

Art of Collage

Nancy Egol Nikkal's Views on Art, Artists & the Fine Art of Collage



Adam Handler: Solo Art Exhibition March 13, 2011

EXCITABLE BOY: PAINTINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS by Adam Handler

This post is an interview (long and in-depth) with a very talented young artist having a solo exhibition at Media Loft Gallery in New Rochelle, NY. The show is titled EXCITABLE BOY (March 13-May 7, 2011) and includes 31 works: large format photographs, large mixed media photocollage paintings, photos of family and friends, paintings on canvas, collage and sculpture.

The opening reception is Sunday, March 13th from 2-6 pm. The closing reception is Saturday, May 7th from 4-6 pm. If you cannot attend the opening or closing receptions, gallery hours are by appointment. Visit Media Loft online for directions and to contact Adam Handler by email for for an appointment to see the exhibition at another time.

The image below is an installation view of the front gallery with 2 large photos and a sculpture by Adam Handler (photo © Christopher Lovi).

Adam Handler's website includes the following Artist Statements:

I strive for originality, but will never forget the influences that played a part in creating these paintings. I hope to entice various generations with the subject matter while exposing it in a way that has never been done before.

I interviewed Adam for this post and think his comments are as compelling and original as his work in the exhibition. The show is worth the trip to see in person.

CHARACTER AND ARTISTIC FREEDOM

Adam Handler wrote:

Mid-twentieth century America, Vietnam, the British Invasion, Andy Warhol's simplistic commercial Campbell's soup cans have long enticed me. To me, this era always depicted character and artistic freedom, liberation from "the man."

Though I was born in the 1980's, I have often speculated how the feelings and emotions that conflicted the youth then continue to remain relevant today.

That era in particular spurred my interests to create paintings that captured the rebellious energy of the time, while transforming the imagery into contemporary works that relate to my generation. Contemporary politics and economics, social interactions, views on love, life, and death are all compressed into my mixed media works. In many of the pieces you will notice small sayings or sexual innuendos – mostly taken from advertisements – inspired by the Dada poets at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. For me, using written words alongside commercial imagery and contrasting it with rapid brushstrokes and intense color create a modern scene that allows for the viewer to create their own personal interpretive narrative.
© 2011, Adam Handler



Robert Motherwell Elegy to the Spanish Republic, 70 (1961)

MY INTERVIEW

The artist statement (above), website, Saatchi online, PS 1 Studio Visit, and the slideshow at ArtSlant helped me develop the outline for the interview that follows.

Q: You say you are inspired by the artists Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, and say Robert Rauschenberg is an artistic hero to you.

In what ways do you think Robert Motherwell (American 1915-1991) inspires your work?

AH: Motherwell truly inspired me when I saw my first Spanish Elegy painting; I believe it was at the MET. What inspired me about this work was something much more subtle. The way Motherwell would take these large imposing expanses of black and then use small variations

of color to accentuate his powerful abstractions inspired much of my current work. For instance, in the painting "Hung," in the Media Loft exhibition you can see how I outline the main female figure with pinks and whites; if you look closely at this piece you can see Motherwell's presence.

ELEGY to the SPANISH REPUBLIC, 70 (seen above) is by Robert Motherwell. It's oil on canvas, 69 x 114 inches (1961) and is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, NY (photo: the internet).

The image below is by Handler and titled HUNG. It's a mixed media photo with paint, 30x40 inches. The artist says this work was inspired by Robert Motherwell's Elegy painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Do you see the connection?

Q: This exhibition includes almost no collages. In addition to his paintings, Robert Motherwell made collages. I saw your solo exhibition last year at the Bendheim Gallery in



Adam Handler, hung

Gallery in Greenwich, CT and you included many collages and photocollage paintings. Did you stop making collage?

AH: As an artist, I go back and forth between mediums. One month I will work only on collages, and then for the next six months I may work only on photographs. I really am not sure what forces an artist to change mediums or focus on different disciplines. Currently, I'm been experimenting with video which is all very new and exciting.

PHOTOS SLASHED WITH PAINT

Q: Why are your photos slashed with paint?

