The Tinker Tailor Paintings

PATRICK WEBB
THE RHYME

Parts 1 & 2

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor,
Rich Man, Poor Man,
Beggar Man, Thief.
Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief.
Or what about a cowboy, policeman, jailer,
engine driver, or a pirate chief?
Or what about a ploughman or a keeper at the zoo,
Or what about a circus man who lets the people through?
Or the man who takes the pennies on the roundabouts and swings,
Or the man who plays the organ or the other man who sings?
Or what about the rabbit man with rabbits in his pockets
And what about a rocket man who’s always making rockets?
Oh it’s such a lot of things there are and such a lot to be
That there’s always lots of cherries on my little cherry tree.

Part 3

additional characters from other version of the rhyme

Old Man, Young Man, Captain (Police) , Pirate
Fisherman , Chief (Fire), Cooper, Farmer
Teacher, Banker, Gunner, Gardener,
Cook, Burglar, Boxer, Baker,
Preacher, Writer, Politician, or Crook

Part 4

My list from free association

Protester, Gangster, Nurse, or Undertaker
Painter, Architect, Builder , Sculptor,
Florist, Actor, Usher, Hairdresser or
Doorman, Dressmaker, Shopper, Salesman ,
Pornstar, Gravedigger, and Grave

front cover: Teacher, Sailor, Zoo Keeper
back cover: Boxer, Cowboy, Gravedigger
THE TINKER TAILOR PAINTINGS
2013-2018

Patrick Webb
an installation of paintings
in honor of Stonewall 50

June 2019
Pfizer Building
630 Flushing Avenue
3rd floor
Brooklyn NY 11206
M-Sa 11-5

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and Acumen Capital Partners for supplying the space for this exhibit
and of course my wonderful husband Brian Kloppenberg without whose support nothing would be possible

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That Rare Mask that Identifies Its Wearer
Jonathan D. Katz

Punchinello’s mask, the singular constant in the pictorial world of Patrick Webb, is in the form of a cock, a mask that is also a dick. Stay with that metaphor a little, and it opens up to a wide expanse of contradictory possibilities in queer life: queerness as a kind of camouflage or cover for the many other, non-sexual things we are; as an identity category that sums us up, that literally becomes our face in the eyes of others—or ourselves; as the token of a sexual universe in which we are both the object of other men’s desire, and ourselves desiring, a blessed relief from the closet in which desire always moved in one direction only, always out towards others. This dick/mask materializes the paradoxical construct we call the closet, that identity that by definition must always leak evidence of the very queerness it is intent on denying, for if it were watertight, it wouldn’t be the closet but a seamless example of the heterosexuality.

The point is that Punchinello’s mask opens up a space in which our sexuality is cleaved from the rest of what we are, and in so doing, it runs counter to the false unity we generalize as our identity. For the mask we wear that is our own queerness is at once blessedly right about us and woefully misleading. We are not the equivalent of our sexuality, even though in these times, queer sexuality is now perhaps the most salient thing about us.

Of course, the cock/mask that Webb’s Punchinello wears was not his invention, but borrowed from the Commedia dell’arte tradition. The figure of Punchinello, called Punch in English, has always worn a mask with a beaked nose, albeit that mask is nearly always black, and the nose more fully integrated into it. Made a figure of ridicule, conniving and often violent, Punch is hardly a model citizen. Rather, he’s a comic figure whose defining characteristics are both his wily ways and his general excessiveness. Punch is thus made over into an apt figuration of queerness through this fraught combination of a camouflaged, yet excessive, performance of selfhood. He is as ripe an analog to queerness as one can encounter in the Commedia dell’arte tradition.

In Webb’s appropriation of another veritable tradition, the Tinker, Tailor... nursery rhyme, all the inherent, deeply buried queerness of the Punchinello figure is surfaced and exposed. He becomes a queer everyman in an all male world, his social standing highly variable, but his essential queerness at once his superficial costume and his deepest core identity. Whether dressed as a cowboy in a gay bar, pickpocketing as two men talk in Wall Street cocktail party, or working as a cop or a jailer, Punchinello occupies both sides of all our familiar polarities: rich and poor, empowered and oppressed, a judge and a crook, a soldier, sailor or doctor. He’s everyone and thus no one. He has no essential characteristics, save for his mask. This series of beautiful, richly colored and mysteriously atmospheric paintings thus asks the question that is thankfully increasingly possible to consider. What are we, what is it to be queer, when sexuality ceases to signify any defining, important or even identifiable difference?

