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**V I T O S C H N A B E L**

All poets are spirited people; and Rene Ricard is a poet. "Spirited" is ambiguous, so it serves Ricard—and poetry—well. Spirited is Rene, whose vivacious wit is the source of endless delight; spirited are Ricard's sad, intensely lyrical poems. Rene Ricard's paintings, too, are spirited because they are possessed by the terrifying co-existence of Tragedy and Pantomime. This statement would make Rene Ricard a caricaturist. It would also explain why his work has not received its appropriate reaction in today's more-chaste-than-we-all-care-to-admit America: caricature never found its place as High Art, here. Its essence is too fractious, too unyielding, too dense. And so, a painting like "Decoy Dinner" doesn't speak to us Americans for it contains together too many discordant pleasures we indulge in: humor, vulnerability, idolization, mindlessness, homo-eroticism, silliness, great intelligence. The same goes for "Growing Up in America..." an apparition of forlorn cinematic experience set against magnificent, gaudy Cadillacs and almighty tenderness. Again: 1950's effrontery, feelings, Cinema—"the lifelike presentation of human beings in magical, dreamlike, and imaginary situations" (David Thompson)—*don't* collide with each other in this painting. Not even Lubitch with his legendary "touch" managed such delicacy born of such contrasting ingredients—though—boy, were his films supremely packaged!

It may be countered that Lubitch was European. He was; but he made American movies. And so is Rene Ricard: an American who makes exquisite European pictures.

Cody Franchetti, New York City, 2008