AH: Many of my photos are slashed with paint because the photograph was taken with the intention that paint would be added. Sometimes I'll see something which, on it's own, would be a boring photograph but when paint is added I'm able to alter the context and confuse people, which in turn creates something original and unique.

The image below, titled Happy Birthday Buttercup, is a photo and painting (presented in a glorious gold leaf frame). It's 10 x 10 inches.



Adam Handler, Happy Birthday Buttercup

Q: Do you have a special process that's unique to your work?

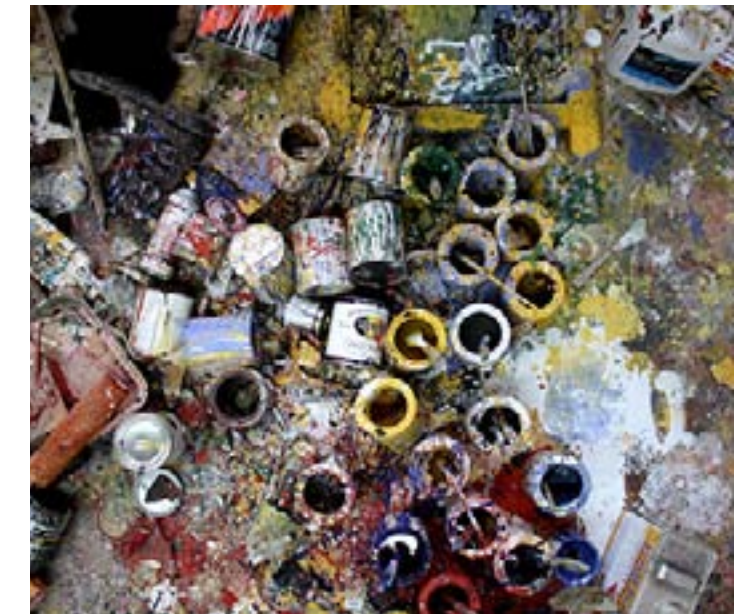
AH: I wouldn't say there's anything particularly unique about my process other than I hardly ever have a planned idea. I guess you can say I'm a "go with the flow artist." My work is about spontaneity and whatever happens, happens; I guess you can say this might be a Surrealist/Dada way of working.

Q: Do you work at a table or an easel, on the floor or on the wall?

AH: Hahaha, I would have to say all of the above. I've splattered paint of every surface I know. From the wall to my car, to my kitchen.

Q: Is your studio clean or cluttered? Does its condition affect your work?

AH: My studio is extremely cluttered and messy. It affects my work in the sense that when I step into my studio it's as if I am literally a drip of paint on canvas.



Adam Handler, Photo of his studio

Q: Talk about your studio. Is it located in a community of artists?

AH: My studio is located in Long Island City, NY. It's a very industrial area which has a personality and feel all its own. My studio is located in the back of a 12,000 square foot custom framing factory, which is owned by my grandparents.

Q: *Talk about your studio. Is it located in a community of artists?*

AH: My studio is located in Long Island City, NY. It's a very industrial area which has a personality and feel all its own. My studio is located in the back of a 12,000 square foot custom framing factory, which is owned by my grandparents.

Q: *Has the neighborhood and the location had any effect on your work?*

AH: I don't think the location has had an affect on my work. I guess I don't know because I never painted anywhere else.

Q: *Are you part of an artist's community in LIC? Please describe it.*

AH: No, I am not part of an art community per se. Since I work in a custom framing factory, I am constantly talking and discussing art with gallery owners, dealers and fellow artists.

Q: *MAX'S KANSAS CITY was a place for artist, musicians, poets and politicians to hang out in the 1960s and 1970s. Is there a place like MAX'S that you and young artists go to talk art?*

AH: No, I don't have any hangout where I chill with other artists. It would be cool, but I feel that artists today are much more solitary then the 60's.

Q: *What kinds of paints do you use? Do you have a favorite color?*

AH: I use many different types of paints. I've probably experimented with everything on the market from acrylics, oils, enamel, watercolors, Japan color, etc.

