



You've heard all the wonderful stories about the seventies; now read about the real and disturbing stories that we experienced in the seventies. It's all in the February 1980 special tenth anniversary issue of *National Lampoon* — plus pages of the winners of the *National Lampoon* contest of nude girl friends with buckets over their heads.

And for fans and collectors, the issue will include a complete history of *National Lampoon* from its beginning, including its special projects, such as record albums, radio shows, live comedy productions and, of course, *National Lampoon's Animal House* — how they came about and how we cornered the market on the best comedy performers, such as John Belushi, Gilda Radner, Chevy Chase, Bill Murray, and many more.

It's all in the February issue of *National Lampoon* — on sale now.

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Playing God—a bit

Jonathan Mann

David Fisher is not a big man. His presence is not commanding, and you probably wouldn't notice him in a crowd. In the gallery where his work hangs, he looks out of place. He seems less an artist than the son or younger brother of one of the wealthy fortyish women who talk about artists and their work in familiar, knowing tones.

Here at York, where he used to study, and now comes to spend a few days once in a while, you might also miss him. He dresses casually, like anybody else in residence. He doesn't call attention to himself. He seems like just another partier, out for some laughs. Just another burn out.

"The worst insult I've had so far is when someone told me 'Wow, it looks like a photograph.'" All too often, this is how people react to Fisher's work, and the realist school in general. For many people outside the art community, realism is a hard style to relate to. On one hand, it's easily accessible, and they appreciate that. They know what the painting is about, and aren't bothered by the feeling that they haven't gotten the point. They also admire the technical skill it demands. But they wonder why men like Fisher spend so much time doing it. After all, couldn't they just take a picture.

It's a long, hard job. Most of Fisher's work starts from photographs, used to collect the information and detail he'll need to do the painting. He paints the most general features of the image first, and then begins the difficult and often tedious job of rendering the fine details of the photo on canvas. The whole process takes months, because of Fisher's painstaking habit of putting layer upon layer, one texture beside the next.

Unlike most realists, he works exclusively in oils, making possible a slower, more relaxed style of working. Tempra and Acrylic, paints favoured by most realists, dry quickly—in a day, perhaps two. Oil gives the artist more freedom to experiment as he works. It literally takes years to dry, giving the painter freedom to move from one part of the canvas to another.

When it's all over, the product is unique. It's hardly just a photography reproduced on canvas, but a piece of the world, imbued with Fisher's own way of looking at things, his own sense of humour.

One of the best works is his *Self-Portrait*. Like Fisher himself, it is self-deprecating. His feet loom in the foreground, straddling the puddle which reflects his partly hidden face. It's almost as if he put himself into the picture as an afterthought. He has said that he didn't really want to do a self-portrait, and it shows. The ground, the puddle, and the worn running shoes seem far more important to him, far more interesting to the viewer.

The painting betrays a lot about Fisher. At York, where so many artists spend so much effort adorning themselves in the manner of last year's avant-garde, it's nice to come across a man like him—more concerned about making art, than being an

she was, and he said, 'Aw, just a customer'. I can't stand that crap. I feel like saying, 'Lady, you're full of shit'. But you can't. You've got to make a living, so you've got to be nice to these people. They're the buyers."

Fisher often finds art a difficult subject even outside the gallery. "Usually with people I have to put on a facade, because I really can't stand talking to people who know nothing about art. You say 'I'm an artist' and they tell you 'Oh, my aunt's an artist. She paints these cows out in a field'. What can you do? You've got to be nice and polite, and say 'I like cows, I'm sure your aunt is going to go far'."

Fisher has sold a number of his works, including the one pictured below (Hallmark Cards



Self-Portrait by David Fisher

'artist'. "I can't get into this image of being an artist at all. I'm like a rowdy college boy. A lot of artists—some of them are bullshit, some of them really are artists—are into this art image. You've got to be mellow, laid back, wear the beads, the Indian shirt. I know some people like that. I like them. They're phoney in a nice way, but they're phoney as hell."

In some sense, Fisher is forced into that role when he enters the gallery. During the first show he participated in at the McDowell Gallery on Yonge Street, an older woman approached him, and started complimenting him and his work. "It made me feel really embarrassed and uncomfortable, but it's all part of the bullshit game. The gallery owner talked to her as if she were his long lost sister. I asked him who

owns *Self-Portrait*), but works at Black's Camera to keep himself in bread and butter. Not surprisingly, he's unenthusiastic about it. For him, it's another place where "you have to play the game. I have to follow everybody else's rules. I'd rather be making them."

That's where painting comes in. He gets to make the rules, to create, to determine just what people will see. "Knowing that anytime you want, you can create anything you want—it's like a god trip in a way. I'm making people look at my work—playing god to an extent. But I guess that's being a bit dramatic about it." Maybe a bit.

Some of his works are currently showing at the McDowell Gallery, 2600 Yonge Street.

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