

Martin Asbæk. Markus Oehlen

It is with great pleasure that Martin Asbæk Gallery can welcome visitors to the exhibition New Works, which consists of a series of brand new paintings by German artist Markus Oehlen.

The painter, sculptor and musician Markus Oehlen (b. 1956) belongs to the influential generation of artists in Germany who had their breakthrough in the early 1980s under the name "Die Neue Wilden". Along with among others his brother Albert Oehlen, Markus Oehlen was part of the Hamburg fraction of the neo-Expressionist movement of young painters who, in opposition to the dominant avant-garde movements of the time, minimalism and conceptual art – which had with great self-assurance proclaimed that painting was dead – took up arms with a decidedly expressive formal language dominated by intense colours and quick, 'wild' brushstrokes. The inspiration came from among other sources foreign cultures and older visual art, in particular German Expressionism and the French Fauvism of the earlier 1900s, given new life by the punk culture's informal codes. Markus Oehlen and "Die Neue Wilden" inspired what we know in the Danish context as "De Unge Wilde".

Markus Oehlen udviklede sin let genkendelige, vibrerende palette på Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, hvor han studerede mellem 1976 og 1982. I denne periode yndede han også lejlighedsvis at bytte penslen ud med trommestikker, når han var stærkt engageret i legendariske punkgrupper som Mittagspause og Charley's Girls. Således er det nærliggende, at der i Oehlen's billeder arbejdes med amorfe former, der bevæger sig frit, næsten anarkistisk, mellem hinanden.

Malerierne balancerer mellem det figurative og abstrakte og mimer med deres mange lag og stærke farvekompositioner collage's hybride udtryk. Ofte ledes tankerne også hen på de perceptuelle eksperimenter, vi kender fra Op Art og den synspåvirkende kunst. Kradsende strøg af hidsige farver kolliderer med stedvist opdukkende digitalt printede figurationer, og resultatet bliver en slags kontrolleret vildskab rammet ind af stabiliserende grids. Oehlen repræsenterer en radikal tilgang til malerkunsten, hvor der alligevel og gennem en vis serialitet kommunikeres lys, dybde og rytme.

Markus Oehlen, b. 1956 in Krefeld, Germany, has worked since 2002 as a professor at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste München. His works have earlier been exhibited by among others: Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Kunsthalle Gießen; Deichtorhallen Hamburg; Museum Frieder Burda; Baden-Baden; Hamburger Kunstverein; Centro Cultural Andratx, Mallorca; ZKM Karlsruhe; Ursula Blickle Foundation; Kunstverein Frankfurt; Haus der Kunst I München; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin. Markus Oehlen is in the following collections; Sammlung Essl Kunsthhaus, Klosterneuburg; Kunstraum Grässlin, St. Georgen; Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach; Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe; Museum Villa Haiss, Zell am Harmersbach; Sammlung Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden; Kunsthalle Weishaupt, Ulm; Sammlung zeitgenössischer Kunst der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn; Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen; Sammlung Alison & Peter W. Klein, Eberdingen; Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis, MO; Centro Cultural Andratx, Andratx/Mallorca; Proje4L / Elgiz Museum of Contemporary Art, Istanbul.

Die Junge Wilden: Junge wilde er betegnelsen på det nybrud man oplevede i billedkunstverdenen i starten af 1980'erne i Tyskland, hvor den dominerende minimalistiske og konceptuelle kunst blev afløst af voldsomme neoekspressionistiske malerier ofte med et ironisk forhold til kunstnerrollen og kunstinstitutionen

Samlende betegnelse for en lang række forskellige tyske malere, som fra slutningen af 1970'erne stod frem med et nyekspressionistisk maleri. deres kunst karakteriseres af "vilde" figurative emner og farver med inspiration fra den tyske ekspressionisme fra århundredets begyndelse, men med tydelig stillingtagen til aktuelle emner, f.eks. fra storbykulturen, og en vis punk-æstetik. Kulminationen for denne ikke klart definerbare retning blev to udstillinger i 1982, documenta 7 i Kassel og Zeitgeist i Berlin.

means of expression in art, on the other hand an immanent art criticism, which is typical of many painters of his generation and the legend of a wild Drauflosmalerei striking refuted.

