

The Coincidence Gallery presents

Why Paint Like That? #1

An Exhibition of Paintings and Sculptures
curated by Gisli Bergmann and Patrick Bryson

At Winns Gallery,
Lloyd Park, E17 5JW

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Why Paint Like That? #1

Welcome to the latest exhibition of paintings and sculptures curated by The Coincidence Gallery. This show brings together the work of ten mature artists and aims to generate a dialogue, whether internal or external, between the works, the viewer and the artists, asking and hopefully gaining insight into simple questions as to why each of

the artists create work in their unique way, and how did they get where they are today?

You will find some answers, and no doubt many more questions, in the following text and, through the transcribed interviews. You will get glimpses into the worlds that artists inhabit which provide depth, meaning and discovery to their lives.

Speaking of art

An excerpt from a dialogue between Patrick Bryson and Gisli Bergmann, founders of the Coincidence Gallery

Patrick Bryson: The Coincidence Gallery was born out of collaboration, discussion, and the necessity to exhibit our own and others' work together.

We engage in dialogue about contemporary art and its relationship with the world. This includes the theoretical aspects of art making but we are more interested in exploring, as the title of this show posits, what are artists doing, what are they looking for and finding, and why?

The name came from a coincidence during the 2021 E17 Art Trail when I visited Gisli Bergmann's studio. We instantly struck up a dialogue that hasn't stopped since. The

term reflects life's twists and turns that create opportunities for creative expression, discovery and engagement with life.

Coincidence is a devalued term, but it actually means the co-existence of multiple interacting factors, events and occasions. The very essence of the creative process. It also conveys value, significance born of hard work, and focus. Coincidence represents the aspect of creativity generated through engagement, time, and seizing the moment. It contradicts the idea of a random universe, suggesting a directionality in the creative process.

Gisli Bergmann: Where did your journey in art begin?

PB: My earliest memories, are of two key events. Firstly, at three years old, my father, a farmer, gave me a small toy tractor in primary colours, a visual memory that has taken

on almost mystical significance and has stayed with me my whole life, as he died soon after this.



Patrick Bryson
'Mega Maha Metta'
123 x 150cm, Acrylic
& paper on panel,
2024

Secondly, I was mesmerized by the stained glass windows in our local church, with sunlight streaming through, projecting beautiful colours across the space and congregation. These experiences were formative, shaping my interest in colour and form.

In secondary school, I realised the distinction between being good at art and being committed, prompting me to develop myself. This continued into art school, where I faced the reality, and excitement of what it could mean to be an artist.

Language of being

I think that as significant as it obviously is, the Renaissance, often seen as the pinnacle of art, created misconceptions about the purpose of art, causing inferiority complexes about being good or not. I freed myself from these restrictions, realising that the creative process is about uncovering and

discovering, and has very little, for most of us, about 'being good' at drawing etc.

I explored Eastern religions and meditation in order to have experiences beyond the confined mental state I was in at the time.

This helped develop deeper understanding and skills, highlighting the power of intuition in the creative process. Art, for me, is about dealing with the 'too-muchness' of life, and helps develop my language, the language of being alive, escaping a dualistic mindset that can trap us into viewing everything, including ourselves in painful polarities, that are the foundation for suffering and conflict.

So Gisli, how have you arrived at the way you currently produce your work?

GB: I've been drawing since childhood. After secondary school, I chose art school, influenced by a friend's shared experiences. Art school felt comforting and enjoyable, but it wasn't until after that I began to understand what I was doing. My identity as an immigrant became clearer after a trip back to my homeland, Iceland. Art helped me survive and gave me an escape from potentially destructive paths.

PB: How was art a positive force for you?

GB: Exploring painting and sculpture, attending lectures, and reading allowed me to dive deep into art. After art school,

I continued investigating abstraction and contemporary art. Therapy revealed deeper issues from my childhood, leading to a series of paintings about my sister and myself.

During Covid, I returned to painting and found confidence in my work, particularly developments in abstraction.

Falling apart

One thing important to me as an abstractionist is the organization of my paintings. I push them to the point where they almost fall apart. This dynamic process is exciting and real. Sometimes, decisions are so nerve-wracking that I stop

Gisli Bergmann
'Neighbours Talk,
Conflict Ensues'
120 x 140cm,
Paper & acrylic
on panel,
2010-24



breathing momentarily, then I step back to see if the painting has managed to achieve a kind of 'agency'.

