

# BESPOKE

INSIDE HANGING OUT WITH THE HONDURAN ULTRAS  
THE ARTISTS BEHIND ICONIC RECORD SLEEVES  
THE JOY OF DRIVING A VOLVO ON A FROZEN LAKE  
TAILORING RETURNS

ISSUE 41 | MARCH 2017

## Dinner time

MONICA GALETTI TAKES NO PRISONERS IN OUR EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



profile



Picture by Greg Sigston; Told to Steve Dinneen

## MY INSPIRATION

*Artist Ben Turnbull on his obsession with Hubert Selby Jr's disturbing novel The Room*

**M**y obsession with Hubert Selby Jr - and it is an obsession - stems from the way he championed lonely, lost characters, the kinds of people who don't often get written about. We've all been there, to life's dark corners, but this guy was going there and bringing back art from the other side.

I first stumbled upon his novel *Last Exit to Brooklyn* in an old bookshop, and that led me onto *The Room*, which is probably the most disturbing book ever written. It's about a man locked in his room, a metaphor for his mind, and it's full of rage, hatred and paranoid revenge. As it becomes more vicious, he makes you read quicker by using less and less punctuation - it's an incredible thrill ride. You find yourself becoming physically affected by it. There were critics at the time who said they became violently ill after reading it. My girlfriend took one look at it and said, "That's the dictionary definition of you."

Selby Jr is one of those authors who macheted the path that others would follow, from Bret Easton Ellis to Richard Price - and I include myself in that. I wouldn't

have been brave enough to have the voice I do without artists like Selby Jr. I would never have made *Smells Like Teen Spirit* [a series in which guns are carved into old-fashioned school desks], for example, which deals with some serious demons. I had to spend a lot of time researching people who are hated by society, often for good reason. It's a tough sell to try to draw from that well of darkness. You can make yourself ill doing it.

It's a gateway that people like Selby Jr opened - you can produce works, even beautiful ones, from places of incredible darkness. My new show is a linear story about war over the last 100 years, starting with the Uncle Sam propaganda prior to WWI, moving on to war after war, essentially telling the same story again and again, about ordinary people sacrificing themselves. It's a kind of GI's view of the hell of war, the honest truth, starting with the patriotic, gung ho spirit, with original vintage flags, moving on to letters sent back from loved ones, and ending with the eventual return home. It includes *Return of the Living Dead*, which is about soldiers with PTSD; without going to life's dark corners you wouldn't be able to make art like that.

*No Guts No Glory* is on at the Saatchi Gallery from 11 April-8 May, visit [benturnbull.com](http://benturnbull.com) or [saatchigallery.com](http://saatchigallery.com)