Although Markus Oehlen strongly emphasizes the subjective component of his artistic practice, he has always paid special attention to the "architecture" of his paintings. It is no coincidence that these seem like "built". This often results in a dialectical tension between unpretentious technique and extremely careful image staging. Technically, the finished paintings should have the perfection of machine-made artifacts. In view of the photographic reproduction of one of his paintings, Markus Oehlen said to me with a positive accentuation: "This looks like printed". Nevertheless, his works represent a deliberate challenge to the mouldering advertising aesthetics of our day. This is not a contradiction. The craftsmanship produces in the case of Oehlens visual phenomena, which point to nothing, but to themselves, and that in a form that produces reluctance rather than stimulation. "One must feel the dirt", commented the artist his specific color choice. Oehlen loves "dirty" colors, which make his paintings look "foreign", sometimes very toxic. The content-related moment is of subordinate importance; formal problems determine the artistic context of his work. Nevertheless, one can not attribute his painting to abstract art, for the figurative elements in his pictures not only fulfill decorative functions. Death symbols appear again and again, a fragmented skeleton, for example, spreads over the carpet-like structured image surface of a canvas. Oehlen seems to be careless in its design. He wants, that his pictures are considered "unfinished". Accordingly, the individual formal factors often seem to be stereotyped. Elaborate formal processing does not take place. The irony with which Markus Oehlen inoculates his paintings is unmistakable. A whole series of his pictures are literally saturated with irony. The term irony needs explanation. It is not meant in a superficial sense, rather something of what has been called "romantic irony" shimmers through. Irony as an appropriation and as a reserve. Irony, too, as a signal of a break between self and reality that helps to overcome this break. "In other words, by mastering irony, man succeeds in controlling himself, and that is precisely what makes him reach agreement with reality." (Uwe Japp, Theory of Irony, Frankfurt / M. 1983, p. 237). Markus Oehlen maintains a great distance to his artistic work. The relationship is ambivalent. On the other hand, that does not mean that he does not take his art seriously or that he does not want to be taken seriously. On the contrary. The irony shows painful traits, is also carrier of the subjective expression.

What the passion for Expressionist artists meant is irony for Markus Oehlen. As a result, the apostrophy fails "neo-expressionistically" over his painting. His paintings are not proofs of an uncontrolled desire to express, but calculated, and each of them conquer over and over again and again from the beginning the terrain of painting. Unlike his brother Albert, Markus Oehlen never painted "funny" pictures. Such an endeavor would contradict his artistic temperament. The process of producing his paintings is slow and only very laborious. The reason is not least that the artist wants to keep him under control step by step. At the same time, the process of production should remain clear to the viewer. The wrong ways, which he takes and the mistakes which he makes, he does not suppress, he lets them stand and integrates them into the further pursuit of his painterly practice. He now draws inspiration from art history; he used to be inspired by the pictures of newspapers and magazines. However, Oehlen combines forms or formal contexts of the most diverse images, which have nothing in common in terms of style or artistic temperature, to form new, sometimes extremely surprising form associations. As a rule, it is the reproductions in art books that interest him, not primarily the originals of art history. By the way, Markus Oehlen is of the opinion that one can analyze his pictures accurately in terms of language. I doubt it. But analogous to the view which he harbors from the artistic process, I am able to understand his view. The gradual production of his paintings and drawings reveals that he is above all concerned with insight into the process of artistic creation and, at the same time, with his final demystification.

Borchs Butik. Marina Adams

I BORCHS Butik er der mulighed for at se og købe original grafik i små, eksklusive oplag, signeret og nummeret, med nogle af verdens førende kunstnere. Blandt de professionelle trykkerier i Europa har Niels

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Bredgade: Martin Asbæk, Borchs, Andersens og Avlskarl.