August 2015

Jonathan D. Katz directs the doctoral program in Visual Studies at the University at Buffalo. He curated Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture, the first queer art exhibition ever mounted at a major US museum, which opened at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, winning the Best National Museum Exhibition award from the International Association of Art Critics and the best LGBT non-fiction book award from the American Library Association. His current exhibition is entitled Art AIDS America, opening in Tacoma in October, the beginning of a three museum national tour, accompanied by a substantial new book.

A pioneering figure in queer studies, Katz was the first full-time American academic to be tenured in the field and founded and chaired both the Harvey Milk Institute, then the largest queer studies institute in the world, and the Queer Caucus for Art of the College Art Association. He also co-founded Queer Nation, San Francisco, and the Gay and Lesbian Town Meeting, the organization that successfully lobbied for queer anti-discrimination statutes in the city of Chicago. He is the president of the new Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art in New York City, where he has curated numerous exhibitions.
PARTS 1 & 2

all paintings 60 inches tall and 20 to 36 inches wide

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor,
Rich Man, Poor Man,
Beggar Man, Thief.
Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief.

Or what about a cowboy, policeman, jailer, engine driver, or a pirate chief?
Or what about a ploughman or a keeper at the zoo,
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Oh it’s such a lot of things there are and such a lot to be
That there’s always lots of cherries on my little cherry tree.
Policeman

Jailer

Engine Driver

Pirate Chief
Ploughman

Zookeeper

Circus Man
PART 3

All paintings 60 inches tall and 20 to 36 inches wide

Additional characters from other version of the rhyme

Old Man, Young Man, Captain (Police), Pirate
Fisherman, Chief (Fire), Cooper, Farmer
Teacher, Banker, Gunner, Gardener,
Cook, Burglar, Boxer, Baker,
Preacher, Writer, Politician, or Crook
Cook

Burglar

Boxer

Baker
PART 4

all paintings 60 inches tall and 20 to 36 inches wide

My list from free association
Protester, Gangster, Nurse, or Undertaker
Painter, Architect, Builder, Sculptor,
Florist, Actor, Usher, Hairdresser or
Doorman, Dressmaker, Shopper, Salesman,
Pornstar, Gravedigger, and Grave
Doorman

Dressmaker

Shopper

Salesman
I have assembled these studies and sketches in much the same way they are collected in my studio on the walls and in sketch books. They are not all identified by title since I want the viewer to have the experience of discovering how the abstract relationships, (line, movement, pattern, light, color, shape etc) of the compositions and gestures carry the meanings of the activities.

The color studies in oil paint on canvas, board and prepared paper are started before color is added to the large canvasses and after the elements of drawing and underpainting have been provisionally established on the canvas. They are modified and adjusted as the paintings progress to explore changes in color balance and movement on a smaller scale where the total effect is immediate.
PART 3
PART 4
Preparatory Drawings along with Paintings

The wash and gouache drawings in the next section are the culmination of a series of small sketchbook studies that are done as the idea of the activity is considered (8-10 inches tall).

The figure drawings are from inventory or from life using gestures that have been established in the compositions. (8 X 8”-16 X 12”).

Paintings reproduced either wholly or in details were from inventory or sales and used to reference light, palette, pose and locations.
Parts 1 & 2

Tinker  Tailor  Soldier  Sailor  Rich Man

Poor Man  Beggar Man  Thief  Doctor  Lawyer  Indian Chief
Part 3

Parts 3 & 4 were composed and begun during the Guggenheim Fellowship and completed a few months after it ended.
Saved I 48X22 2003 o/c

