

ACHENBACH HAGEMEIER

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presents

STRANGERS TO OURSELVES

JON PILKINGTON / ROY MORDECHAY

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Opening 7 September 2017, 6 – 9 pm

A conversation between Jon and Roy.

Jon: Hey Roy, good morning from Copenhagen.

Roy: Hey Jon, good afternoon from Düsseldorf.

Jon: Just got to the studio now, nice cycle in the sun. A rare change. Let's talk painting... How has the process been leading up to the show?

Roy: Sounds refreshing! I'm on my way to the immigration office to prolong my Visa, a little less refreshing! I feel that everything is getting there for our show.

Jon: Ah yes, I know that feeling, the long drawn process. We've made a few of those trips to International services.

How is it working in Germany, how do you think the residency and the continuation in Düsseldorf influenced the works?

I think it's coming together too. There is an energy in the studio now, a buzz ready for the works to leave. A rounded feeling almost, the works are talking and playing off each other.

Roy: That's great to hear! Being here influenced me dramatically. For the first time in my life I'm a foreigner, it's a completely different state of mind, full of constant reflection upon my life and origin. Of course into my works, I think you can see it in both of our works.

Jon: I agree, what about Germany in general? The weather, the people? Do you feel at home?

You are right, all the things that were once "normal" shift. I feel completely settled now and Denmark feels like home, despite still learning daily and getting used to slight differences.

Even sourcing materials change, new considerations. Feels refreshing to just up and start over. New routines, people, friends, colleagues. New bars quite importantly.

This has all fed into the work somehow, it feels like there is more balance in my mind. More time if that makes sense. It no longer takes 1.5 hours by tube in London to reach the studio.

That's refreshing.

Roy: I'm completely with you. Though this journey started without plans, the idea that attracted me so much, was to extend my horizon and to be a little bit distant from my origin. That gives me perspective.

I love a sentence I saw from Clemente when he was asked about living in three places (India, USA and Italy). He answered that "He loves the feeling of longing, when he is in India he longs for Italy, whenever he is in Italy, he misses New York"... I think it's a strong engine.

I feel good here and it feels like home. Of course it's a different state of mind, coming from a very intense country which is in a constant state of struggle and conflicts. So the question of identity and origin is existential. I think that the stay here made it sharper for me to react on it in my work, even though my works are not at all so called political.

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It's interesting what you are saying about materials! For me it was a radical change. Change of sizes, types of materials, colours and I can really follow the process since it started. Another radical change is the weather which has also changed my works. Here I deal more within the studio, in Tel Aviv it was more about being outside, you would spend much more time outside.

Jon: Very true, we are always searching for things that are close or familiar, yet we seem to distance ourselves in some way.

I feel there are nods or references in both of our works to Clemente. It could be the free floating figurative suggestions or maybe a sadistic and sarcastic undertone.

I believe it now takes me less time physically making works, because I have more hours in the day to think. That is something I have to thank Copenhagen for.

It's like an adopted schedule.

Roy: I love the sadistic and sarcastic undertone :) Great observation Jon!

Yeah I guess it's hard to find and adopt a schedule in London.

Jon: I think so too, you kind of just float.

Cool in some way, but time feels like it runs away faster.

Roy: Oh time! I think it's also a very interesting aspect in both our works. Seems like they deal with time in a dreamy and fragmental way, doesn't it?

Jon: Yes! This separation or reaction. Kind of appears collage but it isn't.

This is hard to convey, that paintings aren't born from collage but from fragments of memory that begin with drawings.

It's important that the drawings are shown, it conveys a direct honesty that is sometimes lost in painting. Just due to the nature of the material.

Roy: From the first moment, I thought about our drawings as a key or a gate to our show. They contain a core in both of our practice I feel.

Jon: It's a way in.

They carry loose connotations within the paintings.

It's nice to see a simple line or shape over and over again until the motif becomes redundant. There becomes an authority and ownership with that.

Tell me more about the sculptures... I am looking forward to see how they operate in the space.