Borch Jensen gennem årene etableret en position som en af de mest kompetente inden for klassiske grafiske teknikker. Siden etableringen af værkstedet i 1979 har Niels Borch Jensen samarbejdet med en lang række danske og udenlandske kunstnere.

I 1999 åbnede Niels Borch Jensen Gallery and Edition i Berlin og i 2012 åbnede et showroom i forbindelse med trykkeriet på Prags Boulevard i København.

MARINA ADAMS is a painter based in both New York City and Parma, Italy. She earned degrees from Tyler School of Art, Temple University and Columbia University's School of the Arts.

The American painter, who splits her time between New York and Italy, unabashedly incorporates references to textiles and glazed ceramics into her work, à la Mary Heilmann. The big canvas "Soft Power" pulls your eye around its bright field of wavy, interlocking diamonds; primary colors dominate, but the abstract painter sneaks slices of periwinkle and pale lemon into the loose composition, which could be a cartoon closeup of a harlequin costume. "Bigger" features a kooky vase: two stacked shapes, violet and green, form an hourglass down the middle of the canvas; two green drips pop out from the white background, like a winking pair of quotation marks.

A solo exhibition of Adams' work, titled *Soft Power*, was on view at Salon 94 Bowery last winter, 2017 as well as an exhibition with Marc Jancou at Giovannella Kunstglaserei in Gstaad, Switzerland. In 2016, Adams presented a solo booth with Karma Gallery and Books at the Independent, NY, which was concurrent with their publication of her newest book, titled *Portrait and a Dream*. Past solo shows include *Marina Adams at Galerie Gris*, Hudson, NY (2015 and 2013); *Marina Adams: Coming Thru Strange* at Hionas Gallery, NYC (2013), *Marina Adams at CUE Art Foundation*, NYC (2008), and *The Nature of Line* at Magazzino d'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy (1997).

Adams' work was recently on view in *Aspects of Abstraction* at Lisson Gallery's 10th Avenue venue, NY, *Artemesia* at Albert Baronian Gallery in Brussels, Belgium and *A Space for Thought* at Brand New Gallery, Milan, IT, which has been extended through March, 2018. Other exhibitions include *Vanishing Points* curated by Andrianna Campbell at James Cohan Gallery, New York, NY, *Quicktime* at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA, *Say Yes* at Wayne State University, Detroit, MI, *Making & Unmaking: An exhibition* curated by Duro Olowu at the Camden Arts Centre, London, UK and *Boys & Girls Can Still Draw* at Nathalie Karg Gallery, NYC. In 2007, Adams co-organized with CAMH curator Dean Daderko a large group exhibition titled *Sex in the City* at D.U.M.B.O. Arts Center, Brooklyn, NY.

Adams has collaborated with poets generating the recent publication *Actualities with Norma Cole* (Litmus Press, 2015), *Taormina* with Vincent Katz (Kayrock, 2012), *The Tango* with Leslie Scalapino (Granary Books, 2001) and *Vue sur Mer* with Christian Prigent (Gervais Jassaud, 2010).

New paintings are included in this year's Invitational at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, NY. Two new series of Etchings, *Prussian Blue* and *Terra Verte*, are available through Van Deb Editions, NY. And new Lithographs and Monoprints are available through Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), NY.

She is a 2016 recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship and was chosen by the American Academy of Arts and Letters to receive the 2018 Award of Merit Medal for Painting.

Whitewall interview:

Adams is an abstract painter, working from her studio in New York and spending summers in the countryside of Italy. She sees her work as opening a space for thought, through bright colors and forms she's sketched or drawn before transferring those gestures onto canvas. That act of creating the freedom

for ideas she sees as radical, and even dangerous—but a “soft power,” to be sure. When Whitewall spoke with Adams late last year, she told us that she approaches her work as a practice. This was key, because as a practice, the possibility of fear is eliminated. Today, on this sober Inauguration Day, we thought our conversation with Adams was the perfect fit for this week’s edition of “The Ascent.” She told us about finding confidence in her understanding of her own work, and how she stopped assuming others new more than she did. And she shared the epiphany she came to recently: “When we feel unified, then we have power. When we feel divided, we are already conquered.” There is a wisdom in her work that comes from experience. It is a result of being actively present and mindful; a practice that speaks to not just artists, not just women or activists, but us all.

