

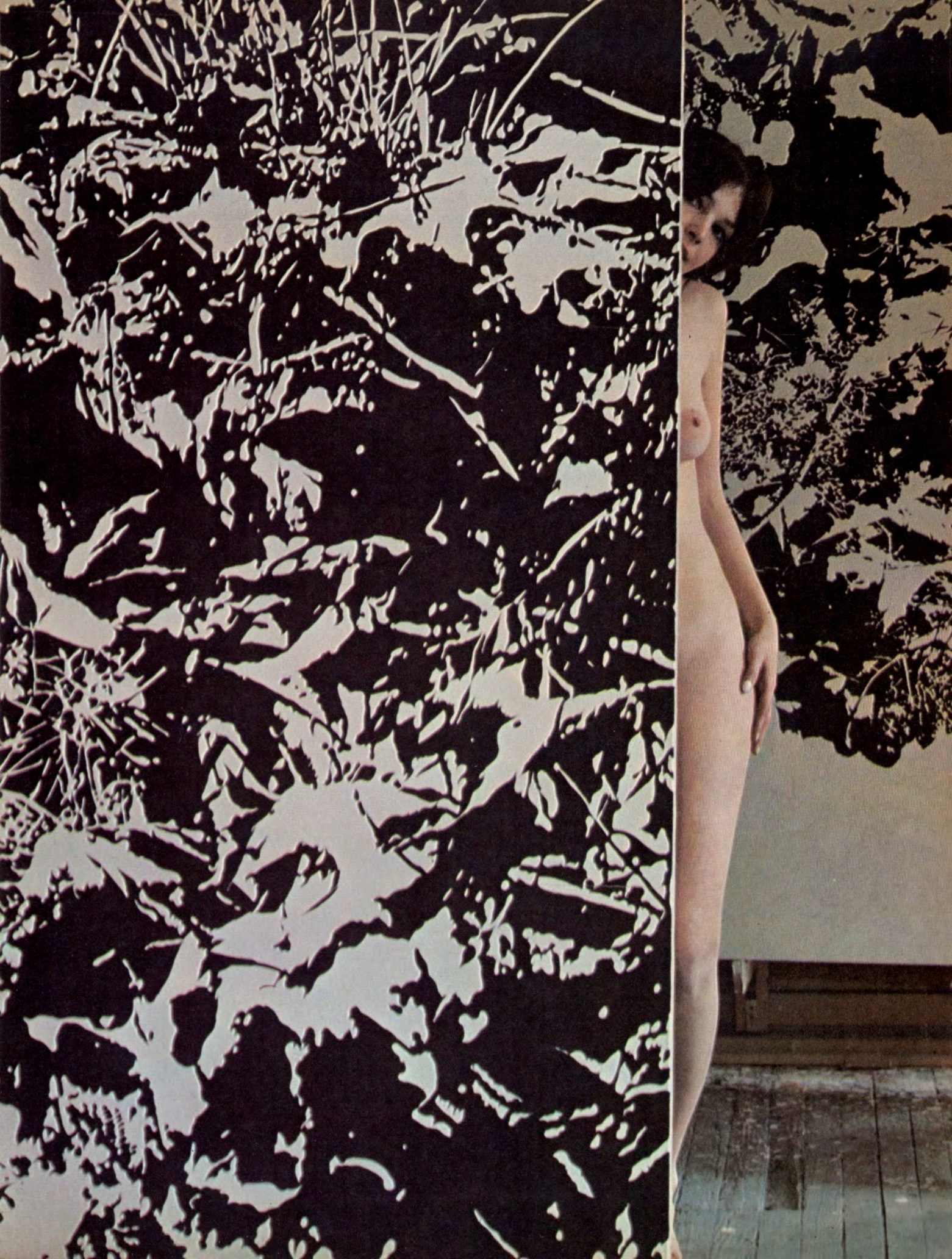
# BIG PAINTINGS: BOB STANLEY

At 36, Bob Stanley has been painting half his life. But until three-and-a-half years ago he had to support himself just like normal people. Well, maybe not normal. From about 3:30 until the day people came he supervised a crew that filed computerized data slips for the margin clerks at a New York brokerage. When work was slow he read all the newspapers, especially the comics and the sports pages. The radio was always on.

