

**Reaction to the Vin Di Fate Lecture
July 24, 2008**

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD
Limited Residency MFA in Illustration



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Vincent (Vin) Di Fate (b 1945) has a vast body of work, best described as the culmination of his interests. His earliest influences were from the news stands; *Science and Mechanics*, *Argosy*, *Wonder Stories*, *Radio News* and other pulp magazines, movie posters and later the readily available paperback novels. Each publication bursting with dynamic color and movement, each beckoning the schoolboy to pick them up and read the fantastic stories inside, or pay his entrance to the theater to be scared out of his wits.

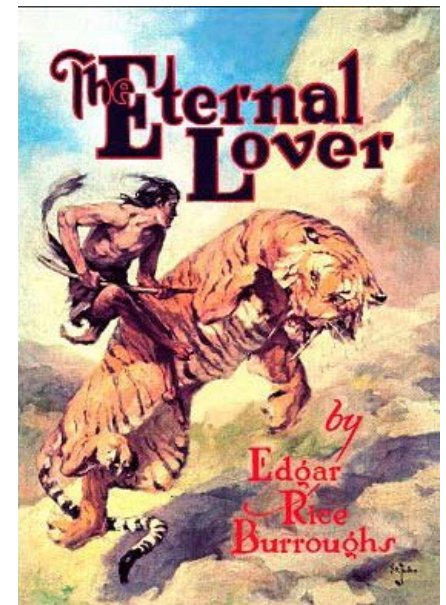


The Synthetic Men of Mars
by Edgar Rice Burroughs
Argosy Jan 7, 1939,
Illustration by Rudolph Belarski
oil on canvas, 34 x 23.75

I have always been struck by the close "lifting" of the style of St. John by Frazetta, with a nearly side-by-side comparison in some instances.

With this observation, I have to believe that St. John also had a painter he emulated. It warrants further research on my part. No artist is born from a vacuum.

Illustrators like **Rudolf Belarski** (1900-1983), **J. Allen St. John** (1872-1957) and **Chesley Knight Bonestell** (1888-1986) with their varied approaches to the finished paintings, each delivered a common theme to young Di Fate; adventure and the fantastic. The stories they advertised delivered more of the same, planting the seed of storytelling, narrative and pacing. The most exciting and impacting delivery system for these stories was the big screen. Young Vin originally desired to become involved in the film industry, but was unable to afford the tuition into a program he had been accepted to. He "settled" for art school.



The Eternal Lover
by Edgar Rice Burroughs
Illustrated by J. Allen St. Johns, 1925

Through careful observation of the picture frame, light and form, Vin's acute

Vin keeps the eye moving across his pieces with a strong use of overlap and sense of spacial distance.

“director’s eye” aided in his early success as an illustrator that was able to deliver an exciting final in a very fast turn around. From the podium, Vin stated, “If it’s in front of me for more than three hours, I begin to lose interest.”

The speed of his painting execution is due to his control and mastery of his medium, acrylic paint. Vin has a consistency to the viscosity that must be present in his paint application to delivers his desired result. There is an “oil-like” feel to the the acrylic surface that mimics the opaque and liquid application of oil, but transitions to areas of transparent layers that oil can only achieve through days of cycling glazes.

Di Fate reveals a freshness and wet quality to the surface as he paints in this approach. His treatment of broad areas of the background are similar in approach as the styles of **St. John** and **Frank Frazetta** (b 1924), both oil painters, with the liquid paint pushing and blending areas actively on the canvas, rather than the measure pallet mix and soft-hair blending and airbrush seen in works considered more a “point of the brush”. Vin echoes the chaos of space and the ephemeral unknown, allowing a dreamlike interpretation of those areas, while pulling in very tightly and aware



