

youngspace



So happy to share the work of young Amsterdam-based artist and current BFA candidate Johannes Holt-Iverson, whose abstract paintings caught my attention right away for their deceptive simplicity and gorgeous palette. He has also delved recently into 3-dimensional work, which you can see at his website after you get a kick out of the Q&A below!

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YS: You are currently pursuing your BFA at Gerrit Rietveld Academie, and you originally studied Interactive Digital Media. When did you first become interested in pursuing art?

JHI: I guess it is more a question of when I became aware that art was actually what I was pursuing all the time. I have searched within the creative arts all my life, especially since the age of 12. Here classical percussion and classical composition had an important role while growing up, undoubtedly giving birth to important aspects of my visual practice today. Getting a University Degree was more to make sure I understood the world outside the creative arts; what drives it, where are we going etc. I find it really important to speak every possible language that you have the willpower to master. You can call it enlightenment in the age of overloading information; I am sure in a few years us Millennials will have the curiosity of breaking down the boundaries between schools and institutions.

Do you have any particularly important mentors or teachers?

The older I get, the more I understand that, surrounding me, is an army of important teachers and mentors. Great, hard working musicians, artists, music composers, singers and actors. Lately my good mentor MFA Erik Rytter is the reason why I found my way back to the fine arts. He clearly understood what kind of artist I potentially would become, and I am deeply grateful for everything he taught me in this crucial, transforming moment. Also it is important to mention my old teacher in Classical Composition Niels Mølgaard who opened the door to higher artistic creation and contemporary classical music. If it weren't for his lectures about atonal compositions, I wouldn't have searched into the works of Arnold Schönberg's 12-tones or John Cage's prepared pianos, which eventually would lead me into abstract painting. Other important composers would be Alexander Borodin and Tchaikovsky, due to their strong emotional, compositional means.

Who or what are some of your major influences?

I guess I can put it this way; when an influence hits you, you either embrace it 200% or you work around it, in denial of its profound presence in your work. The first time I saw Edvard Munch's work, I had to sit on a bench outside the Munchmuseum in Oslo and take a few deep breaths, because it hit me so profoundly and deeply. When I saw the retrospective exhibition of Asger Jorns international works back in 2011 in Aarhus, Denmark it filled me with such a joy and I immediately wanted to go home and paint. The first time I saw Emil Nolde in Germany it filled me with a heavy heart but also an immediate calm. The same happened when I saw Vilhelm Hammershøi the first time. I became a wild teenager the first time I saw Cy Twombly and my intellectual background kicks in when I visit the works of Per Kirkeby or Mark Rothko.

Right now I'm investigating my Scandinavian visual heritage deeply these days, and I am having all kinds of questions about it, that I try to get out in my paintings. I'm sort of doing a historical investigation, digging in the dirt trying to figure out for myself, putting all the pieces together. Nature also has a big impact on my process. I don't see landscape and subject aligned to each other in a hierarchy anymore, but democratized thanks to the theories of relativity. It fascinates me how time, gravity, and mass has such a profound impact on everything in the cosmos. It invites you to think of the aspect of timeless communication which happens in all of the audio/visual arts, on a spiritual and higher intellectual level, which needs further discovery. Especially the processes of creation. Because that would lead us to the answer of our own existence ultimately.

What is your studio space like? How much time do you spend there?

Right now I am in a huge collective space at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, however I've transformed my apartment into a home studio as well. So I guess right now I spend 50/50 of my time in studios. Actually right now I don't know where to go when I can't stand looking at my work or the smell of oil. Well, other than wandering by the canals here in Amsterdam. But that does the trick as well.

What do you enjoy most about painting? You work a lot with oil; what do you like most about that medium?

I guess it's a medium that never lies. It surely gives you every nasty little detail up front. Its organic attitude really suits me, every time I work with oil painting I want to take it further, understand the material even better, challenge it, distort it, break it, refine it.

What do you find most exciting or rewarding about pursuing art?

That you keep getting lost.

As a current student and artist early in your career, what do you find to be the most challenging or daunting part?

The most challenging part is to keep pushing yourself to constantly experiment and never settle with a given outcome. It is also quite a challenge that the only one truly judging you is yourself. When you get satisfied it's a trap!

What is the best advice you've ever received?

My old teacher in classical composition once sat down with me after class and said, "Remember to always eat well, run with inspiration and care for your bedtimes."

Do you have any upcoming exhibitions or projects?

I'm working on/off preparing a project, to paint and perform a piece together with a couple of musicians revisiting one of my old string quartets which hasn't surfaced publicly since 2009, more information will come in 2017.

Anything else you would like to add?

Artistic creation should be like a river, not a fire. The river flows freely, slowly but naturally. The fire consumes and constantly needs to be fed. Eventually the fire will burn out even in old age, whereas the river would change its streams and always be a part of the big ocean.

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