



**Richard Caston
The Painter**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear Friends,

Welcome to this celebratory exhibition. I am Beatrice Caston and it is a tremendous honor to introduce you to this significant exhibition, which will prove to be a milestone in the life, work, inspiration and contribution of Richard Caston, The Painter.

Richard saw this world's daylight for the first time on the 18th of March a few decennia ago. One of the first post-war children, he was born in a wounded world that was pulling itself up. His roots are firmly spread in the county of Norfolk (U.K) where, a little more than 50 years ago he received his first box of real oil paints and where his lifelong passion for life, color, shape, patterns and meaning began. From the onset as a somewhat serious child, throughout his often difficult adolescent and young adult's years and to this day, his search is genuine and intense. Abhorring dilettantism and mediocrity, Richard is always re-creating to perfection as soon as he squeezes paint on his palette and his brush starts to touch and put tone and values on the canvas.

Before elaborating on his masters, the themes and the significance of Richard's work, I need to chop away some of the stereotypes that surround the sometimes extreme and exotic image we have of an artist in general or of a painter in particular...

Richard has both feet very firmly on the earth and his long walks home are not only times for reflection and higher level thinking but are the times where he fully feels his 'corporalita' as Leonardo da Vinci called it - his physical being in the world: the rain piercing through every layer, the wind drying his skin, the smells of the time of the year, the dramatic skies over the fields.

In fact, Richard is an avid football player. Richard is not only thinking in two dimensional terms and trapped by the surface of a canvas, like the photographer by his camera, he has a very strong spatial understanding and adds some less rational dimensions like intuition to this. He relishes in thinking in terms of tactics, great ideas and brilliant moves.

Richard will never describe himself as tortured because he enjoys life to the fullest. Meals prepared with love, lots of ingredients and creativity as well as carefully chosen wines are sacred. Richard is an enthusiastic thinker and philosopher. His 'curiosita' (I quote one of Leonardo's principles again) is infinite. Avid reader and listener of radio programs, he has a very wide range of interests.

These aspects need to be mentioned because they all have a great impact on Richard's paintings.

Throughout his life, Richard has been open to inspiration and has actively looked for it. The list of his great masters is huge (and you should see the amount of books we have about them) but some stand out and you will soon see their presence in the work here around you. For the landscapes, English masters like Stanley Spencer and Constable not to mention the rich and influential Norwich School have left their mark. For the other themes, in particular the portraits, Michael Andrews, John Wonnacott and David Hockney are still constantly consulted.

Richard moved to Germany and to Düsseldorf, his second Heimat, when he

was in his late twenties. Here he became familiar with world of Liebermann and the Düsseldorf Akademie. Since he was a child, he identified in particular with Paul Klee, his intellectual and artistic courage and his tremendous pedagogical skills and vigor. At least two criteria are omnipresent when Richard approaches one of his colleagues' works: is the work technically up to standard, touching excellence, is it honest, and is it inhabited, does it have a spirit, and inner life, a warming fire? Is it both beautifully crafted and contributing to humanity?

In this exhibition we are surrounded by works that reflect a strong local allegiance: you will see landscapes you recognize from your own walks; you will also notice that nature in Norwich is not too dissimilar with this part of the Rhine. It is amazing how this local allegiance pairs up with a global vision. When going to other countries or parts of the world, Richard of course always has painting materials with him and the scenes he is naturally drawn to give him yet another view on the same contrasts and natural order, the same architectural compositions, the same spoiled and unspoiled, the same global vision and search for beauty.

There are a lot of landscapes here – I don't know if it is the same for you as it is for me. Used to this rapid and loud world, full of visual distraction and artificial stimuli, I find it somehow difficult to enter in them, in their unobtrusiveness, their quiet, their normality. They invite to a deeper "sensazione" (as Leonardo says): to a deeper use of our senses: a use informed by our thoughts. We are asked to move from distraction to thoughtfulness. We are invited to enter a mystical world. Maybe this is somewhat easier with the skyscapes and the playful games the dynamic clouds seem to engage in.

Richard's portraits talk to us in very different ways. They most obviously

express their painter's humor as well as search for the understanding of individual personality. The people represented here were not chosen at random: they all have their distinct place in history and in Richard's own life. Surrounding oneself with them is like when we filled our walls with posters as teenagers: we identified with them. The self portraits reveal their author's fascination with change. Like for Rembrandt, there is no touching up or masking make-up: what you see is what the mirror says – this is me, as I am, from the outside and inside, undergoing time but infinite.

So far, I've chosen to give you a more intimate introduction rather than one anchored in art history and expressed in the language of art critics. I think it serves this exhibition and celebration better.

I would like to end this introduction with some thoughts about the significance of Richard's work. There is an enormous strength in the early, focused and total commitment and dedication to painting, not to the creation of illusion but to the re-creation and interpretation of multi-dimensionality.

There is an enormous strength in the honest and continued search for beauty and the transmission of its expression. We have not spoken much of Richard the Teacher but this requires another meditation.

There is an enormous strength in "conessione" (connectedness, as coined by Leonardo) and the place one is not afraid to take, love and give in the Bigger Picture.

Thank you very much for your kind attention. Thank you to Mrs. Nichols for the opportunity she gives Richard to, in this gallery, communicate with you through his work.

Beatrice Caston
Düsseldorf, 18 March 2006