

Jim Dine

The Picture of

Dorian Gray.

A Working

Script for the Stage

from the Novel by

Oscar Wilde

with

Original Images and Notes

on the Text

by

Jim Dine

Presentation by Elise Meyers

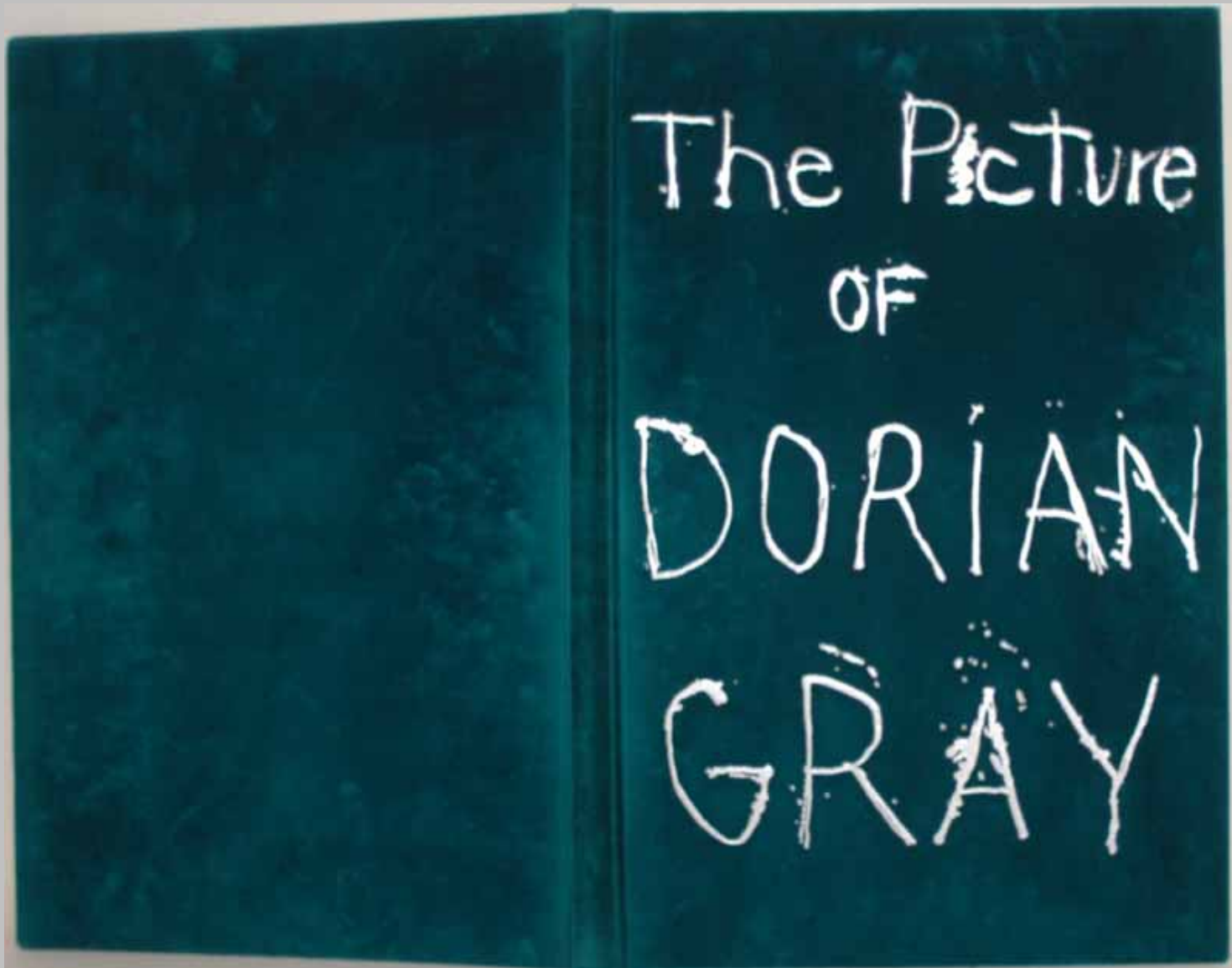


Fig. 1. Front and back cover: Jim Dine, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: A Working Script for the Stage from the Novel by Oscar Wilde*, 1968
Weingrow Collection

“Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.

Those who read the symbol do so at their peril. It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors. Diversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital. When critics disagree, the artist is in accord with himself. We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely.

