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Intervju

Interview | Johannes Holt-Iversen

October 25, 2017

Johannes Holt-Iversen (b. 1989) is a passionate young painter currently pursuing a BFA title from the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. We love the energy and the honesty of his work. We talked to him about his thinking behind his work, the process and inspiration. Links to his works after Johannes' fantastic Q&A.



Photo: Menno Van Winden

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Photo: Menno Van Winden





How would you describe your work?

My work should always behave like a river. A river flows freely and make radical turns in order to act naturally in its environment. It can flow quietly but persistently, but also make a violent outburst into heavy stream, falling several metres down the abyss.

What ideas are you exploring in your practice? (Is there a major theme you pursue in your work?)

For many years I have been exploring the ritual of painting. The simple act of painting has a great importance to me. Here the investigation of material matter within the act of painting has caught my interest. But also the narrative you often build with your paintings. I cannot say what is the major theme I pursue, but I can tell that being present in the current moment, looking at our world feeds my visuality a great deal.

How is your creative process, where do you start?

I just start. I can wake up and just do. Pure and simple. The process has become such a natural part of my daily life that it is as important as a morning ritual and also a necessity throughout the day. It simply needs to be done in order to survive daily life. Technically it mostly starts from the drawing and then travels out in other mediums such as sculpture, installations or painting.

What do you love most about your medium?

A painting never lies. It shows everything you are occupied with at the given moment. It shows how far you are in your process becoming you. It shows your heroes and it shows your love affairs. You cannot hide in a painting. It is as honest as you should be to all human beings in general.

Describe your studio.

Paintings, sculptures and works are slowly beginning to be stacked on top of each other. And the walls are slowly being filled with paintings, photographs, drawings and memories. I'm working from the studios appointed to the Gerrit Rietveld Art Academy in Amsterdam.

You have your studio in Amsterdam. How does your surroundings influence your work?

The long diagonally perspectives of the long lovely canals and the wonderful views from the Amsterdamse Bos (forrest). From time to time evening walks in the city centre late at night comforts me. When love is hard, Amsterdam is always there.

What keeps you creating?

The fear of death and the curiosity towards that inner travel when it comes to pure creation.

What inspires you?

Human relations inspires me greatly at the moment. Ever since I experienced Edvard Munchs works in Oslo and here experienced a very honest scandinavian painter, I have been struggling finding the viewpoint of our (lacking) relationships as human beings of the 21st century. Conceptual art doesn't seem to fit anymore either. Post-modernism is finally going to die and that sure is inspiring to be an explorer of the 21st century's fluidity. Everything is now possible, even being a retrospective archeologist is just as new.

Is there any other artist(s) or art periods that influence you work more than others? That has/or is playing an important role in your development as an artist?

The CoBrA movement and the Situationiste Internationale has played a major role in developing my work. They were sort of the initiation of my international focus. They brought me out discovering Europe and contemporary art. Also the meeting with norwegian contemporary painter Christian Tony Norum in Edvard Munchs studio in Ekely, has played a huge important role in my development.

When do you consider a work (painting, drawing, etc.,) to be finished?

A painting should cry out, it should make a scream and raw when it enters the world. It should be as violent and beautiful as birth. Sometimes a still born painting comes to life in a later process, even days after, it's like cheating death. As a man, creation is my only way to give life.

And I believe as a male painter, we (men) should be listening more to female artists and their views upon creation and vice versa. There is a great deal to learn about masculine artistic practice by listening to female artists and through this meeting, understand the dualism between man and woman.

Do you ever change your mind about what is or is not a good painting (work)?

So far I haven't changed what makes a good painting. But I am eager to see if I at some point in life change my preferences.

How important is titling your work?

A title is somewhat either a clearing for the viewer or a possibility to confuse and tease instead. I see it as a dualism between those two aspects. And I do love to provoke.

What advice would you give to someone who are in the very beginning of collecting art?

Collect not by numbers or names. But what attracts you! What makes a historical relation to you! In any investment there'll be downfalls. It is inevitable. However many of the works I have in my own collection are either trades or buyings made years ago, now worth a lot more.

Any books you would recommend?

I will always recommend to read the works of Hegel concerning Art and aesthetics. Alongside the aesthetic theory of T. W. Adorno from the 1970s. However I would at any time recommend to read poetry first rather than theoretical literature. Then I would recommend to read the poems of danish poet Michael Strunge. Especially his debut «Livets Hastighed» from 1978.

What's next?

«What's next» is always a super exciting thought. But I try hard to stay in the present at the moment. To maintain presence in my artistic process that way.

Anything you would like to add?

Always treat the person next to you with genuine respect. If you fuck up, admit it and then move on.

SEE JOHANNES' WORKS HERE

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