

Tell us about yourself. When or how did your interest in art and painting begin?

Being creative, drawing and painting is something that has always been with me – but as a personal thing. I started out as most kids enjoying drawing and playing with paint, and I just never stopped, kept doing it on the side all the time no matter what education or work I was doing at the time. As I got older it developed more and more into a personal way to express myself, and I used to be very insecure and shy about my work. I didn't really consider it "art," and didn't feel comfortable showing it to anyone. But then eventually I did, and slowly I found out that other people got something out of my work as well that I could reach other people through my work. I opened up to the idea of actually being an artist and decided to really work hard to put my work out there and take it very serious.

What first drew me to your paintings was my love for Francis Bacon's paintings. Your paintings are very Baconesque. Was this intentional or unintentional? Is there any artists or bodies of work that have influenced your art?

I realise there is a certain "Baconesque" quality about my work – especially since people like to point it out to me. I mean, I get it – distorted human figures on simplified backgrounds, which on first glance seems similar, but is yet so very different – in theme, technique and "feel." I get other comparisons too – to other well known artists, especially here in Denmark. I think it somehow helps people a little bit to try and define my work, and it is in some way also flattering.

Truth be told it is somewhat of a coincidence. What really set me off into this direction was actually discovering the Surrealism, and the Surrealist movement as a whole. I like to think my inspirations comes from a lot of styles including Surrealism, Futurism, Cubism, etc. Previous to that, I was painting realism, things from nature, i.e. what I could see. Then I got a further bump getting into philosophy in relation to my studies at the university. A lot of artists inspire me. Some of the first to set me of on this journey were Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Wilhelm Freddie – but also artists like Egon Schiele, David Lynch, Friedrich Einhoff and Berlinde De Bruyckere to name a few are inspiring to me. I've looked to a lot of the old masters for technique too. And there is a whole plethora of new and upcoming artists that blow my mind!

Could you describe how you learned or cultivated your aesthetic? Has any sort of schooling or instruction helped enrich your art or repress it?

As far as art I'm self taught, I never went to art school, which in some respects has been instrumental in the way I approach my work process and my techniques. I did however spend a couple of years studying design & pattern development, and then went on to take a degree in computer science and communication at the university of Aalborg DK. I guess you could say that my affinity for reducing the space in my paintings to pure geometry is a residue from the more mathematical aspects of pattern-making. To understand everything as simple forms and reduce it to a bare minimum. As far as my studies at the university, especially the philosophical theories interested and inspired me very much – and really pushed me into what my art has become today. Theories on perception, cognition, the way we relate to and understand the world and each other. In general, due to the way I work, which is all about the process, I believe that anything I ever did or learned in life will somehow affect my work.

What was your childhood like?

I was alone a lot – by choice. I never really took an interest in the kids at my school(s) and after school I preferred my own company most of the time. Which I still do by the way. I would spend hours or whole days alone in the near by forest or just on the floor painting and drawing. I guess other kids saw me sort of as an outsider or weirdo – but I was mostly in my own bubble so I didn't even notice it much. If I was at a classmates birthday party, you would find me alone in front of the bookshelf of the parents, instead of playing with the other kids – that sort of sums it up.

Is there a physical provocation or a particular intense emotion that you are trying to capture in your work through the bodies that you paint?

I don't really see nudity as a provocation, but then again I don't really think of my figures as certain "persons" but rather embodiments or representations of the inner life of those persons. The general emotion or theme in my work all together is loss or confusion of identity with an underlying theme of alienation. To me, in this day and age, everything is in disruption, turbulent and fragmented – and that has a certain effect on the people who live in this world. You could say I'm trying to capture or question the psychological and existential consequences.