All art is quite useless.”¹

—Oscar Wilde



Fig. 2. Detail: Napoleon Sarony, Oscar Wilde, 1882

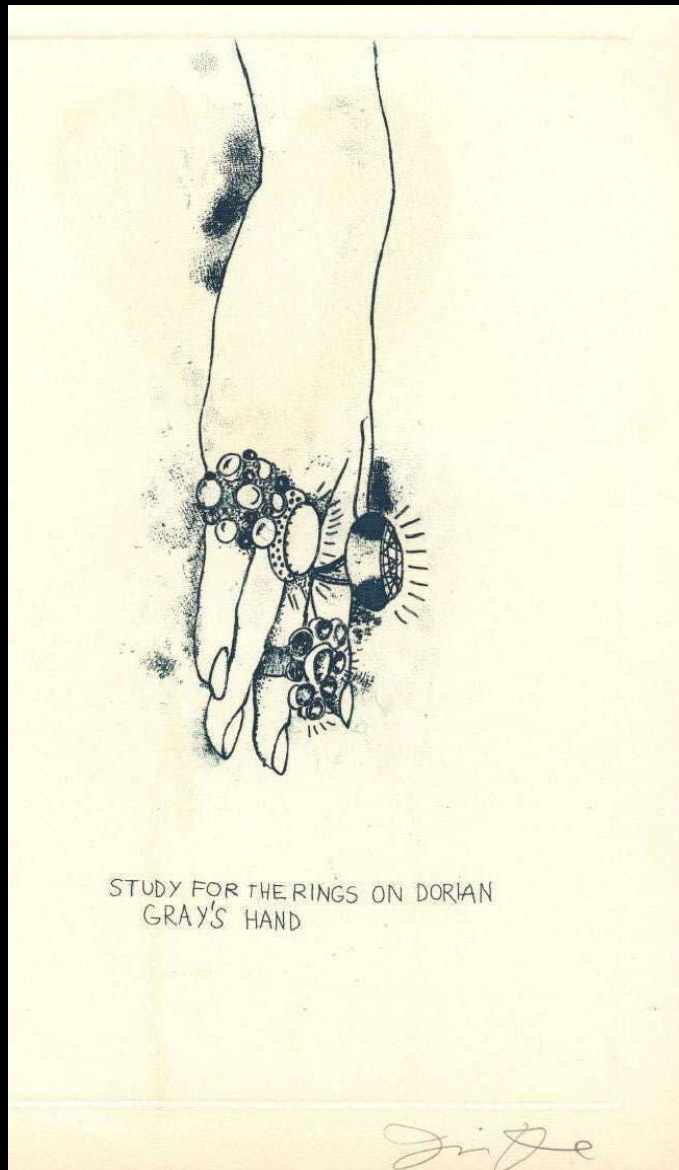


Fig. 3. Jim Dine, *Study for the Rings on Dorian Gray's Hand*, 1968 Weingrow Collection

In an interview in 1979, which included a discussion of publishers who had paired well-known writers and artists to create new projects, Jim Dine said, “I collaborated with Oscar Wilde, as it were, with *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. I thought it was quite successful, but it was secondary; it came out of something natural, which was that I was designing the play. The play was not produced, so we salvaged something and made some prints out of the costume designs.”² In a previous interview/statement published in *Studio International* in 1968, Dine discussed the intriguing, limited-edition deluxe book that he (along with Paul Cornwall-Jones) had created based on this material: *The Picture of Dorian Gray: A Working Script for the Stage from the Novel by Oscar Wilde with Original Images and Notes on the Text by Jim Dine*. Dine said that “after three months of work with these drawings and things” publishing them as a book was “the logical thing to do.”³ That book is the subject of this presentation.



Fig. 4. Jim Dine, *Basil in Black Leather Suit (Basil at the Theatre)*, 1968

In the 1968 interview, Dine added, “I feel very schizophrenic about what I do. I mean I can do a lot of things—not necessarily in different styles, but in different ways, and things demand different ways. For instance, a production of *Dorian Gray* done now demands a different content than a piece of sculpture that I make and that I’m going to show now. I feel at a certain level it’s just a costume book; this is a valid thing to make—a book of costumes.”⁴

In 1981, David Shapiro wrote that Dine’s various elaborations on Wilde’s novel did not imply that Dine agreed with Walter Pater’s aestheticism of art for art’s sake, leaving aside all moral concerns; instead, Dine “delighted in the fable of such a sensibility *in extremis*. Never has Basil worn such an outrageously black leather suit, nor has Sybil Vane ever been pictured in contemporary underclothing more explicitly than in the lithograph of *Sybil in her Dressing Room*.”⁵