Farm 12X16 2001 o/c

Punchinello's Lair 24X72 2014 o/c
**Artist Notes**

Since late 2013, I have been obsessed by the simple rhyme of *Tinker Tailor*—I love the seeming banality of the list that in verses and versions expands and resonates with associations and confluences. Umberto Eco says we make lists because we are afraid of dying. I agree, and would add we make lists to understand and to make connections. I enjoy the John Le Carré novels that use the rhyme. In them, the characters’ search for information is indirect—the questions asked reveal as much about the questioner as the answers reveal about those questioned. This is how art and the imagination work too—through implication and within ambiguities. So my ubiquitous Punch explores a series of activities. He inhabits the roles of the rhyme. It is more a journey of possibility rather than one of death and loss. I thought at first I would paint only one verse of 11 canvasses; then the discovery of a second verse precipitated 12 more canvasses. Further research revealed other versions that added another 20 characters, bringing the series to 43 paintings. Then I had to write my own list, my own libretto. These final 19 characters were inspired by a stream of consciousness riff on the rhymes and bring the entire series into an even more biomythographical frame, fulfilling an arc of possibilities for this everyqueer-man. There are now 62 canvases. This uncanny fiction is filled with anachronistic activities (Tinker, Cooper) as well as memories and screen memories of childhood experiences (Indian Chief, Circus) of a cis queer man. The sequence, like many of my recent series, is malleable—interchanging the placement of the paintings brings to light new connections, possible narratives and causalities that underscore the niggling strangeness of life, with its interconnectedness and unknowability. This catalog documents, the paintings and some of the preparatory drawings and sketches as well as older work that inspired elements.

---Patrick Webb 2019

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**GRANTS AND AWARDS**

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Grant/Organization</th>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>PRATT Institute Faculty Development Grants</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Thomas B. Clarke Award in Painting, National Academy Museum</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Ingram Merrill Awards in Painting</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Art Matters Inc. Fellowship</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships</td>
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**SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exhibition/Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018-9</td>
<td>WHAT MAKES THE ENGINE GO? IPTAR, NYC, NY</td>
</tr>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>AT HOME WITH PUNCHINELLO Rice Polack Gallery, Provincetown, MA</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>PAINTINGS Rice Polack Gallery, Provincetown, MA</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>TINKER TAILOR SERIES PART1&amp;2, The Painting Center, NYC, NY</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>FIRE! Rice Polack Gallery, Provincetown, MA</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>LOVE’S PROGRESS: 1989-2013 The Painting Center, NYC, NY</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT The Painting Center, NYC, NY</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>PAINTINGS Rice Polack Gallery, Provincetown, MA</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>NIGHT &amp; DAY Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown, MA</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>PUNCHINELLO AS OTHER The Painting Center, NYC, NY</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>25 YEARS OF WORK Provincetown Art Museum, Provincetown, MA</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>PROVINCETOWN-NEW YORK Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown, MA</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>CHEAT Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown, MA</td>
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<td>HOME Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown, MA</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>PUNCHINELLO’S CITY CJG Projects, NYC, NY</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>PUNCHINELLO YOUNG Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown, MA</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>IN NEW YORK WITH PUNCHINELLO Erector Square Gallery, New Haven, CT</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>PUNCHINELLO UNDRESSED Julie Heller Gallery</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>PUNCHINELLO WORKS OUT (PWO). Cortland Jessup Gallery, NYC</td>
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<td>PUNCHINELLO GOES WEST Julie Heller Gallery</td>
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<td>PUNCHINELLO IN AMERICA 55 Mercer Gallery, NYC, NY</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>PUNCHINELLO PAINTINGS Amos Eno Gallery, NYC, NY</td>
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**SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

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<th>Exhibition/Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>2015-17</td>
<td>ART AIDS AMERICA curator Jonathan Katz &amp; Rock Hushka; One Archive &amp; Library Los Angeles; Tacoma Museum of Art; Zuckerman Museum of Art, Atlanta; Bronx Museum; Alphawood Gallery, Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>DOGS AND CATS curator Nancy Grimes and Leslie Lalehzar, Mark Miller Gallery, NYC</td>
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PARTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

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“Stonewalling” Thomas J. Jackson, New York Native, 2/93,6/95
“Finding Those Who Fall Before” Gambone, Bay Windows, 8/20/92
“Real Implications” Mary Verrill, New North Artscape 2/90
“Coat of Many Colors” Mary Abbe, Star Tribune, Minneapolis, MN, 1/25/90
“...the subject is AIDS” Art South 5/89
“Alone and Embattled” Walter Wadas, Bay Windows, Boston, MA 12/86