

Private Domain Part 2 They've been There Always: DAVID SHROBE (1974)

In every human life it's about recognition. It starts as soon as we land here on earth. We want attention. There are people who get downright sick of not being recognized. Wikipedia lists a long list suicides of famous people, many of which have felt insufficiently recognized. All artists I have met in my life want to be recognized through their work. As if they don't say it all literally, but the 'I'am the greatest and best artist' is deeply ingrained in it. In itself it is good that you set the bar high for yourself, but it is extremely difficult if it turns out that it is disappointing.

Not finding attention or recognition can lead to horrible abbreviations. What would have become of Hitler if he had not been rejected from art school?

Yet unbridled or too much praise and success can also lead to failure. There must always be tension between recognition and rejection. It's a delicate balance. The abyss is not that far away. We walk along the abyss every day, although we don't want to know otherwise life will become too unbearable.

We live in a strange time, a time of transition. In addition to the gloomy reports, we read in almost all newspapers that many people in all kind of sectors are going to take a new path. Let's focus on that. Trying to separate truth from falsehood.

A few days ago, while I was sleeping, the book 'Confessions' by Aurelius Augustine suddenly appeared in my mind. The next day, I picked it up from the bookshelf. Apparently I had bought and read the book in 1988 because it was full of pencil marks down the sides. On page 256 I had a thin piece of paper on which I wrote: **'Yet the truth itself is more pleasing to me than words of praise'** (line 10 from under) (1). Certainly not easy to live by. As for myself, of course I like to receive a compliment every now and then, but in my choice of art and way of life I go my own way.

Life is not always easy, we have to persevere, get ourselves excited, there is no other way - now that we're here anyway.



Aurelius Augustine (354-430). Burning Haert 1645 (78.7x62.23) by Philippe de Champaigne (Brussels 1602-1674). LACMA-Los Angeles County Museum that we visited in 2011

The choices I make are arbitrary. There are so many new artists who used to be minorities. Still, I make my personal choices as I always have. There are people who think or wonder why I don't write about this and that. It is impossible for me to write about everyone. I always prefer to look at the edges. And I'm certainly not going to say something nice about someone for the sake of friendship or other interests if it doesn't come from within me.

DAVID SHROBE (1974)

I saw his works at Thierry Goldberg in New York and was immediately impressed. I bought the work 'Detach' without knowing anything about the background, purely because the collage painting intrigued me enormously. It has been hanging in the house for over a year before I recently started looking for the background.



Detach in the Garden mixed media 85x67 Detach 2019

Words are perilous, Armando said, but so are paintings. (Armando was a Dutch painter, writer 1929-2018)

'All those stories, stop it, a painting is a painting and that's more than enough', said a collector friend. But behind every footstep we take and leave behind is a story.

David Shrobe is known for his portraits, which are literally made up of different layers, such as oil and acrylic paint, ink, foam, pieces of fabric and parts of furniture. He finds the various materials in his immediate vicinity. In a way, they are classic portraits in often oval frames, the origin of which is reminiscent of the Baroque era.

The above portraits exude a mysterious atmosphere. The left painting is a woman and the right one depicts a man. They are both built in the same color gamut. They belong together, are condemned to each other.

Large brown-gray hairs like smoldering ever-expanding clouds, with here and there light shades of ochre hues, spread God's ideas across the world. Unfortunately, it can take centuries to understand this idea. According the Korean artist Hyon Gyon (*Pr. Do. 135*), hairs mean that life continues after death because afterwards they continue to grow and are such a sign that the spiritual power is preserved.



Hyon Gyon

David Shrobe is influenced by the soft blurry atmosphere of daguerre photos in oval frames. The mouth part of both consists of a cut out and glued on painted piece of fabric with the same reddish brown lips. Between the eyes and mouth we see glued-on painted foam pieces.

Douglass looks up at her in quizzical sorrow. Are tears falling from his eyes ? She looks at him slyly. She is very seductive, attractive, a beauty. Her left arm, raised up, has a catanette in her hand. The titles both bear 'Detach' which means to detach or to separate. With hers it says something more: 'Detach in the Garden'. I almost automatically complete: 'Detach in the Garden of Eden'. In paradise the discord has already arisen between woman and man and people in general. Temptation is the source of evil, the ego that is stoked. Unity has been broken there, and isn't racism lurking then?