Fig. 5. Jim Dine, *Sybil in Her Dressing Room (Sybil Vane in Her Dressing Room)*, 1968

Dine's interest in literature as a frequent inspiration for his art is clear; his primary engagement with the biographic representation of authors and the visual exploration of literature through characters and their appearance has been highlighted by Marco Livingstone.⁶ In fact, Livingstone cites Dine's reading disability—described by Dine as *Dyslexia*⁷—as a factor that drew him more in the direction of poetry and its methodology in collage than to fiction's lengthy, dense narratives.⁸ Like Shapiro, Livingstone cites Dine's inventive costume design as his way of emphasizing and elaborating upon the characters in novels, plays, and adaptations as is evident in the *Dorian Gray* publication.⁹ In addition, Dine recalls using cutout figures from a fashion magazine—probably *British Vogue*—as templates for his costume designs for *Dorian Gray*.¹⁰

In elaborating on the publication's form, Dine remarked, "On another level it's a book of some highly articulated colour lithographs."¹¹



Fig. 6. Jim Dine, *Red Design for Satin Heart*, 1968
Weingrow Collection

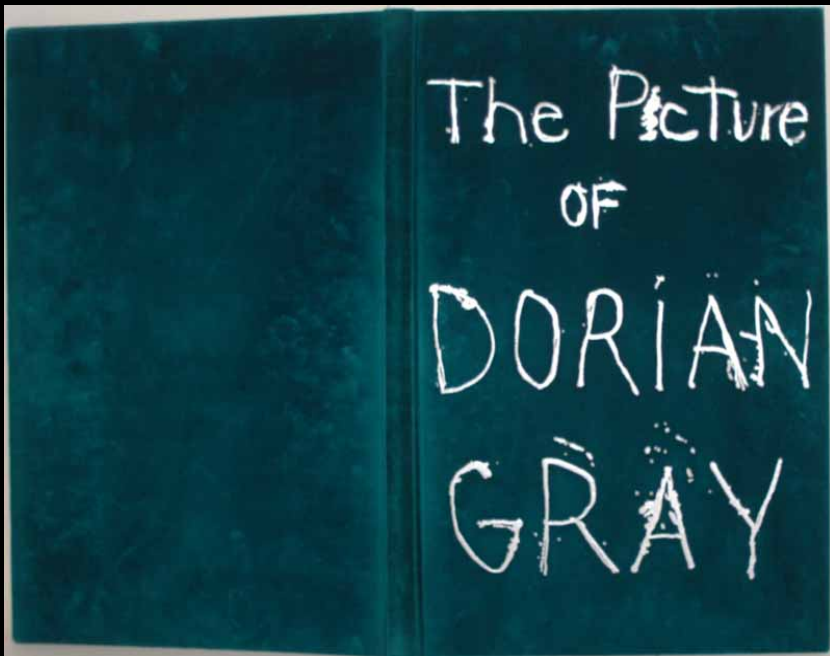


Fig. 7. Front and back cover: Jim Dine, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1968
Weingrow Collection

Describing the project further, Dine said, “It’s in certain ways a *tour de force*, the velvet cover and that sort of thing—although I do like it as a total object. I think one of the things about making it was that it fulfilled a need in me. There aren’t many places today where you can still use your hands and still talk straight about something that’s contemporary. Here was this opportunity to scribble again, and to stool-smear again and to get your old thumb in there and really I’d jump at any opportunity to do that. As an object itself the book’s quite pretty, I think, and it’s one of the most indulged things I ever made. In a certain way that’s how *Dorian Gray* was—completely indulged—and that’s why I felt it was in keeping. There’s no point in giving it a cool plastic look if it’s something like *Dorian Gray*.”¹²

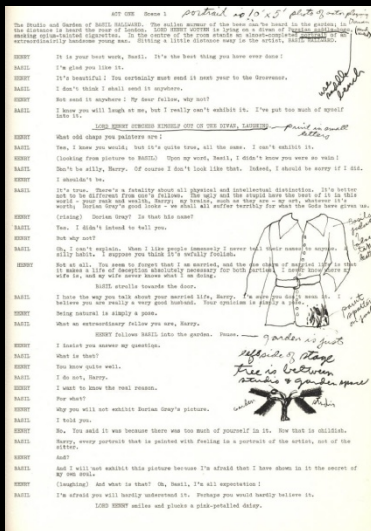


Fig. 8. Jim Dine, Page 1 (Act I, Scene I),
The Picture of Dorian Gray, 1968
Weingrow Collection

