

IN THE REALM OF OTHERS MAKERS

Eden Kötting

I like drawing because it makes me feel good. It makes me feel big and I am happy when I am drawing. I like people looking at my paintings and my drawings. I like writing on my drawings.

Neville Jermyn

What sort of things can you draw without seeing them?

I think snakes. Yeah. Tony, I drew a picture of a snake once didn't I?

You did.

Yeah. It was a grass snake, wasn't it?

That's right.

A grass snake.

And if I remember rightly that was a dream – that was a drawing about a dream you had.

That's right. Yeah.

Do you sometimes draw your dreams or was that just once?

No. That was just once. Yeah. Just once.

Paul Colley

You can tell us when you want to do something and when you want to stop but you don't use language to communicate this. Instead, you gently push a hand away or stand up and leave the studio. When working you like intensive interaction and eye contact especially with people you like in the studio.

Michelle Roberts

What do you prefer using, pen or paint?

Sometimes pen... sometimes paint

Does it depend on how you are feeling?

Yes

Where did the idea come from?

My head...remembered...

looking in a book...

remembered

Where do the images come from?

looking, book...look, scissors... put it in my bag



Untitled (Jungle) Darryl Spencer, 2008 (detail)

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

Generally speaking there were two kinds of Zen painters in traditional Japan: painters who became monks and monks who, for whatever reason, took up painting. The former would have undergone an extensive training over many years under the strict guidance of a master, their work characterised by a dexterity with the brush and gradated black ink together with an exquisite compositional finesse. The latter would have little or no formal training whatsoever but would take up painting from impulse, out of a sense of inner necessity. We would probably regard them as amateurs. Their work, though at times achieving remarkable levels of skill, was more often characterised by a certain charming ineptness, cack-handedness might be a better term. Their paintings may usefully be compared to a tea ceremony bowl in all its' wonkiness, cracked raku glazing and accidental imperfections that were, and indeed still are, held in high regard. Nevertheless, both types of practitioners shared certain values; the qualities of directness, spontaneity and unselfconsciousness; above all, their works displayed a use of materials that came to be known as '*the way of the brush*', or, as one western commentator aptly described it, *the*

uninhibited brush. The use of the term '*way*' hints at the absorption of Taoist influences in all matters Zen. In this value system the painter is submissive to the calligraphic possibilities of the brush and ink (no distinction was made between writing and painting as both were done with the brush).

But one could just as readily call it '*the way of the ink*' and it is indeed this understanding that can be identified in western, particularly American, Abstract Expressionist painters of the 1940's and 50's, and in Europe in the works of the so-called 'Action' painters. In these works the brush is merely one of many means by which pigment is conveyed to a surface: it may be dripped, dribbled and poured in dance-like, rhythmic skeins of paint such as by Jackson Pollock or the human body itself may be used as a means of mono-printing the canvas surface with paint as in the work of Yves Klein in France. This is not as crazy or as unprecedented as it sounds: the great Japanese artist, Hokusai, in a public display of his painting and imaginative skill, took a rooster, dipped its' feet in red paint and had it walk across a swath of blue pigment producing, to the delight of his audience, *Maple-Leaves on the Tatsuta River*. In all cases the expressive possibilities of the medium are explored unconditionally and without prejudice, the outcome validates the '*way*'.

Many of the works in this exhibition, to my mind, belong in this tradition in that they convey a sense of spontaneity, directness, unselfconsciousness and above all, 'being in the moment', the 'now'. I hope I'm forgiven by all Zen practitioners for my drastic over-simplifications but it seems to me that the works on show share



Untitled (black, white & yellow) Paul Colley and Cherry Lane, 2011

something of the spirit which I have tried to describe. What we have here is '*the way of the paint*' or the '*way of the felt-marker*', '*the way of the paint-pen*' or whatever the chosen medium. These image-makers, for I hesitate to call them artists because I'm not sure whether they are or not, demonstrate a natural and instinctive use of their chosen medium and are at one with their materials. Just as water will always find its' way, so these makers find theirs. As for whether it's art, I would suspect the question would be as meaningless to them as ornithology is to birds and that, for me, is what makes the images refreshingly powerful as traces of a moment or moments, when time and space and the self collapse, when an image is brought forth which enables us to actively retrace, to recreate and vicariously participate in something of that creative moment. Some paintings may convey a sense of contemplative quiet whilst others fizzle with energetic excitement, either way the makers have been encouraged, by means of empathetic and experienced guidance, to discover '*their way*' through the uninhibited and unhindered exploration of their preferred medium. This is the way of Project Art Works.

Tony Colley. September 2015

Notes on the studio installation

We express our individuality through the choices we make. In creative interactions these choices are about materials and their qualities such as the colour and viscosity of paint, variations in surfaces, and the volumes and arrangement of spaces. Through its emphasis on the practical the exhibition studio sessions valorize the creative agency of all those involved. The installation environment frames a context for communication that encourages understanding and empathy between audiences and groups of people who may have little or no experience of one another.

The studio installation is reconfigurable at will by the makers and artists to give them control over how they interact with public audiences within the exhibition environment.

Project Art Works' exhibition team:

Curators: Kate Adams and David Rhodes
Installation design: Kate Adams, Tim Corrigan, David Rhodes, Sara Dare
Films: *Modus Operandi* and *No Church in the Wild* – Tim Corrigan
Sound design: films and installations – Marley Cole
Exhibition participation logistics: Sarah Locke
Communications: Matthew Pitts
Finance and Operations: Wendy Routley
Evaluation: Caroline Sell, Matthew Pitts, Kate Adams
Archivist: Leila McMillan
Build technician: Olly Adams
Studio space –
Lead artists: Tim Corrigan, Sara Dare, Annis Joslin, Rachel Hine
Artists: Mark Daniels, Caroline Sell, Patricia Finnegan