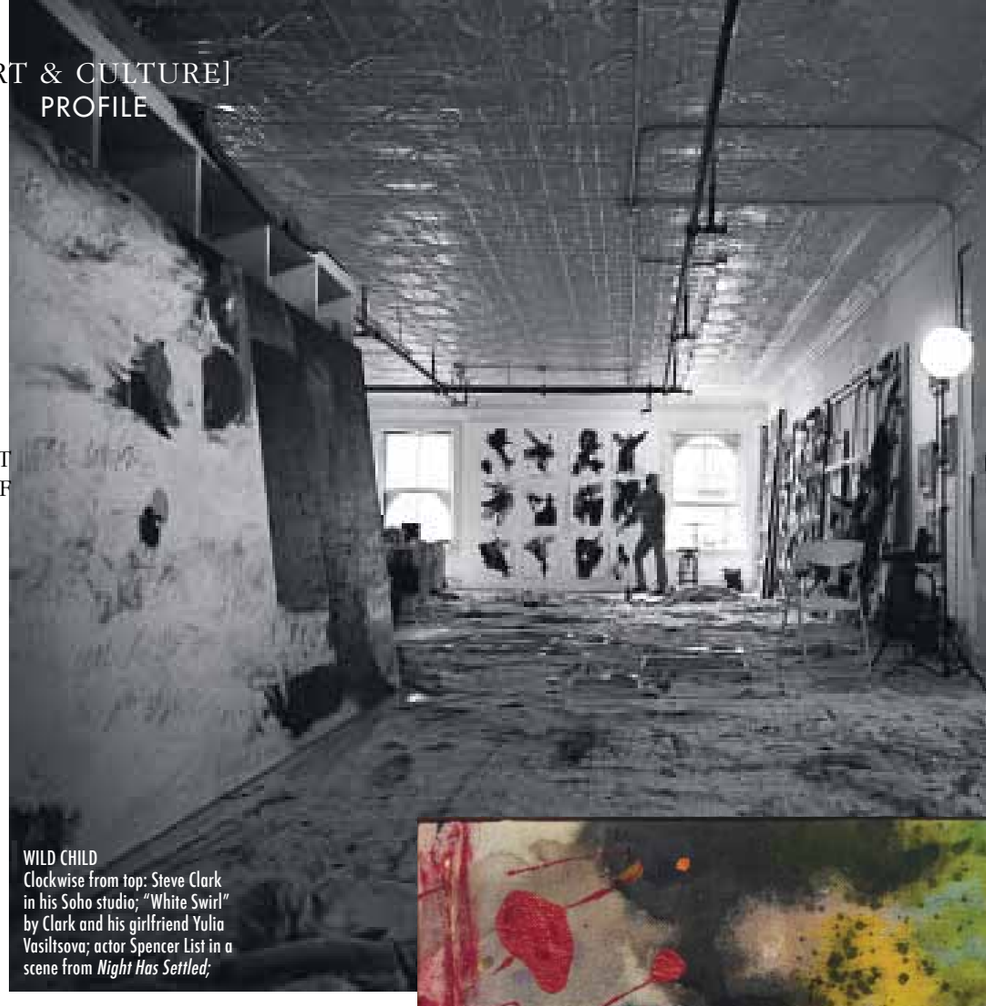
NIGHT FEVER

WITH HIS ACCLAIMED SECOND FEATURE, ***NIGHT HAS SETTLED*** (AVAILABLE ON DEMAND THROUGH ALL MAJOR CABLE PROVIDERS THIS MONTH), WRITER-DIRECTOR-ARTIST **STEVE CLARK** RETRACES THE HIGH-OCTANE DAYS OF HIS NYC YOUTH.

By James Servin



WILD CHILD
Clockwise from top: Steve Clark in his Soho studio; "White Swirl" by Clark and his girlfriend Yulia Vasiltsova; actor Spencer List in a scene from *Night Has Settled;*

Just outside the Shakespeare and Company bookstore in Paris, filmmaker Steve Clark, his newly purchased copy of *Henry Miller: The Paris Years* in hand, pauses to photograph a poster of a poem titled "The Harmony of Paradoxes." "Somebody spray-painted 'Aldo Huxley *Brave New World*' on top of it," Clark notes, "and then someone else wrote 'Have You Taken Your Soma Today?' Literary graffiti—only in Paris!" The Paris trip caps two months of travel, which has included visits to Spain (Clark's mother's homeland) and Russia (the homeland of his girlfriend, model and photographer Yulia Vasiltsova).

It's an appropriately cinematic respite before Clark delves into a series of creative projects back in NYC. Amiable, intense and still youthful at 44, Clark, formerly a senior editor at George Plimpton's *The Paris Review*, segued to films in 2008 as co-writer and director of the booze-soaked drama *The Last International Playboy*, and just sold the U.S. distribution rights for his poetic, turbulent second feature, *Night Has Settled*, to Film Movement.

A coming-of-age story about teenage life in fast-lane 1980s Manhattan, *Night Has Settled*, which Clark wrote, directed and produced, has been compared by critics to the works of Jonathan Safran Foer, Larry Clark and Noah Baumbach's *The Squid and the Whale*. "I'm honored to be mentioned with them," Clark says. "*The Squid and the Whale* is a great movie—it was funny and dramatic, and often at the same time, which I especially like."

The movie, admits Clark, is an auto-biographical work, inspired by his formative years on the Upper East Side. Like the film's protagonist, Oliver, Clark grew up with a Chilean housekeeper named Aida, fought with his older sister and had a buddy who once nicked cocaine from his brother and brought it to school. "Real life was even a little bit racier," Clark recalls. "I remember kids going to rehab at 13. I saw a picture of myself smoking when I was 12, and it just looks so funny now—that's so wrong!"

Spencer List, Clark's charismatic lead, "was really a kid when I first met him, a little 13-year-old, blushing when he looked at the girls." By the end of the shoot, which required List to kiss two girls at once, among other high jinks, the actor was not so innocent. Says Clark: "His father came up to me afterward and said, 'You've had every possible awkward conversation that I could have with my son in the future. Thank you!'"

Currently writing a new screenplay, a drama "with an edgy, defiant tone," Clark, a Renaissance man of sorts, is also assembling a three-part art installation about a woman reconciling her masculine and feminine sides. Clark's paintings, drawings and collages have been exhibited at Little House Mayfair in London, among other venues, as well as in pop-up shows at his Soho art studio. In 2010, he published *From the Ashes*, an acclaimed book of bilingual poetry.

"Crop rotation is how I explain it," Clark says of his multifaceted creative impulses, fueled by inspiration from heroes ranging from Leonard Cohen to Goya, Antonioni, Fellini and Tom Waits. "I write, paint and make films because I get pleasure out of doing each one. I'm always excited to go into that quiet, closed place where it's just you and your computer, after a swarm of fun and insanity on a film."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEVE CLARK