Although the play is set in the Victorian era, Dine's costume designs are clearly indicative of the time and place in which he created them. The modernist or "mod" style of dress grew out of a youth subculture of the same name in 1960s London. A reaction to the oppressiveness of post-World War II culture, the mods and other members of subcultures like theirs (bohemians, beatniks and punks) rebelled against mainstream society. Mods inherited much of their style from the "teddy boys," or "teds," who sought to revive the 18th-century "dandy" look in 1960s London. Drape jackets and drainpipe pants became the preferred look. Dine's affection for the mod style is most apparent in his costume designs for the title character, Dorian Gray. The pointed "winkle picker" boots, elongated jacket, and scarf pictured here, as well as the bold use of colors, are all typical of the mod look. Even Dorian's hair style is mod—short and neat, like that worn by French Film stars of the period.



Fig. 9. *Winkle Picker*
(Men's Boot), ca. 1965

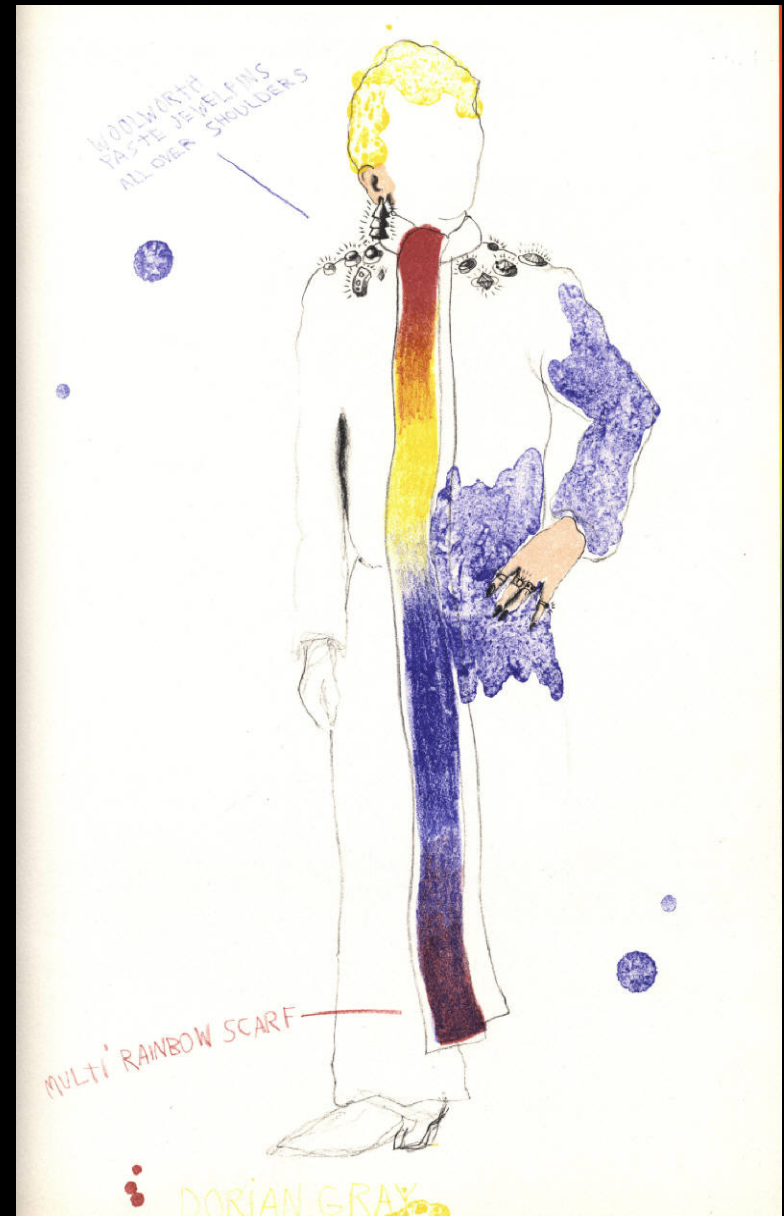


Fig. 10. Jim Dine, *Dorian Gray with a Rainbow Scarf*, 1968
Weingrow Collection



Fig. 11. Jim Dine, *Dorian Gray at the Opium Den*, 1968
Weingrow Collection



Fig. 12. Tedd (Maker), Men's Suit, ca. 1969, Worn
by John Lennon as he appeared on the cover of the
Beatles' album *Abbey Road*.