I usually do have favorite colors, but they come in phases. One month I'll love blues, right now I've been into very pale pinks and light greens.

Q: *What do your colors convey?*

AH: My colors usually convey a feeling or an emotion. If I want a painting to feel modern and clean, I'll use more

black and white. If I want a painting to feel airy and light, I'll use pale blues and subtle pinks.

Q: *How do you describe your media? Do you call your works paintings? Photographs? Mixed media?*

AH: I describe each of my works separately. For instance, I will call a photograph with paint, a painted photograph. When painting with collage paper, I'll describe the separate medias. For instance, "oil, wax and paper collage on canvas."

Q: *Do you take (and do you print) your own photographs? Is your studio set up with photo equipment?*

AH: I take all my own photographs with the exception of various collage works; in that case, I use magazine articles and such. I do print my own photographs, however am restricted by the size I can print.



Adam Handler, My Friends, My Habits, My Family

For my larger prints, 20x30, 30x40, 40x60 inches, I use professional printers. I do collage photos and actually some of my most recent work, such as "My Friends, My Habits, and My Family" in the Media Loft show bears this technique. This work is large format and 40x60 inches.

Q: *Your website shows you also work in sculpture. The works are expressive, vfigurative and made with clay. Why clay? Do the paintings relate to the sculptures?*

AH: I started off sculpting in college, experimenting with marble, wood and clay. I worked with clay for the closeness it allowed me with each work. My sculptures really don't relate to my paintings in any way.

The DADA INFLUENCE on your work

Dada was a cultural movement that began in Zurich, Switzerland during World War I, and peaked by 1916 to 1922. It laid the groundwork for abstract art, performance art, postmodernism, and is still an influence in today's art world.

Q: *Your artist statement mentions Dada and the Cabaret Voltaire. In what ways does Dada inspire you?*

AH: What inspired me about Dada was not so much the art itself but the idea behind the art; the freedom of self expression and passion and sometimes absurdity that made this movement a breath of fresh air to me.

Q: *How is your subject matter contemporary for your generation (if it also harks back to an earlier time)?*

AH: I am not really sure how my work is considered contemporary. I know that I'm contemporary for being a young artist currently producing work, but other than that I just don't know.

Q: *What response do you want viewers to have to your works?*

AH: From my viewers I want intense reactions; whether they are overwhelming good or bad, I want them to really feel the work. Way too often I see exhibitions where people walk out the same way they walked in, which sucks! Art legally allows us to introduce people to a new world. It allows for us to offend or inspire in the confines of a room.

Q: *You say Robert Rauschenberg was an art hero to you. His work was about performance and participation. How do you want your work installed and how do you want viewers to participate with your work?*

AH: I love playing around with hanging a show and experimenting with different lighting, but sometimes you need a good curator to understand and lay out your visio on the wall.

Q: *You talk about originality. What do you mean? Do you believe an artist can be original in the 21st century, in a media saturated world?*

AH: Being original in the 21st century seems nearly impossible, but I do believe it's possible; I have to! I need to believe that there are still ideas and subject matter, poses, paintings, photographs that the world has not seen.

Q: *How can an artist make subject matter excitable?*

AH: I believe an artist can create "excitable" subject matter if they stay true to themselves. As long as your art reflects your life, personality, relationships, etc, you will be one of a kind.

Q: *You say you want to expose subject matter in a way that has never been done before. How will you expose it?*

AH: I expose my subject through my close personal relationships with my family, my friends, my fiancé, my cat (haha). Much of my work is based on my life, my dreams, and my fantasies. I find if you let yourself be vulnerable through your art people can see something that's new, exciting and overwhelmingly personal.

I want to thank Adam again for being so real and personal, and hope every person who read the interview felt they got to know more about the artist and the ideas that inspire his work.

Please note images belong to the artist, so you may not copy without permission or credit to Adam Handler, and also note this interview is © 2011, Nancy Ego! Nikkal.

SOURCE: <https://artofcollage.wordpress.com/2011/03/13/adam-handler-solo-art-exhibition/>