Roy: Me too, I'm looking forward to it. I see the sculptures/objects crucial to activate the rooms, to "glue" them to the paintings and the space, in order to play with the space and it's possible context, as a former apartment.

I felt a strong sense of blurred definition to it and found it challenging to work with and to use it as a playful interplay between 2D and 3D.

Jon: Yes, I'm interested in this domestic approach. The sculptures almost play as furniture or belongings in the apartment. This changes the way the works are read, different conversations.

Roy: Exactly! The works themselves, feel like familiar interior objects. Like furniture, a plant or a boxing sack. They lose those clear definitions due to a sort of abstraction. The materials I use play the main role, wood leftovers that I have carved, displayed in a plaster wall box standing on wood legs, it's like handicapped objects. I see it in an almost human way :) Also the stones that I've used for the banana plant, which I have carved the Superman logo into. At the end of the day I see them as an extension of painting. It has an interplay that breaks the pureness and heroic, a potential painting may have. I hope this makes sense to you :)

I'm just thinking now that the objects are echoing upon themselves, Strangers to themselves.

Also perhaps your paintings have a strong sense of echo, right?

Jon: Certainly, definitely makes sense.

It's like when the paintings spill out, kind of becomes awkward or unfamiliar. Yet very familiar.

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I like how robust the sculptures feel and look.

Roy: Are you working from specific references? Or all from memory and imagination or intuition?

Jon: Mainly from 18th Century Staffordshire figurines.

I make quick sketches that references the form etc. These shapes find their way into the works and the motifs recur. Over and over, so it becomes almost like memory, kind of like riding a bike. You never forget.

Roy: That's a nice surprise! It has a humorous side to it. This little home decor figurines. I guess they would belong to the bourgeois?

I like the fact that both of our works are very much influenced by objects at first, then translated to 2D.

The way the images are filtered and integrated in the painting field becomes fluid, almost environmental and dreamy.

Jon: It has this sculptural reference, but on a very domestic scale.

These small figurines lend so well with their loopy forms. Kind of sloppily painted and dysfunctional in appearance. They are enlarged, cropped, scaled down and repeated over multiple canvases. The colours are kind of nasty, jarring and clunky. These are all the things that I try to bring through.

Roy: Yeah it appears very strongly. Like a sort of zoom in and out puzzle.

Jon: There are these Dog figurines which take on strange tales.

One story is that a woman could place the ornaments in her front window; if the dogs were turned back to back, it meant her husband was at home. If he was away or at sea, the dogs would be placed facing each other. When her lover passed the house, he would know by the way the dogs were facing, whether it was safe for him to visit her without her husband knowing...

I like this kind of power or position these figures once held. I have been trying to buy some for a while but they are from the 18th Century so without cracks and repairs they become very expensive.

Roy: You definitely somehow have to get one! :)

Jon: Will find the right one, one day!!

Roy: I like this idea of hidden narratives. How strong fiction dictates our life through big ethos or small private mythologies. I guess it's one of my biggest engines.

Jon: I like that too, the small symbols or signifiers that you carry with you throughout life.

Roy: Exactly! How bigger stories melt into our personal life. Filtering their ways.

I'm so happy that the gallery space is a former apartment. It has such a strong feeling of hidden history.

Jon: This kind of concourse, passage through almost. How the rooms weave and turn into the next. It's secretive. This allows us to play on various things without it becoming clumsy or confusing.

Roy: I agree, it will be a challenge to find the right balance.

Jon: Scale will be important. We have the drawings, the painted wall, sculptures and paintings. It could be one big play on the apartment.

Roy: True. I have a good feeling :) Especially after this chat we found out in a deeper way why by intuition David & Anna saw common ground.

We still haven't met, that's funny.

Jon: Exactly, in many ways we were strangers to each other. Playing off a visual. Now we know each other's trail of thought, I think there will be a nice link up.

Look forward to meet :) See you in Düsseldorf

Roy: Very soon! Me too!! Will be fun!