In one reading of the project, “Dorian Gray reminds us that one of the central concerns for Dine has been to escape from the hedonism of the New York School of poets and young painters toward something more capacious and more fully human.”¹³ In fact, vanity and hedonism are central themes of *Dorian Gray* and Dine’s early biographical experiences informed his relationship to Wilde’s novel. Egocentrism and excesses are vital elements of Dine’s life and art—and, sometimes, he has not distinguished life from art. In developing a working script of a play based on a novel, the transformative interplay of a person and his portrait is fitting subject matter for him. Still, Dine’s decision to channel his artistic energies into creating the working script and then turning it into a publication must be considered against a cultural backdrop in which he felt a lack of vital dialogue in art making beyond New York.¹⁴ Further, the argument has been made that Dine’s deluxe limited-edition publication “provides an early indication of the shifts that took place in his work during his London stay from 1967 to 1971: a gradual distancing from the avant-garde in favor of a return to the figure, and consequently to the handmade image and to earlier traditions within European art.”¹⁵



Fig 13. Jim Dine, *Lord Henry at the Theater* (*Lord Henry in a Yellow Suit*), 1968

Dine achieved early acclaim for his art through his performances or “happenings” of 1960, which could be broadly viewed as containing themes that might have drawn him toward *Dorian Gray*, including obsession, mortality, and transformation. For *Smiling Workman*, Dine set up a large sheet of paper to look like a canvas. “He rapidly scrawled in paint the phrase, ‘I love what I’m doing’; just as he finished, he drank a bucket of red paint (actually tomato juice), poured two other buckets of paint over his head, and finally jumped through the ‘painting.’”¹⁶ He describes this piece as being about “obsessions, obsessive working, about being an artist and becoming famous through the theater.”¹⁷ In *Car Crash*, he donned an aluminum-foil costume and silver body paint and wrote with chalk on a blackboard so hard that the chalk broke, connoting physical and psychological damage and linking to the theme of mortality. *The Shining Bed*, another happening, could be described as a meditation on the themes of embodiment and transformation.

Dine went on to design sets and costumes for a number of plays, including *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1966), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1968), and *Salome* (1986).



Fig. 14. Jim Dine, *Smiling Workman*, 1960



Fig. 15. Front and back cover: Jim Dine, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1968
Weingrow Collection

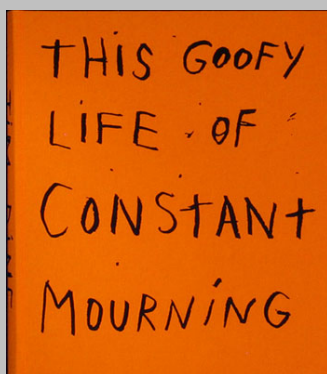


Fig. 16. Jim Dine, *This Goofy Life of Constant Mourning*, 2004

The working script is bound in green velvet with the title applied to its surface in an erratic scrawl of thick silver material. This wild and frenzied holographic form could be interpreted as alluding to the mental state of the play's pleasure-seeking protagonist, Dorian Gray, as he struggles with the moral implications of his actions, which his youthful and vital form seems to elude, but which plague his painted portrait with the visible gruesome ramifications of age and the anguish and wear of his debauchery. Interestingly, Dine continued to use a similar calligraphic style in the book's interior for the titles of the full- and partial-color full-page costume sketches. In fact, the style of handwriting might be more reflective of Dine's own hand and psychology. The handwritten form appears again both on the cover and throughout Dine's *This Goofy Life of Constant Mourning* (2004), which is also an artists book that references lived experience, death, and irony, and which is comprised of photographs of Dine's poems, objects, and images that he has arranged in real space. The two books are examples of multilayered artists books in which the conception, visual elements, text, and form join to create a unified whole—without editorial comment.

The Studio and Garden of BASIL HALLWARD. The sullen murmur of the bees can be heard in the garden; in the distance is heard the roar of London. LORD HENRY WOTTEN is lying on a divan of Persian saddle-bags, smoking opium-tainted cigarettes. In the centre of the room stands an almost-completed portrait of an extraordinarily handsome young man. Sitting a little distance away is the artist, BASIL HALLWARD.