WHITEWALL: Was there a starting point for the body of work on view in “Soft Power”?

MARINA ADAMS: The title painting, *Soft Power*, and *Second Sun* were painted before I left for the summer. The other three paintings in the show on Bowery, *Alice When She’s Ten Feet Tall*, *Bigger*, and *Standing on My Head*, come from work I did over the summer in Italy. They were painted this fall along with four other slightly smaller paintings that have been installed in the office showroom on Freeman’s Alley.

WW: Right, you have been spending the summers in Italy. What kind of work do you make there, and how does that impact the work you make in New York?

MA: The studio in Italy is in the countryside. What time and space are there is different than New York. The energy of New York is powerful, and it requires you bring your fiercest self. It’s also the place where I can paint the large-scale canvases. Italy serves me well because it allows me to develop new visual thoughts. I do a lot of work on paper and smaller things that I can bring back to the NY studio. It’s a whole other space in the countryside, both physically and mentally. I feed the paintings with the work I do over the summer. It’s all about thinking about one’s practice and how to maintain it, how to grow it, and in that respect how to keep it alive and moving.

WW: Have you always seen your work as a practice?

MA: I think that I have, but I think now I have better language. The notion of a practice, I think about it in terms of walking. We’re in the middle of our lives and we walk, we don’t think about it. But if you think about what it was for an infant to learn to walk, and you think what it is for somebody who is disabled or very old to walk, you realize that walking is literally putting one foot in front of the other, taking one step at a time. When you break it down that way, you take the fear out of it. You focus on something that you can tackle, that you confidently do, and that’s what a practice is. It takes the fear out of it. In the world right now, there is a lot fear, and fear produces hatred, fear produces all kinds of really terrible things. When you think about a practice, and what artists do, it’s another way of thinking about living. Sometimes everything just flows and I wish it could always be like that. For me painting is the same. Sometimes the work just flows out of me. And sometimes I have to really fight for it.

WW: For this show, did the paintings flow out of you or were any a struggle?

MA: I think it’s the gambit. This isn’t something that you can control. Life is about constantly adjusting. And that’s what painting is for me too. I can put something down, and no matter what, there is always a process of adjustment that I have to feel out. And that has to be in the moment, you have to be awake to do that, you have to be present. As a painter, I deal with a blank canvas and take that on. It never changes. You always start at the beginning. What you bring to it, what does change, is your experience and experience if you’ve paid attention, can turn into wisdom. And wisdom brings with it a confidence. The difference between me now and let’s say 20 years ago is I’ve been through some things and I know that no matter how disastrously a painting can go, or how difficult, how rough the waters can sometimes become, I’ve developed the ability to turn those sails. I know that I just have to calm down, I have to relax, and I have to become sensitive to the wind and shift the sails.

WW: The titles of your works are almost lyrical, and I know you’ve collaborated on publications with poets. Could you talk about your titles and their relationship, if at all, to poetry?

MA: I did three books with three different poets. The most recent is *Actualities* (Litmus Press) with the poet Norma Cole. I’ve done other smaller collaborations and people have used my work on their covers. It’s a

great dialogue. I love what poets offer the world. I think what they do with language is extraordinary, it's refreshing, and it's necessary. They bring a depth of meaning that for me is very similar to what I try to do in a visual way. I look for language I guess when it comes to titles, but it doesn't all come from poetry. I think that language is a way in for people. And with abstract work, you're not offering a narrative and for some people it's much more difficult. They don't know what they're looking at, and that not knowing can create a sense of insecurity and fear. You do need to give them something if they feel like they're being left out. Language is a way into a work. But you also don't want to be descriptive, or at least I don't. The titles do not illustrate the work; hopefully they broaden the experience of it and sometimes they can make you laugh. Ultimately the work is a visual experience.