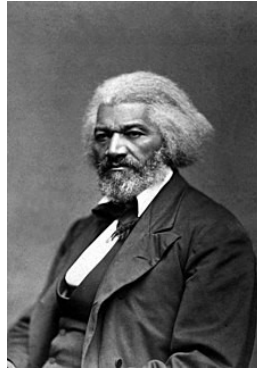
I suspect the male figure is 'Frederick Douglass (1818-1895)'. Douglass is not his original name. Its original name is 'Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey'. Frederick Douglass has become world famous for rebelling against slavery. He has become known as an abolitionist, republican, editor, publicist, politician, reformer, as a major advocate of the abolition of slavery and human rights activist.

Douglass is the son of Harriet Bailey. She is a black slave who works on the plantations and sees terrible things. Slave necklaces on the neck, wrists and feet are normal during work.

Frederick Douglass married Anna Murray (1813-1882) in 1838. He meets her while working as a docker of sealing holes and seams on ships. Anna Murray is active in the anti-slavery movement, but later has great difficulty adapting to the social circles in which Douglass eventually finds herself. Anna died in 1882.



Anna Murray



Frederick Douglass 1879

The Iranian artist Sam Samiee, who is domiciled in Iran as well in the Netherlands, where he teaches at the AKI ArtEZ of Arts Academy of Arts in Enschede, says the following about the difference between the color black and white:

'Your first assumption should be that the color under black and white is Pink. Every is born Pink colored' (2)

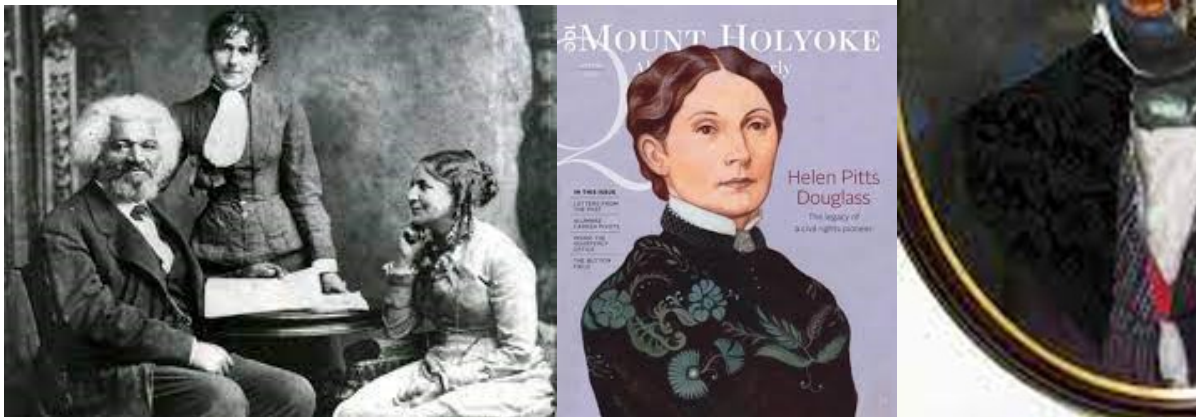
Frederick managed to escape slavery in 1838. On the way of freedom he is received by a certain Johnson. At first he takes his name, but for his safety he advises him to call himself 'Douglass' in response to the story 'The Lady of the Lake' by Walter Scott (1566-1625). David Shrobe is inspired by a lecture given by Frederick Douglass in 1861 at 'Boston's Tremont Temple Baptist Church'. Everyone is equal to the Baptist faith community.



Boston 'Tremont Temple Baptist Church'

Douglass speaks like an artist: *'Poets, prophets and innovators are all picture-makers and this ability is the secret to their strength and achievements. They are sensitive to the reflection of reality. The new Frederick feels related to picture-makers, in which three people are included: poet, prophet and innovator. David Shrobe also sees himself as someone who reveals a multi-colored palette of events in his portraits.'*

Black people have been seen for centuries as beings without intellectual gifts. In the north of the United States, people are amazed that Douglass has enormous oratory talent. He excels in many areas.