HENRY It is your best work, Basil. It's the best thing you have ever done!
 BASIL I'm glad you like it.
 HENRY It's beautiful! You certainly must send it next year to the Grosvenor.
 BASIL I don't think I shall send it anywhere.
 HENRY Not send it anywhere! My dear fellow, why not?
 BASIL I know you will laugh at me, but I really can't exhibit it. I've put too much of myself into it.

LORD HENRY STROCHES HIMSELF OUT ON THE DIVAN, LAUGHING.

HENRY What odd chaps you painters are!
 BASIL Yes, I knew you would; but it's quite true, all the same. I can't exhibit it.
 HENRY (looking from picture to BASIL) Upon my word, Basil, I didn't know you were so vain!
 BASIL Don't be silly, Harry. Of course I don't look like that. Indeed, I should be sorry if I did.
 HENRY I shouldn't be.

BASIL It's true. There's a fatality about all physical and intellectual distinction. It's better not to be different from one's fellows. The ugly and the stupid have the best of it in this world - your rank and wealth, Harry; my brains, such as they are - my art, whatever it's worth; Dorian Gray's good looks - we shall all suffer terribly for what the Gods have given us.

HENRY (rising) Dorian Gray? Is that his name?

BASIL Yes. I didn't intend to tell you.

HENRY But why not?

BASIL Oh, I can't explain. When I like people immensely I never tell their names to anyone. A silly habit. I suppose you think it's awfully foolish.

HENRY Not at all. You seem to forget that I am married, and the one charm of married life is that it makes a life of deception absolutely necessary for both parties. I never know where my wife is, and my wife never knows what I am doing.

BASIL strolls towards the door.

BASIL I hate the way you talk about your married life, Harry. I'm sure you don't mean it. I believe you are really a very good husband. Your cynicism is simply a pose.

HENRY Being natural is simply a pose.

BASIL What an extraordinary fellow you are, Harry.

HENRY follows BASIL into the garden. Pause.

HENRY I insist you answer my question.

BASIL What is that?

HENRY You know quite well.

BASIL I do not, Harry.

HENRY I want to know the real reason.

BASIL For what?

HENRY Why you will not exhibit Dorian Gray's picture.

BASIL I told you.

HENRY No. You said it was because there was too much of yourself in it. Now that is childish.

BASIL Harry, every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter.

HENRY And?

BASIL And I will not exhibit this picture because I'm afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul.

HENRY (laughing) And what is that? Oh, Basil, I'm all expectation!

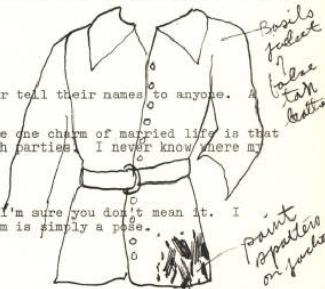
BASIL I'm afraid you will hardly understand it. Perhaps you would hardly believe it.

LORD HENRY smiles and plucks a pink-petalled daisy.

portrait is 10'x5' photo of actor playing

use small pencil

print in small letters



Basil's pocket or false turn button

paint splatters on pocket

garden is just
 offside of stage
 tree is between
 studio & garden space



Traditional working scripts are created and used by directors or stage managers to keep notes on ideas pertaining to a production they are currently working on. Working scripts tend to be written in a mixture of an accepted industrial shorthand and the creator's own personal scrawl. Occasionally a working script, also called a "prompt book," is used by someone other than its creator—for example, when a director becomes ill or otherwise engaged and the stage manager has to run a rehearsal—but for the most part a working script is used only by the person who created it. These are not public works, and they are not intended for publication. The only practical reason for saving a working script is for re-use in the event that the director decides to remount the same production.

Dine's handwritten notes appear on every page of this script, along with rough sketches and even photocopies of pages taken directly from the original novel, including the preface. Ideas and phrases that Dine felt were important are circled or underlined. While he takes the time to correct mistakes involving the dramatis personae at the beginning, changing characters' names and even adding a missing character, he seems completely unconcerned about typographical errors, leaving several uncorrected.

Fig. 17. Jim Dine, Page 1 (Act 1, Scene I), *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1968
 Weingrow Collection

By aestheticizing and publishing the working script, Dine subverts its function, rendering it useless. Echoing the quote by Oscar Wilde at the beginning of this presentation, which evokes the philosophy of art for art's sake, Dine has created something to be admired and not actually used.