WW: You've said that abstraction creates a space for thought, rather than dictating that thought. And poetry does that, as well. It has an open possibility for experience. It's generous that way.

MA: That's a great word. I love the word generous.

WW: I wonder if that's something, was that what attracted you to working with abstraction?

MA: That thought was an epiphany, to tell you the truth. I was at the Alhambra, I must have been in my twenties, in Grenada at the Moorish Palace. It's all tiled. So I was not looking at abstract expressionist paintings, but I was looking at all that color and pattern and repetition in the tile work, and it gave me this insight into an experience that is not narrative. It occurred to me that the work itself could be exactly that—it could be a space for thought and an experience. Matisse used the analogy that a great painting should be like sitting in an armchair. What he was saying, and this goes back to the practice, is that you have to relax. You have to let your mind relax and you have to let your body relax. A great painting hopefully opens something up in you. And when something opens up in you, you can have a thought or experience you've never had before. This makes us more human and this is why art is so crucial and this is why culture is so important. For me it was an epiphany [at The Alhambra] recognizing that when you are not given a narrative and are left with, "How do I deal with this?" Well as I say, "Relax. Breathe. Let yourself just enjoy it." What we do as artists is very important. The curators, the critics, the people asking the questions, this is all building something that I think is really strong, really important, and really necessary, and really does ultimately fight against all the things we are now terrified of.

WW: You keep going back to this idea of your art as a practice. When did it become a practice for you? When did you start to see it that way?

MA: I like to say I was an artist before I knew what that meant. I think I was born an artist. I started to figure out, as I was growing up, that when I looked around myself, I didn't see myself in anybody and I didn't really relate to anybody. I knew there was a world where there must be people like me. And then the business of it, that's a whole other thing, and that took me a long time to figure out. I remember having people over the studio when I was young and thinking that they knew more than I did. I was expecting the visit to tell me something about what I was doing. When they left I was always disappointed and I finally realized it was just foolish of me. That I knew more about my work than they did.

WW: It can take a long time for us to get there, though.

MA: It does but that's part of the process. That's life. Experience, if you pay attention, it becomes wisdom. Even now, I feel like there is all this emotion, and there is this moment when people feel that they want to do something but where is the front line? How do we get clarity? How do we not waste the moment?

When we feel unified, then we have power. When we feel divided, we are already conquered. I think we need to look at things in a bigger picture. We are emotional, human beings. That's where the battle line is. It's easier to feel divided than it is to feel unified. That's the fight if you ask me.

abstrakt kunst, egentlig billedkunst, der fremhæver væsentlige, karakteristiske eller alment kendetegnende træk på bekostning af uvæsentlige og individuelle detaljer. Men udtrykket har i praksis altid været anvendt om kunst, der "ikke forestiller noget", dvs. er sammensat af former og farver uden direkte genkendelig forbindelse til den ydre virkelighed — det, der også betegnes nonfigurativ kunst. I forbindelse med kubismens radikale billedeksperimenter blev der før 1910 skabt abstrakte værker af bl.a. Francis Picabia og François Kupka. Maleren Wassily Kandinsky udførte sine første abstrakte billeder i 1910, samme år som han

udformede det teoretiske grundlag for den abstrakte kunst i bogen *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, der udkom 1912.

Den abstrakte billedkunst delte sig tidligt i to hovedretninger. På den ene side opstod en overvejende spontan, ekspressiv og fabulerende tendens, som Kandinsky i begyndelsen selv repræsenterede. Den udviklede sig senere i mange retninger og affødte nye, mere eller mindre beslægtede tendenser: abstrakt ekspressionisme, lyrisk abstraktion, tachisme, informel kunst og action painting. Det er kendetegnende for denne ekspressive retnings repræsentanter (fx Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning og Asger Jorn), at de gerne udtrykker sig emotionelt og intuitivt, mens billedhuggere som Constantin Brancusi, Jean Arp og Henry Moore har dyrket et mere organisk præget formsprog; deres arbejder rummer mere eller mindre tilsigtede naturinspirerede elementer eller mindelser om naturfænomeners organiske strukturer.