The concept of alienation is something I take from myself personally – and the way I use it or comment it differs from work to work (often mixing more than one of these angles in the same painting). In general there are 3 categories I work with: Bodily, Social and Internal alienation. Bodily alienation: thoughts about the concept of bodily integrity – how our bodies are conceived and "felt from the within," how the flesh exists submerged into the world. Where do "I" end and the surroundings start – what is the connection between ego and flesh, etc. Social alienation: Is about feeling alien or strange in social situations and human interaction. Internal alienation: feelings that there are things going on in your (sub)conscious mind that you feel a certain degree dissociation with.

Tell us about your painting process.

I'm not opposed to recreational drug use – drugs, more or less, represent a sort of a vacation from myself – but for me work and play are two different things. I don't do drugs when I'm painting. That doesn't work for me at all – I mean you hear that things like weed is supposed to spur creativity, but it does no such thing for me at all. I do enjoy a good glass of red wine – which works fine for working too as long as I don't get flat out drunk. I really need to be alone when working, I sort of regress to my former ways when painting as I don't like to have anyone around, nor do I like being watched. It's still so very personal for me, I get super shy and inhibited if there are other people around. I always listen to music in the studio, I find it very inspiring and beneficial for my process! I like it to be loud, and yes, I'll even dance around a bit sometimes and it's not pretty (another good reason not to have spectators in the studio).

As far as the process, I always start out with a sketch directly onto the canvas and go from there. I alternate between drawing (using charcoal, crayons, pastels, pencils, etc.) and painting (with brushes, fingers, airbrush, etc.) many, many times in the course of creating a painting. I also like to alternate between and balance the planned and constructed work, where I get very precise and conscious about it and then the much more intuitive approach, where I get a lot more abstract and try to let my subconscious rule. I like to see my work process as a dialogue between myself and the painting – where I harvest the greater part of my inspiration from the actual working on the painting and how it "reacts" to whatever I do to it. The final outcome is the result of this process rather than a planned image – sometimes things go in a very different direction than I thought.

Who are the subjects that you paint?

Most of the time they aren't really "somebody" as such. I tend to think of my subjects as representations of themes and concepts. That being said, I have on occasion used family and friends as models.

Do you think about your audience at all when you paint? Does the audience, to a certain degree, dictate your work because of your identifiable marks as an artist; does the anticipated reception of your work influence its direction?

I honestly don't think much about my audience when I paint – and sometimes, if a little thought like "is this too much?" does sneak in I try to remind myself that as an artist you should never fear to be absolutely ridiculously out there. If I was interested in what a potential audience would or would not like I would do something "pretty." By going down the road I have, I automatically and very effectively have cut off a big potential audience. But I have to "do me" – for me, creating art is both something very intimate and personal yet very public – and I need to feel that I personally pour myself into it or I wouldn't do it. I also continue to develop my technique and style – so even though you can say I have "identifiable marks as an artist" these are also developing organically over the years and changing.

Tell us about your fondness for Rick Owens and fashion. Does that influence your art?

That's a first as far as interview questions! I don't know if I'd call it an obsession but yes I confess, I really do enjoy the aesthetic of Rick Owens; not just the clothes, but also the furniture, which I'll probably never be able to afford. I love the brutal minimalism and the understated, yet very luxurious feel. My initial career idea was actually in the clothing business, studying pattern making and teaching drawing at design school – so fashion does have a certain place in my heart. But it is only recently that I have even been able to really afford garments like that, which is a huge luxury that I immensely enjoy! I do think there is a certain connection between my fondness of his vision and my own art & personality but I wouldn't say my clothes affect my art... more like the other way around. My art reflects in the kind of clothes I like to wear. As far as Rick Owens, I just love the silhouette, how proportions are manipulated and distorted. The perversion and abstraction of well-known artifacts and the numerous references to uniforms, regal clothing, fetish and street wear is really right up my alley. Also the fact that it isn't a completely different aesthetic, a crowd pleasing newness each season, but a slow and organic evolution is very appealing.

What is your vision of the world?

The world is a pretty complex, fragmented and confusing place – filled with people who are way too busy and stressed out trying to keep up.