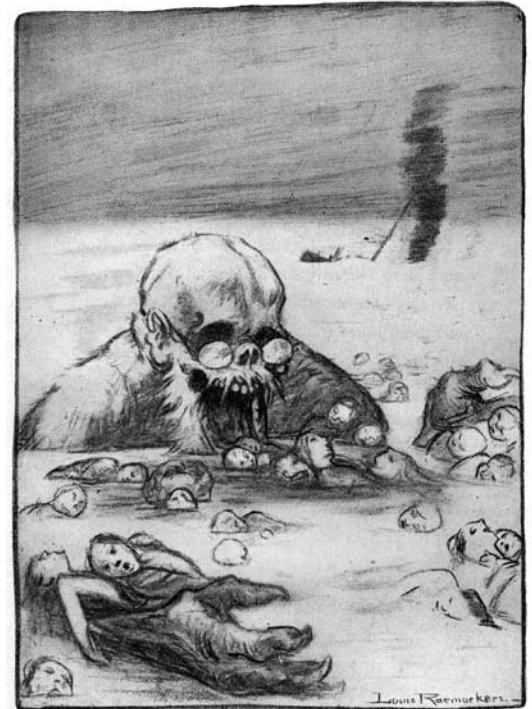
Broke Down Engine
by Vin Di Fate, 1969
acrylics and collage on illustration board



Horror as the Beastman Stalks
Creepy No. 11, October 1966
Illustration by Frank Frazetta

I discovered the Lithographic work of Belgium's Louis Raemakers through his *Cartoon History of the War*, chronicled his daily editorial commentary on the atrocities of the German Army during WW1. The speed, immediacy of line and graphic impact seem to have much in common with the pulp, comic and paperback art that had influenced Vin.

of the surfaces. The brushwork of his more painterly style, seen with his small works of spaceship trading cards, speaks more of an artist that is "feeling his way around" a form, rather than the tip of the brush painting used in some of his earlier work. In these smaller scale and immediately painted pieces, Di Fate's manic brushwork has more to do with the lithograph work of **Louis Raemakers** with his daily editorial deadlines, expressing the form with deft and unflinching calligraphic precision. Di



New Year's Feast of Kultur - Lithograph by Louis Raemakers, 1915
The Century Co, NY, NY, 1919



Creature from the Black Lagoon
Movie Poster, 1953
Illustrator - Reynold Brown



Above and Below, 50th Year Tribute to the Creature from the Black Lagoon, 2003
by Vin Di Fate
Limited Edition Print Series

The brush work of illustrators like Berkey has an energy that seems to be the polar opposite of the subject matter depicted, such as precision space craft, robots and cityscapes. Where a lesser artist would try to render each window, Berkey uses broad knife like strokes to imply the detail, allowing the viewer to complete the picture.

Fate's willingness to dream and invent seems to be manifest in these brushy and quickly executed pieces. I applaud the energy present in the brushy areas. This seeming hap-hazard approach allows for life to enter a fairly mundane region of a painting. Vin brings an energetic boost to simple, but essential items like bubbles in his tribute to the 50th anniversary of the release of the movie, **The Creature from the Black Lagoon**, *Above and Below*.

To compare the original movie poster by **Reynold Brown** (1917-1991) to Di Fate's painting of bubbles is to view the approach of the rigid, to the composition of an observant and pliable designer who uses the air's mass as player within the scene, rather than a mere symbol that the conflict takes place underwater.

Di Fate's masterful brushwork is similar, in places to that of **John C. Berkey's** (1932-2008) monumental space constructions. However, where Berkey verges on abstraction, Di Fate hauls the view back in to the representational world with the his ability to render in a classical manner, similar to the



Space Ship
by John C Berkey, 1980



The Best of Philip K. Dick, Paperback cover painting for single author collection, Ballantine Books acrylics on hardboard by Vincent Di Fate, 1977



Third Stage Ferry, Space Station, Taxi and Telescope in Orbit
Crossing The Last Frontier, Colliers, March 22,1952
 by Chesley Bonestell

Bonestell's book, Rocket to the Moon (1961) was the first book I remember owning. I had a NASA jump suit I would insist on wearing. I still remember how clean every thing looked in the future... Bonestell had a particular vision that was noticeably different from my daily life.

tightly executed and precise work of **Chesley Bonestell**. Bonestell's slick approach, smoothly rendered forms and sterile environments is in direct contrast to the kinetic surface rendered by Berkey and sections of Di Fate's work. Di Fate has settled his approach directly in the middle of those two masters of the Science and Sci-Fi genres. He is able to noodle the surface, mimicking textures and forms, while allowing the medium to play a role with it's seemingly turbulent application, adding a level of natural randomness.



Space Cadet 1967
 Paul Zdepski in NJ

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