

hospital. Her limited observations in other institutions quickly led her to realize just how context-specific medical interventions are. “Ontology in medical practice is bound to a specific site and situation” (p. 53). This has implications for medical ethics, which in Mol’s view can only be “enacted” in the specific details of each case. She does not seek universals. Moreover, unlike the health administrator or the writer of consensus guidelines, she is uninterested in generalizations and guidelines. Her subject is not “quality of care,” although in her last chapter she opens up the question of what it is to consider “the good” in medical practice.

In Mol’s view, the reasoning typical

of medical ethics posits a reality that is distinct from action, as if “values” (the province of the patient) existed in a realm separate from “facts” (the realm of the physician). She proposes another way of seeking the good in medical acts:

What if values reside inside the facts? Then it may be better to stop shifting the boundary between the domains of professionals and patients and instead look for new ways of governing the territory together. (p. 171)

It remains to be explained that *The Body Multiple* is in fact a double study. Mol’s “main” text, her study of hospital Z, runs along the top two-thirds or so

of each page. Running underneath is an articulate and challenging subtext, which one may read before, after, or concurrently with each chapter. In this subtext Mol examines her own writing against the background of other texts in the sociology of medicine, philosophy, gender studies, and health economics. Thus she situates herself methodologically and conceptually. This transparent declaration of position is rare in contemporary theoretical discourse and will be helpful to readers who are as curious about theory-making as Mol is about medicine.

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Lifeworks

Tony Calzetta: Who wants to play war?

Faced with the chance to see Tony Calzetta’s exhibition *War Stories for Children and Art Stories for Adults* on its stop at the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, I wondered how closely the stories in question would relate to the conflicts weighing on the public mind in many countries today. This Toronto-based artist is known for working up whimsical, semi-surreal paintings from the psychological territory of absurdity and play.

The influence of Surrealism was evident in this small exhibition of ten paintings and three sculptures. Calzetta invokes two of that movement’s most charismatic leaders, André Breton and Marcel Duchamp, in a painting and a sculpture, respectively. His shapes also bring to mind works by 20th-century American modernists such as Cy Twombly and Philip Guston. The three sculptures are six-foot-high cardboard, steel and shellac whimsies that emphasize art as a play space: a space that is treacherously spiky at times but ultimately humorous. They seemed somewhat extraneous in this exhibition, however, perhaps because the

paintings are so closely related that they do not need the company of works in another medium.

Each large-format painting, created in 1998–1999, follows a thematic composition in which an image appears inside a large rectangle of textured colour, which in turn floats inside a contrasting rim of colour. Each shape,

including the rectangles, is outlined with rapid, freehand, charcoal lines whose buoyant confidence reveals Calzetta’s love of drawing. The images function as surreal “cartoons” — both in the classical sense of outlines set out for holding layers of colour, and in the modern sense of stand-alone visuals that reveal and satirize character.



Tony Calzetta, 1998. *Bob's Life was Quite Exciting With the New Art and All*

Calzetta's sense of the absurd is strongest in the links between his images and their titles. How could anyone read with a straight face long, liling titles like *Under the Hot Light of Interrogation*, *André [Breton] Finally Breaks Down When Asked About the Mysterious Appearance of the Ruggedly Handsome Birdy?* The exhibition catalogue notes that Calzetta originally wanted his titles to have nothing to do with the images: they "were deliberately whimsical and obscure because Calzetta didn't want to force interpretations of the work." Interestingly, this practice has changed over time: "Now, composing a title," he says, "has become a side art form."¹

In this context, then, are Calzetta's references to war stories and art stories a reflection on actual historical events? Perhaps he invokes the general absurdity of a state of war, not any particular current or past conflict. The exhibition title certainly sets one to thinking about how war events might settle into the psyche over time. Do children see war stories where adults

do not? Have adults turned war into such an aesthetic experience that it isn't differentiated from other subjects in art? Is war, like art, becoming increasingly more abstract?

Calzetta's titles also refer to one another, inviting the viewer to develop connecting metaphors between the images. The "Bob" character who appears in three titles, for example, seems to evolve from an apparently random name into a sardonic metaphor for an ordinary person who can't distinguish between the stimulation of the latest trend in art and the false exhilaration of the latest war. The two concepts seem especially enjambed in *Overcome With Art Bob Adjusts His Beret and Prepares for the Onslaught of the Propeller-powered Philistines*, in which a jaunty pink and yellow rocket poses precariously on an object that looks suspiciously like an inverted "Uncle Sam" top hat.

Of course, this interpretation of these three paintings is not definitive — partly because these are not literal images, and partly because each revels in

bright oranges and lime greens that insist on a certain degree of intelligent humour. Calzetta's work is mature and thoughtful, deserving interpretation on many levels. For example, he repeats certain visual gestures to create rhythms that unbalance the images, as if his thoughts were precarious and fleeting. A billowy, looping shape appears in different contexts, and always mysteriously, as an abstracted fog bank, or head, or spilled puddle of something unidentifiable. Calzetta's "horizons" tend to tilt downward to the left, creating tension with objects tilting downward to the right. Standing inside a Calzetta image would involve reaching for a steadying wall, only to find that the wall is tilting, too.

All this to say that Calzetta's work is more than a commentary on our globe's immersion in armed conflicts. Yet Calzetta would not be blind to the fact that his paintings are circulating in a culture where "war stories" are, sadly, part of the conscious and subconscious thoughts we are obliged to carry. If the Surrealist movement was evidence of art exploding from psyches attempting to escape World War I, maybe one of Calzetta's roles as an artist is to show us vignettes in which war is ridiculous and absurd.

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Reference

1. Regan K. Tony Calzetta: line dancing. In: *War Stories for Children and Art Stories for Adults* [exhibition catalogue]. Kent (ON): Thames Art Gallery, 2001.

War Stories for Children and Art Stories for Adults was curated by Carl Lavoy of the Thames Art Gallery, Chatham Cultural Centre, Chatham, Ont., where it was on view from July 20 to Sept. 9, 2001. The exhibition was at the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, Brandon, Man., from June 13 to July 27, 2003. Its next and final venue will be at Gallery Lambton, Sarnia, Ont., Sept. 6 to Oct. 11, 2003.



Tony Calzetta, 1998. *Overcome With Art Bob Adjusts His Beret and Prepares for the Onslaught of the Propeller-powered Philistines*