books, something new emerges— the faces of the portraits are painted with

*Doug Cason*

ONE HECK OF AN ARTIST AND ALL AROUND NICE GUY

new selves; the cover of the texts are painted with new narratives. The portraits are quite intriguing, yet I do not know what they mean. Who is this new self that has been created? Why? The white paint is pushed across their faces and the black ink (paint?) scratches out the details. They attract me.

You definitely want to call upon the artist, Doug Cason, and hope he invites you back to his studio. The space moves you to sit and contemplate. It is a quiet, peaceful space. Yet I am distracted. The sense of the space is interrupted. My eyes have been assaulted by two small paintings, cartoonish in nature. Two figures float on an undefined flat background. The color palettes mimic that of the other works, but I am suddenly on Sesame Street playing the game...“which one doesn’t go

*Doug Cason*

ONE HECK OF AN ARTIST AND ALL AROUND NICE GUY

with the other ones.” The well crafted cartoonish female forms are a stark contrast to the intricately delicate works of the texts and portraits. Works like these cartoons are strewn across the web. Google searches for contemporary art will spew forth hundreds of pages of art similar to these two paintings. They are an irritation. They distract me from the contemplative mood brought about by sitting in this ~~old study~~ studio with all its inherent beauty, yet, I am still glad I was invited into this space. What irritates me only serves to make me appreciate the other works so much more. I just hate that those two small paintings can pull me into the now—that present where nothing is sacred.