Discoveries come from previous episodes of exploration stored within. It becomes an instinct. I've always been interested in understanding without over-rationalising.

Maintaining relevance

The connection between

life and work is intertwined and significant. The task is to maintain relevance and keep going despite modernism's short-lived period. We've inherited a profound connection to art's history, and understanding and maintaining this relevance is crucial.

PB: The contemporary art narrative often suggests our choices have been stripped away, as in 'painting is dead' but I find this absurd. Art isn't less relevant now in spite of the challenges raised to its prominence. Each artist is questioned by history on how to frame the relevance of their work.

Explosion of possibilities

Modernism dramatically changed art, exploded the possibilities, and now we have more choices, more avenues.

I question the authority dictating how art should be. The dialogue about outsider art and work by people with brain injuries shows that art's purpose isn't constrained by art world philosophies. Their art is profound, authentic, free, and expressive.

The direct experience of creativity fuels the importance of art, not just the existence of the artistic historical record.

GB: Abstract art frees us from the need to represent while allowing ambiguous links to representation. Identifying patterns in abstraction raises questions about recognition and its meaning.

It's about understanding the profound way we make connections between ourselves, others, and life itself, through the creative process.

When a piece feels right, it's like discovering an order within the painting that reflects something important. This involves trusting yourself, letting go, and allowing things to fall apart without adhering too much to a critical voice.

PB: On the topic of fin-

ished work, I often think about continuously painting over a single canvas, as a metaphor for our lives work all being one continuous stream.

GB: I once worked with an artist who continued painting on one canvas to the extent that he could hardly lift it, but it became a way to free himself to continue with other works.

We pause the conversation there :).

Babble



EC

'Mondrian's Disco Ball'
100 x 100cm, Acrylic,
oil, household gloss on
paper, cardboard and
canvas (on stretcher),
2023

EC: In the 90's I was studying natural form from macrocosm to microcosm (via my photography and research), chaos theory, the golden section and

maths in nature and architecture. Information seemed to bifurcate and cross pollinate with other 'subjects' in a continuous, unfurling stream.

Research led from architecture and maths to magic and superstition about maths and the cultures it thrived in whilst we were still counting sheep by twisting bits of twine together. It was a rich seam of information that wasn't anti play or at odds with making. I'm saying this as a chal-

lenge to that meaningless phrase some will repeat, as if hypnotised by it - "cold and intellectual".

Now I would say that there is a 'letting go' where learned material, visual energies are 'reorganised' within an improvisational and intuitive act. I work with no 'image' in mind and it could be said my work is 'non relational'. My work can appear to be on cusps of collapse or 'chaotic'.

Decisions about how far to push a painting over, the visual anchors, rhythms etc that hold the eye, or leave it wandering, are often fast decisions made with slow work. I make work to make work. 'Flat' abstract paintings are broken up and brought into one another until I find something. These are paintings or 'constructed paintings', not *collage* as some would call them.

In my interest in the ugly and the beautiful I often treat colour quite crudely, not often mixing them. The fragments of paintings and their juxtapositions become a kind of mixing. The brush marks (and other types of 'mark') get broken up by my ripping paintings up. I arrange these on another (under)painting.

I'll often work with qualitatively different paintings so there can be quite a clash or crash sometimes. The cut off, disrupted marks create a new kind of "mark" that is both inherent to the fragment but also the fragment itself acts as a mark. Everything is in motion yet the flow is interrupted by the act of tearing, only to be integrated into a 'new' flow. (John Dewey discusses this at length in his book "Art as Experience").

The work begins in earnest when complexity comes in, when I've made a problem for myself in the studio. I don't believe 'less is more' or in things 'working' in any facile sense. In more recent years I've been pushing myself to see how much content I can 'get in'; how much complexity I can wrestle with.

Experience is too often described with a Cartesian kind of splitting which brings about hierarchical structures. This denies the cross pollinating nature of cognition and human experience. Some people fall apart when ambiguity

is in the room but I'm 'all for it'. I'm a big fan of incoherence and things falling apart.