Sideløbende med denne hovedstrømning udvikledes en modsvarende række af overvejende konstruktive retninger: konstruktivisme, neoplasticisme, suprematisme, konkret kunst, op art, minimalisme og nygeometrisk kunst. Deres udøvere fastholder en gennemreflekteret, rationel orden og afviser al naturinspireret abstraktion til fordel for en strengt nonfigurativ dyrkelse af geometriske formelementer. Inden for denne hovedretning, som pioneren Kandinsky med årene også tilsluttede sig, udelukkes enhver relation til naturen ved at tale om konkret kunst i stedet for abstrakt kunst. Foregangsmænd for disse retninger var bl.a. malerne Piet Mondrian og Kazimir Malevitj og billedhuggerne Naum Gabo og Antoine Pevsner.

I årene omkring 1930 manifesterede de abstrakte kunstnere sig i Europa med internationale udstillinger og dannelsen af sammenslutninger som Cercle et Carré og Abstraction-Création; i USA blev den nye kunst støttet af blandt andre Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation for Non-Objective Art, stiftet i 1937. I Danmark var Vilhelm Bjerke-Petersen, Ejler Bille og Richard Mortensen i begyndelsen af 1930'erne de første, der udstillede abstrakt kunst. Bjerke-Petersens banebrydende bog *Symboler i abstrakt Kunst*, udkom 1933, og den abstrakt-surrealistiske kunstnergruppe *Linien*, der udgav et tidsskrift med samme navn, blev ligeledes dannet i 1933. Den abstrakte kunst er gennem 1900-t. nået til udfoldelse på alle billedkunstens virkefelter. Selv på fotografiets område har abstraktionen vundet indpas med udgangspunkt i László Moholy-Nagys banebrydende eksperimenter i 1920'erne.

Avlskarl. Andi Fischer. Han tænkte alt.

Avlskarl Galleri er glad for at præsentere Andi Fischers (b.1987) første solopvisning i København. I en udstilling med titlen *HAN TÆNKTE ALT*, præsenterer Fischer nye malerier og collager.

Ved et første blik synes Fischer's værker at blive skabt i en børnehave. Fischer nægter, charmerende, at leve op til regler for perspektiv eller korrekt gengivet proportionalitet. Det vi ser er engagement og følelsesmæssige kvaliteter svært at sætte ind i ord. Værkerne understøttes af spontan abstraktion, der minder om Michael Krebbers ufærdige æstetik og en slags moderne actionmaleri. De blev lavet med en høj grad af intensitet med linjerne tydeligt markeret og groft udvalgt - som et barn, der starter og stopper med høj hastighed.

Der er en sjælden sårbarhed i værkerne - en markant mangel på perfektion gør dem menneskelige og mærkeligt udsatte. Værkerne går aktivt imod, hvad folk forventer og derved spiller med skuffelse som en faktor. Magien i børns tegninger er netop indlejret i evnen til at engagere sig i en verden, der ikke er forstyrret af fysiske regler, men arbejder med unikke former og farver, som ikke nødvendigvis matcher virkeligheden.

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Bredgade: Martin Asbæk, Borchs, Andersens og Avlskarl.

Fischer arbejder med en unik æstetik i sine værker - hans malerier tømmer af traditionelle symboler, og en ny virkelighed opstår, hvor seerne er nødt til at lave deres egne sind.

Fischer tog eksamen fra Udk Berlin, med professor Thomas Zipp.

I 2018 vandt han Berlin Masters Award.