At about the time the Stock Exchange was closing Stanley would wake up and start to paint in the one-room studio of his apartment. First it was heavy abstract expressionist canvases that often took months to finish. Then pop got to him and he started to paint multi-image canvases, mostly about sports and sex, in roughly the two-color style you see here. In mid-1964, he did a series of single-image pornographic paintings. Everyone liked them, but no one bought them, and the galleries were evasive. He began to buy rock-and-roll fan magazines and leaf through them on the subway back from work. Around New Year's he started his rock-and-roll series, and a month later he had a gallery contract and a major show which produced a set of silkscreens that were distributed all over the country. A year later he had a real studio and showed his sex paintings at the Bianchini Gallery, many months before the Janis Gallery created a major stir with a group show on the same subject.

Now he has an even bigger studio and is painting both sports scenes and the landscapes you see here. Nice to look at, aren't they?





Q: *Why do you paint such big paintings?*

A: I don't really think they're so big. They should be twice as big, probably.

Q: *Why don't you make them twice as big?*

A: I try to make things as small as possible because I don't want to get into that size competition scene.

Q: *Actually, I suppose these are only medium-sized paintings, or a little bigger than average.*

A: They're not very big in relation to what a lot of artists are painting. They're quite large if someone expects to put them in his apartment.

Q: *Isn't it important that paintings be put into apartments?*

A: I don't think it's important they be put anywhere. But it's nice if someone wants to buy them. It's nice if someone wants to show them.

Q: *What should happen to these paintings?*

A: They should go to shows and be sold so I can live comfortably and paint some more without going to work. [Pause] This generally happens.

Q: *What would happen if they were twice as big?*

A: First of all I'd be exhausted. [Pause] But the effect would be . . . the experience would probably be better . . . but if I thought it would be a hell of a lot better I'd probably think of doing them that way. I don't think the quotient is right — is that how you put it? — the quotient of work to expense to effect would be right for me. It gets all out of whack if I do it much bigger. On the other hand, when they get smaller they don't work as paintings. They work quite well as drawings. A drawing situation is intimate. You can do intimate paintings but I don't really believe in that. I want a painting to be a confrontation, and that requires this kind of size. When I was doing the rock-and-roll paintings it didn't require that, because the image was bigger than life in those sizes.

Q: *Painters used to work a lot smaller, didn't they?*

A: Yeah, but now we're in a situation that most artists respond to with big work.

Q: *You've painted four different kinds of images in your current style — sex, rock-and-roll, sports, and trees . . . trees and grass and leaves and stuff. Isn't that much different? Do you feel any continuity between these subjects?*

A: There's definitely a continuity. The trees are a departure because I was painting almost exclusively figure paintings. I felt it was time to do something without figures, but it's definitely part of the same thing. There were floral elements and tree elements in the last sex paintings that I did, and I got interested in certain problems they presented . . . [Pause]

Q: *It's peaceful here.*

A: That's what happens when you have these leaves and trees around. They're very pleasant to live with. When you get bored watching television you look at the paintings for a while.

Q: *You've never lived with any other kind of painting in this space, have you?*

A: When I first moved in I had some rock-and-roll and sex paintings up. I still have sex paintings, in the bedroom.

Q: *Do you want to keep some of these paintings?*

A: Probably. When I'm in the middle of a series I don't really think about it because I'm painting more. When I'm done I will probably want to keep some and would feel bad if they were all gone.

Q: *Are you getting tired of trees?*

A: Well, I've got to do some hockey paintings. They're gonna be the same size as these. We'll see what happens.

Q: *They'll be a lot easier to do.*

A: Yeah, they'll probably take a lot less time.

Q: *Do you want to go back to sports paintings?*

A: No, I want to do more paintings with this kind of thing going on.

Q: *Does the subject of these paintings interest you over and above the kind of technical problems they present?*

A: Oh no, not these.

Q: *How about the others?*

A: To a certain extent. Sometimes. Yes.