The schisms and leaps within my work are part of a conscious pursuit that has come about slowly, through a discontent with "good" abstract painting. It's become a commodity in a shop; an illustration of itself. (Terry Atkinson described abstraction as having become an "illustration" of itself. I'd agree.) That doesn't mean just give up though - not to me. It's part of the challenge.

My approach can mirror Psychoanalytical ideas about the unconscious, transitional space, conflict within wholeness and the idea that we over-edit our imaginations. As Adam Phillips once wrote, "the problem with direction is that so much must be excluded." I think about this visually.

We live in a world that respects and values direction, coherence, narrative, 'aboutness', good taste etc and I am kind of working against this.

Understanding the world

Alfredo Cristiano: For me, it started as a seven year-old in primary school. I wasn't excelling in much, but I could draw. Mr. Holden, my teacher, commented on a drawing of a bird I made. His encouragement, even though I was poor at other subjects, planted a seed. I felt rewarded for the first time and decided I had to be an artist. Throughout my school years, art was the only thing driving me forward, despite not knowing anyone who did it or having examples in my family.



Alfredo Cristiano
'Mostly or
Something'
42 x 30cm, Acrylic
& household paint
on panel,
2024

Lining it up

Another pivotal moment was in college. I struggled with sketchbooks, but my teacher, Mr. Napper, suggested using a lined notebook to write in. It allowed a voice to develop in my work.

The notebooks were mostly writing. Even today, my sketchbook equivalent is a notebook, where I jot down ideas, often maps to galleries. I had an interesting conversation with my son about the periodic table, which made me reflect on my understanding of the world through art. Just as he explained the periodic table to

me, I feel a similar wonder and connection when looking at art, like standing in front of a Willem de Kooning show and understanding the textures and presence.

Acts of generosity

The process of making art is vulnerable and risky. Sharing our work, despite not always thinking it's good enough, is an act of generosity. Writing about exhibitions and sharing those experiences is part of this generosity. The dialogue and exchange that occur through art continue the work beyond the studio.

Writing as drawing

They indeed come from the same place. I struggle with mechanical writing but feel connected when writing with a pen. The writing process is intuitive, similar to drawing.

I then did an undergraduate degree at the Polytechnic of Wolverhampton. When I got there, I was thrilled because the seed planted when I was seven had led me to art school.

Post Wolverhampton I got on an American exchange program, at the University of Alfred in upstate New York. Later I returned to the US, and did a Master's degree at the University of Delaware.

Making and connecting

Delaware was a small town with a strong university presence. There weren't great connections with the outside art world, so I started writing postcards to artists I admired, like Robert Irwin, Tim Rollins, Laurie Anderson, and others. Ray Johnson even sent me a package with his famous rabbit stamp. These interactions made me feel connected to the art world.

After two years, I returned to England and London to be closer to the art world. For a while, I didn't have a studio and focused on text-based work, writing a piece of text every day for nearly 10 years.

Evidence of wonderment

Eventually, I returned to painting, finding abstraction to be a compelling way to express my thoughts and experiences.

Abstraction allows me to process wonderment and describe my experiences without creating self-portraits. It's about capturing moments where I've been present. The process of painting feels like giving evidence of my existence and the importance of the creative act.

Each piece encourages me to move forward, constantly seeking new expressions and connections.

Sharing my work, whether through exhibitions or conversations, extends the creative process. It's an act of generosity that invites others to

connect and engage. The dialogue that follows continues the work beyond the studio. Looking and listening become intertwined, fostering a generous exchange of ideas.

Flowing and not knowing

When I'm in the flow of painting, I often don't know what I'm doing, but it feels like the most authentic version of myself. The act of creating, without judgment, allows me to be fully present. It's a unique contentment, different from other joys in life, like holding a loved one's hand or tucking in the kids. It's a quiet, magical moment where the world seems to disappear, and I'm fully immersed in the act of creation.

The process of making art is inherently vulnerable and risky, but it's also profoundly rewarding. Sharing my work, despite not always thinking it's good enough, is an act of generosity. Writing about exhibitions and sharing those experiences is part of this generosity. The dialogue and exchange that occur through art continue the work beyond the studio.

Experiences, Environment, Emotions

Casper Scarth: I think I began drawing when I was really small, around five. I never drew individual things, always clusters, mainly like stickman figures of war or battling. My sister found it quite irritating, which is why I remember it.