This book would be of particular interest to anyone studying theater or art history. Since it is a working script, it clearly reveals Jim Dine's creative process. Aspiring directors and actors might benefit from his insights. The costume designs are colorful and detailed, and would be appreciated by anyone with an interest in fashion history or fashion design.

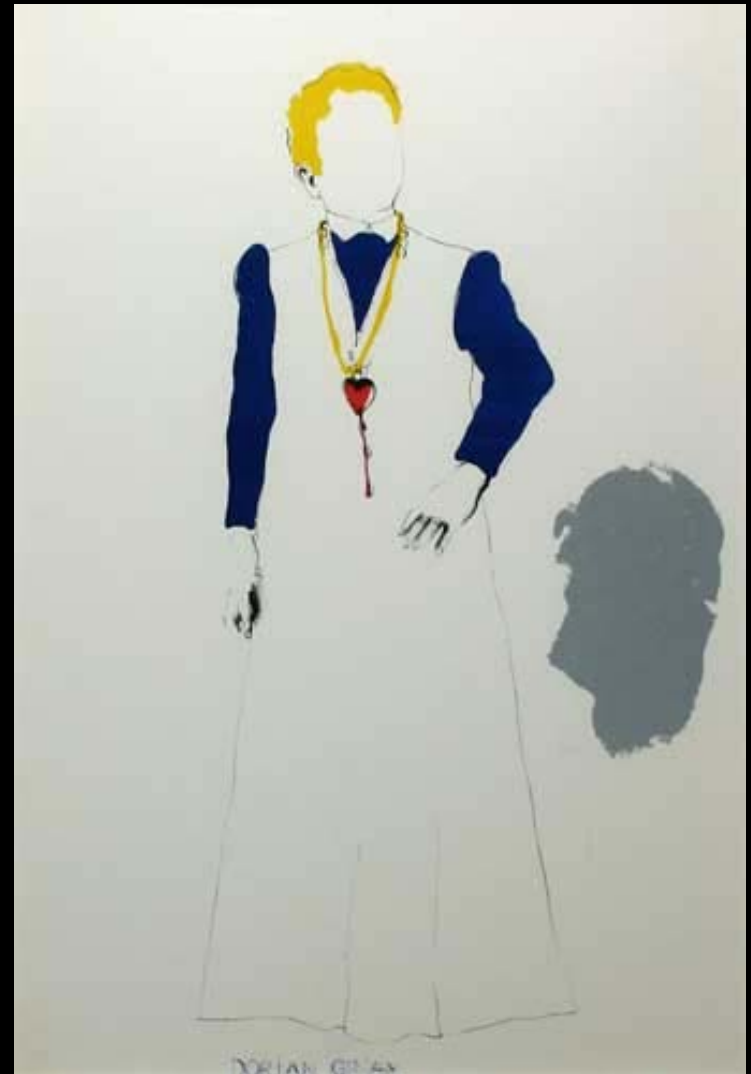


Fig. 19 Jim Dine, *Dorian Gray (The Costume Dorian Gray Dies In)*, 1968

Notes:

1. Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1998), preface.
2. Susie Hennessy, "A Conversation with Jim Dine," *Art Journal* 39, no. 3 (1980): 168, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0004-3249%28198021%2939%3A3%3C168%3AACWJD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-3/>. (accessed December 7, 2005).
3. Jim Dine, "Lithographs and Original Prints: Two Artists Discuss Their Recent Work," *Studio International* 175, no. 901 (1968): 337.
4. Ibid.
5. David Shapiro, *Painting What One Is* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1981), 61.
6. Marco Livingstone, *Jim Dine: The Alchemy of Images* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998), 55, 56.
7. Ibid., 56n45.
8. Ibid., 56.
9. Ibid., 54.
10. Joseph Ruzicka, "Jim Dine and Performance," in *American Art of the 1960s*, eds. James Leggio and Susan Weiley (New York: Museum of Modern Art, ca. 1991), 121n77–122n77.
11. Jim Dine, "Lithographs and Original Prints: Two Artists Discuss Their Recent Work," *Studio International* 175, no. 901 (1968): 337.
12. Ibid.
13. David Shapiro, *Painting What One Is* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1981), 61.
14. Jim Dine, "Lithographs and Original Prints: Two Artists Discuss Their Recent Work," *Studio International* 175, no. 901 (1968): 337.
15. Marco Livingstone, *Jim Dine: The Alchemy of Images* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998), 54, 55.
16. Joseph Ruzicka, "Jim Dine and Performance," in *American Art of the 1960s*, eds. James Leggio and Susan Weiley (New York: Museum of Modern Art, ca. 1991), 99.
17. Ibid.
18. Artcyclopedia, sv. "Jim Dine," http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/dine_jim.html (accessed March 19, 2007).