Fr. Douglass with his second wife H. Pitts and her sister Eva Helen Pitts Fragment jacket

A year after Anna's death, Frederick Douglass married the white Helen Pitts (1838-1903) on January 24, 1884. Helen has inherited activism from home. Her abolitionist-minded parents strive for the abolition of slavery. *'I got love and was not afraid to marry the man I loved because of his color'.*

Although her parents are abolitionists. They object to her choice. It turns out to be difficult when it ultimately concerns your own child.

Helen Pitts is also very active in the suffragette movement whose goal is equal rights for women. She teaches and is very active politically. Helen becomes Frederick's secretary and helps him write his autobiography.

Cut-out piece of fabric.

When I asked David Shrobe whether the woman in *'Detach in the Garden - of Eden'* is not the white woman Helen Pitts, he writes to me that he had no particular woman in mind. However when I look at part of David's jacket, I notice that the pattern resembles Helen Pitts' costume, but Helen does have a dark skin here.

When I saw the picture for the first time I immediately experienced a white woman. It is a feeling that is difficult for me to put in words. Could you say that marrying Frederick, Helen has become more dark and his mind brighter?

Be that as it may, I am very impressed with both collage paintings. They are moving, I have to be careful; the tears come to me.

Dutch slave trade 1619.

In the NRC journal of Saturday 2 January I read a 6.5 page article by Leendert van der Valk about slavery from 1619. Archives show that we, the Dutch, from Vlissingen, were the first to deliver slaves to the South American mainland. The English captain John Jope sails with the ship *'White Lion'* from Vlissingen, hijacker port of the *'Republic of the Seven United Netherlands'*, with letters of marque across the Atlantic Ocean and conquers the ship *'Sao Joao Boutista'*, which contains slaves taken from the kingdom of NDONGO from Angola. Jope is allowed to hunt Spanish and Portuguese ships in the Caribbean on behalf of the Netherlands with letters of marque from *'Maurits van Oranje'*. Via transshipments from the ships *Sao Joao Boutista* and *Treasurer*, the Angloans *'Antoney'* and *'Isabella'* arrive from the kingdom of Ndongo on the coast of Angola on the ship *'White Lion'* which they transport to Point Comfort in Virginia from the South American mainland, at that time in English hands.

Antonio and Isabella are sold there and resold to 'William Tucker'. Antonio and Isabella's son is given the same name from the owner Tucker. The current Vincent Tucker manages the family grave. In previous letters about graffiti artists I mentioned that many of their names are descended from white slave owners. (3)

On January 3, I saw a beautiful documentary about the famous Dutch conductor Bernard Haitink, who lives in London, during 'The Hour of the Wolf' on NPO2. In this documentary he tells that he and his family suffered a lot from the way in which the Dutch dealt with the Jews in World War 11. Three quarters of the Dutch Jews died because we willingly handed over the addresses of Jews, helped with the registration and the removal via Westerbork tot he gas chambers. Surviving Jews find their homes occupied upon their return.

However, only 1% died in Denmark. The Danish government, trade unions and civilians do not cooperate with the Germans. Their motto was: 'STAY AWAY FROM OUR JEWS'

Winston Churchill seems to have said: 'The Netherlands is no more than a shop' and the famous French writer Michel Hoellebecq says in his book 'Serotonin' about the same thing: 'The Netherlands is not a people, at most an enterprise - a race of multilingual, opportunistic merchants'. If we look at the events surrounding the benefits affair and the bringing over of 100 refugee children from the Greek camps, there is still a lot of work to be done.

We are all to blame.

For other works and exhibitions by David Shrobe, see: www.davidshrobe.com, www.thierrygoldberg.com, www.jenkinsjohnsongallery.com,

Explanation picture page 1. Burning heart of Augustine. He is touched by the ray of light of God's Truth (Veritas), illuminating his mind and igniting his heart with love for God. The flame returns to Truth (*which we're missing in our time*). Under God's guidance and by his own efforts, Augustine creates his own halo.

Literature

1. Aurelius Augustine, *Ambo classical*, translation Gerard Wijdeveld, p. 256, 1988
2. Sam Samiee, video: 'A Universal Pink' Electric Room 03/50, 2017
3. Leendert van der Valk, *Slavery 1619*, NRC Weekend Saturday-Sunday January 2-3, 2021