Casper Scarth
'Birdseye'
50 x 40cm, Acrylic
on linen on panel,
2024

I was almost certainly influenced by black and white films, both television and cinema. That influence remains significant even today. Another significant moment was when my grandfather, during a holiday, picked up my colouring book and did an incredible colour study on cowboy and Indian images. It fascinated me and stayed with me because it turned something from nothing into something magical.

In the family

Although he wasn't an artist, my grandfather showed an interest in art and had some

technique. He was the only family member who had a connection with art in his spare time. It made me engage with art more seriously, especially since most of my peers had no interest in it.

One reason I was drawn to art was that it was a way of expressing myself without words. Initially, my work was abstract. My teacher in secondary school encouraged us to only draw with vertical and horizontal lines, which freed me from feeling I wasn't good enough and allowed me to focus on balancing shapes and colours.

Cinema Paradiso

Visiting galleries and watching films became crucial. Seeing works like Willem de Kooning's in Paris was a revelation about making something beautiful and ugly simultaneously. This mixture of cinema, art, and music deeply informed my work.

I spent a lot of time in Paris, going to small cinemas and interesting galleries, discovering artists that opened my eyes to different layers of narrative and contradiction.

Acceptance

The balance between being an introvert and an extrovert as an artist is complex. While feeling isolated in Kent and then being accepted filled me

with suspicion. Moving to Rotterdam allowed me to develop my language independently, away from the monumental YBA movement in London, which felt like advertising to me, lacking the poetry and narrative I craved.

Rotterdam provided space to develop my visual language. I gained confidence quickly but doubted how to take the next step, missing big opportunities due to not being in the right headspace. Moving back to London, especially East London, reignited my creativity, influenced by the urban environment.

My process is intuitive and exploratory. I never start with a fixed idea. Creating is about peeling away layers to uncover something meaningful. This method has remained consistent from my early abstract works to the more figurative pieces I create now.

Creating art is a journey of discovery, influenced by experiences, environment, and emotions. It's about balancing the familiar with the new, the internal with the external, conveying complex emotions, and seeing how they shape future work.

Delight within dysfunction

The paintings from the Hackney period often featured dysfunctional public spaces like broken ping pong tables and dysfunctional swimming pools. These scenes felt loaded with

tension and claustrophobia, reflecting the environment's impact on my art.

Over time, my work evolved, influenced by different locations and life experiences, including the birth of my child and the pandemic.

The familiar and the new

During the pandemic, I started making work that was more introspective, focusing on the human condition, mental well-being, and the complexity of emotions. These paintings often depicted flights, prisons, or journeys, reflecting how people coped or didn't cope.

Post-pandemic, I've been creating portraits, delving into the complexities of human emotions and mental health. By juxtaposing different elements, I aim to create a new narrative, combining the familiar with new discoveries. It's an ongoing journey of exploration and expression.

I'm excited about this exhibition. The paintings embody the sense of being in the world, observing, and processing emotions. I hope viewers follow me on this journey, even if they feel a bit baffled. It's important to convey these complex emotions and see how they impact future work.

The question is the answer

Cedric Christie
'White Painting',
190 x 140cm,
Car bonnet & steel,
2019



Cedric Christie: When I first started making sculpture, I was often confronted with the response, “We like this work, but you haven’t found your voice yet!” It was confusing to hear this because, as the creator, I felt I was already expressing myself. I wondered, “What does that mean?” Looking back, I now realize that, at the time, I didn’t believe in my own voice. In retrospect, I understand that I now have a voice. What I lacked then was the belief in my own voice, so my work was almost a cry for validation. That question used to flummox me, but now, I’m much more understanding. Whether that’s good or bad, I don’t know.

The Nature of Fear

Fear is an interesting concept. If I’m here now or in the

middle of the woods during the day, I’m fine. But if you place me there at three in the morning, fear sets in. The only difference is the unknown, the inability to see. Fear is essentially not understanding. It becomes fear unless not knowing becomes a question. For me, it’s like the breath of life—the very essence of our existence. Answers, on the other hand, are just conclusions. They can be limiting because they often shut down further inquiry.

When you ask a question, it leads to more questions, and that’s a beautiful thing. Few things allow you to simply ask, but art does. I want to be the person at the table who poses the questions rather than just seeking answers. The act of posing the question is more important to me than finding an answer.