An Interview with Andi Fischer by Chloe Stead

I LOVE HOW RIGOROUS CHILDREN ARE IN THEIR WAY OF DRAWING

Compared to other megalopolises like New York and London, Berlin is still a relatively affordable place for artists to live and work – but a lack of reasonably priced studio places and increasing rent has caused some to question for how much longer this will be the case. With this in mind, collectors Max and Monique Burger founded the Toy Berlin Masters Award. Established in 2017, this year the couple awarded Euro 10,000 to the German artist Andi Fischer. Fischer, who just graduated from Berlin's University of the Arts this year, was picked from a short list of nine other contestants under 30.

Can you tell us a little bit about what works you showed at the exhibition and how you made that particular selection?

Philipp Bollmann, the curator of Berlin Masters, called me a few weeks after Rundgang (the exam exhibition at the University of the Arts, Berlin) and invited me to exhibit. As the space each student gets for the exam show is fairly limited, I thought it would be a good chance to show a bigger painting. During the last year I worked a lot with Albrecht Dürer paintings – he was born in my home town and you can barely escape his legacy in Nuremberg – so for the exhibition I made the painting *Das seemonster und das mit den horns* "after" Dürer's *Seeungeheuer und das Tier mit den Lamm Hörnern*. I can't fully explain what attracted me to this particular piece; maybe it's because it seems so silly to me but at the same time the way the painting is constructed is also very serious.

And how do the drawings fit in?

Drawing and painting goes always hand in hand in my works. My way of working is pretty spontaneous, but sometimes mistakes can't be undone due to the materials I use. Making drawings gives me a certain practice and helps translate the motive to a bigger format. The drawings would not exist without the painting and the other way around; so it was really important for me to show a few drawings.

"I LOVE HOW RIGOROUS CHILDREN ARE IN THEIR WAY OF DRAWING... WHEN THEY SAY THEY ARE DONE THEY ARE DONE, AND YOU CAN SEE THAT IN EVERY LINE."

From the naive style of your paintings to your sculptures of racecars, there seems to be a recurring interest in childhood in your works. When did this start and what is your interest in this way of working?

I love how rigorous children are in their way of drawing. They're really strict with the beginning and stopping of lines. When they say they are done they are done, and you can see that in every line. That's what I also wish for my work: to work against roles and maybe also disappoint people in a way. There's an obvious failure to obtain perfection, which is what makes them so human and vulnerable.

I wanted to ask you what role influence has on your work. Some pieces remind me very much of the CoBrA abstract painting movement, for instance, and there are other pieces that look like they are directly referencing specific paintings.

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When I am thinking about the artists who have most influenced me so far I would probably have to say that it was people I studied with, artists such as Okka Hungerbühler, Lars Fischer and Thomas Mader. As far as the big names go, I often found the notes and sketches some artists left behind more interesting than their actual pieces. There are a bunch of references in my works that aren't as in your face as the Dürer pieces, but I want to leave it at that. People can figure it out for themselves.

You had an apprenticeship as a car mechanic between 2002-2005. How did you go from fixing cars to pursuing a career as an artist? Are there any similarities between the two professions?

The only similarity that comes in my mind between the two professions is that you always have dirty hands!

I had a really low school level when I was sixteen so there were no other chances for me. It was either be a car mechanic or maybe a hairdresser. After my three years of training I went back to school and did my high school degree with the idea to hopefully go to university one day. I moved to Berlin because getting a high school degree is much easier here, and I had the possibility to take art as a subject. After finishing, Thomas Zipp took me in his class at UDK and supported me a lot with my thoughts and my way of working.

I couldn't help but notice that you have a very big smile on your face in all of the promotional photographs for the Toy Berlin Master's award... What did it mean for you to win?

It is really great that the jury honoured my work. How far the prize will make a difference to my life is hard to say yet, but the money takes away some pressure. On the award day I rented out a small atelier with a good friend. It is a place that needs some work, time and money invested in it and we weren't sure if we can handle the construction work and the rent for a year. A few hours later (when I knew I won) my only thought was... okay now we can rent the place. That made me really happy. But honestly, I was really exhausted on that day: sick, tired and hungry.

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