Illustrations:

1. Front and back cover: Jim Dine, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: A Working Script for the Stage from the Novel by Oscar Wilde with Original Images and Notes on the Text by Jim Dine* (London: Petersburg Press, ca. 1968). Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.
2. Detail: Napoleon Sarony, Oscar Wilde, 1882. Courtesy of Riccardo Gessa, "Grazie" or (Credits), alienazioni.com, <http://www.alienazioni.com/credits/credits.htm> (accessed December 7, 2005).
3. Jim Dine, *Study for the Rings on Dorian Gray's Hand*, 1968. Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.
4. Jim Dine, *Basil in Black Leather Suit (Basil at the Theatre)*, 1968; lithograph on Velin Arches paper; image: 14 7/16 x 10 15/16 in.; sheet: 17 5/16 x 12 3/16 in. Courtesy of the Animation and Fine Art Galleries, <http://animationandfineart.com/Fine/ArtistsAH.html> (accessed March 19, 2007).
5. Jim Dine, *Sybil in Her Dressing Room (Sybil Vane in Her Dressing Room)*, 1968; Lithograph on Velin Arches paper; image: 10 x 9 7/16 in.; sheet: 17 3/4 x 12 1/4 in. Courtesy of the Animation and Fine Art Galleries, <http://animationandfineart.com/Fine/ArtistsAH.html> (accessed March 19, 2007).
6. Jim Dine, *Red Design for Satin Heart*, 1968. Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.
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8. Jim Dine, Page 1 (Act 1, Scene I), *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1968. Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

Illustrations (continued)

9. *Winkle Picker* (Men's Boot), ca. 1965. Courtesy of Velvet Illusion of London, <http://1960s.org.uk/main.htm> (accessed December 7, 2005).

10. Jim Dine, *Dorian Gray with a Rainbow Scarf*, 1968. Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

11. Jim Dine, *Dorian Gray at the Opium Den*, 1968. Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

12. Tedd (Maker), Men's Suit, ca. 1969, Worn by John Lennon as he appeared on the cover of the Beatles' album *Abbey Road*, Julien's Autumn 2005 Sale, October 29, 2005, Lot no. 179. Courtesy of Julien's Auctions, <http://julienauctions.com/auctions/Autumn-2005-Auction/lot179.html> (accessed December 7, 2005).

13. Jim Dine, *Lord Henry at the Theater (Lord Henry in a Yellow Suit)*, 1968; lithograph on Velin Arches paper; image 13 9/16 x 7 7/16 in.; sheet 17 5/16 x 12 3/16 in. Courtesy of the Animation and Fine Art Galleries, <http://animationandfineart.com/Fine/ArtistsAH.html> (accessed March 19, 2007).

14. Jim Dine, *Smiling Workman*, 1960. Courtesy of Stephan Barron, http://stephan.barron.free.fr/1/eynard_milene/artiste2-m.htm (accessed March 19, 2007).

15. Front and back cover: Jim Dine, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: A Working Script for the Stage from the Novel by Oscar Wilde with Original Images and Notes on the Text by Jim Dine* (London: Petersburg Press, ca. 1968). Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

16. Jim Dine, *This Goofy Life of Constant Mourning*, 2004. Courtesy of Art MoCo, <http://mocoloco.com/art/archives/001328.php> (accessed June 11, 2006).

17. Jim Dine, Page 1 (Act I, Scene I), *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1968. Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

18. Jim Dine, Basil Hallward's Costume for the First Scene in Studio. Costume design for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. 1967. Cut-and-pasted printed paper, gouache, oil pastel, felt-tipped pen, brush, pen and ink, and pencil on tracing paper, 29 1/8 x 20 in. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, The Joan and Lester Avnet Collection. © 2007 Jim Dine / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, http://moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A1547&page_number=10&template_id=1&sort_order=1 (accessed March 19, 2007).

19. Jim Dine, *Dorian Gray (The Costume Dorian Gray Dies In)*, 1968; lithograph on Velin Arches paper; image: 15 7/8 x 8 3/16 in.; sheet 17 5/16 x 12 3/16 in. Courtesy of the Animation and Fine Art Galleries, <http://animationandfineart.com/Fine/ArtistsAH.html> (accessed March 19, 2007).