

STUDIO CRITICAL

A behind the scenes approach to contemporary painting

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*Monologue Interieur II (from the series Monologues interieurs)
oil on canvas, 167 x 167 cm*

What are you working on in your studio right now?

At the moment I'm working on a series of paintings which are composed paintings from different parts. Some of them are assembled to a single work -which I did before- others are arrangements. It is a new development in my search for a clear formulation of what I call 'Synthetic concretism': a synthesis between constructive and expressionist elements in painting.

Can you describe your working routine?

I paint as much as possible, I wake up and go to my studio till late in the evening. I teach art for three days a week.



Can you describe your studio space and how, if at all, that affects your work?

For six years now I have a large studio (90 m²) in an old school-building on the ground floor. The large and high walls in this grand studio give me the opportunity to work at different pieces at the same time. I can view several paintings hanging aside each other. This gives me the opportunity to 'arrange' and study the whole in a quiet surrounding.

Nevertheless I think the picture you want to make is 'in ones mind': in the former, much smaller studio for example I made a painting which was arranged of five panels of 1.50 x 1.50 cm each! (Life, Primal Urge, Love, Art, Death) I couldn't place them next to each other in that small studio, only when it was put on view in the Stedelijk Museum Zwolle I myself saw them for the first time as I had them in mind. Later I made even larger paintings here (4.00 x 1.20 cm.) which could not fully stand up because the ceiling was too low so I painted them on the floor. When they were exhibited I saw the monumental power of it as I meant it to be working.

Since my work developed in a more monumental way -as well in size as image- there was a need for a larger studio, especially high ceilings and long walls. The first grand project in this studio was 'Lost Innocence', it is dedicated to the victims of the Srebrenica Massacre: a painting of 130x130; a painting 'White Flames of Sorrow' 300 x 280 cm.; a triptych 180x450 cm.; a triptych 170x310 cm.; and a triptych 200x420 cm. In this project the subject was a great European tragedy on which I felt an inner need to express myself about it through my work. I worked for two years on it. For the first time I had the space I need for my work. Nevertheless I think concentration and self-criticism are the most important and decisive aspects that counts in an artists work.



Tell me about your process, where things begin, how they evolve etc.

The elements of which I want a painting to be built of, I always have in mind when I start, but I also allow myself the attitude to arrange and play with them in the process of the work. Often comes the idea of a second or third painting/as part of the result. The concept is clear; the formulation of it in real colour, shape, composition is a process.

I usually start with a thin, transparent layer and then look at it with a critical eye: the adventure begins...! I intervene and look again: paint-look-paint again, and look again, at a certain point the elements are on its right place or are near a point of the tension I had in mind for the painting. From that moment on it is the painting itself that tells me how to complete the finishing touch. It's like the birth of an image: I'm always a bit surprised myself, because although you have an idea in mind, you can not be in control of all the effects from what you do. It shows it to you during the process. Balance of colour, shape and size you can never foresee in mind.

What are you having the most trouble resolving?

The most trouble I have, I think is to maintain the distance to my personal affections and dislikes. In a way I consider painting as a schizophrenic action. To create a really true

painting you have to be with yourself, at the same moment it has to speak a universal transcendental language. It takes a long self-critical attitude towards your interventions before you can consider the painting is finished.



*"Composed painting" in the studio, untitled,
oil on canvas, 200 x 290 cm*

Do you experiment with different materials a lot or do you prefer to work within certain parameters?

In the past I worked with different materials, in fact I made assemblages. But for me, as a painter, the restriction of the paint itself is the best way to create a clear image.



*From the project "Lost Innocence",
oil on canvas, 180 x 450cm*

What does the future hold for this work?

I guess the work will evolve in an even more clear formulation but in what direction it grows you never know. I'm working on a painterly solution of the synthesis between constructionist and gestured/expressionist aspects, an integration of these two opposite approaches to a whole. Also I hope that the recognition will bring the work to good exhibitions, after all a painting is a visual thing and it is meant to be shown and seen.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Well Valerie, thanks for the opportunity to express myself on your blog, I think it is a nice initiative that reaches people around the world. Art feeds people and is a great need!: it makes ones mind open and breaks barriers and prejudices and can touch people in a way nothing else can.