The Importance of Questions

When I started making sculptures, it wasn’t just for the sake of creating objects but for the art itself. The growth of my understanding of the importance of questions has developed alongside my work. These two aspects are connected for me. Art isn’t just about producing objects or referring to history. There is a self-development process within the act of making art.

It involves understanding what materials can do, how they relate to other materials, and what they represent.

Understanding Materials and Context

For example, consider the game of snooker. If I remove the game from the equation, I'm left with coloured objects. Their meaning and context change, allowing me to explore new possibilities. This process is about more than just the physical materials; it's about the ideas and concepts they represent. By deconstructing and recontextualising these elements, I can explore new meanings and insights. This approach allows me to challenge traditional notions and create work that is thought-provoking and reflective of my own journey.

The Creative Process

The creative process is like posing a question rather than seeking an answer. It's not about breaking the law but about challenging the structure within which you work. Each piece anchors me until I continue with the infinite inquiry. It's a space of flexibility, aware of the potential outcomes. Being allowed to explore these questions is like being given permission to challenge the status quo. It's not about rebellion for the sake of it, but about a thoughtful and deliberate exploration of possibilities.

Work and Self-Development

My work is more than just a reflection of understanding materials; it's a reflection of my own development. The process of making art allows me to explore identity and beliefs. It's a journey of discovery, both of the external world and my internal landscape. Through this process, I learn not only about the materials I work with but also about myself. This discovery is intertwined with the evolution of my work.

The questions I pose in my art are also questions I pose to myself. They are inquiries into my own understanding, my own fears, and my own beliefs.

The journey of creating art is about understanding and challenging materials, ideas, and oneself. It's an ongoing process of questioning and exploring, making each piece a step in an endless inquiry.

My journey is both personal and universal. It's about finding my voice, understanding my fears, and continuously seeking new questions. Through this process, I hope to create work that not only reflects my own journey but also resonates with others, inviting them to join in the exploration of what we do not know yet or fully understand.

The Everyday

Dan Curtis: I find myself standing with one foot solidly in the history of abstraction, exploring the concerns of pure abstract art—line, colour, texture, negative and positive space.



Dan Curtis
'Slow house (detail)'
90 x 150cm, Acrylic,
emulsion, spray paint,
paper, on canvas,
2024

This includes the interplay between the artwork and the observer, creating a type of face-to-face engagement with the piece.

My other foot is deeply immersed in an ongoing obsession with the textures and patterns of the city and its endless inertia—its over-painting, wall posterizing, repainting, graffiti, and erasures.

Early Inspirations

As a young teenager, I encountered a Mondrian painting that captivated me. I felt a compelling need to decode, unpack, and delve deeper into it. The conceptual depth of Mondrian's work was remarkable. This coincided with an attraction to hip hop culture of the late 70s and early 80s. Connection to the streets and urban landscapes became an important means of artistic exploration.

Exploring Liminal Spaces

I was drawn to liminal, ephemeral spaces behind buildings and alongside train

lines. These spaces, became a canvas for my observations. They are places where the remnants of the past and the present intermingle, evoking a sense of the surreal and the half-remembered.

The Unfinished Mondrian

Recently, I encountered an unfinished Mondrian work, which evoked the potential collapse of the world around us. This reinforced my interest in framing the constant change of our environment, capturing textures and contrasting pairing of forms. I am particularly drawn to the back streets, embracing the messiness and the drama of the everyday.

The Stage of the World

I see the world as a stage, with its elements acting as characters in a play. These liminal spaces, like an empty theatre, are charged with potential and history. They are places of possibility, where the tension between the elements creates a dynamic narrative. Some characters in this narrative create harmony, others argue, and some disturb, adding depth and complexity.

Everyday Interactions

A recent experience, seeing markings on a building site near my house, highlighted the tension between nature and urban development. The combination of plant textures and industrial materials, like grass

and concrete, created a visual paradox that I find fascinating and disturbing. This friction and the lyrical moments it creates charge the work, adding layers of meaning.

Balance and Sensitivity

I seek a balance in my work—not too balanced, allowing for meditative moments. However, I avoid alienating the viewer by denying them a space to enter the work. I aim for a delicate entry point, where the colours and forms engage in a conversation. The objects speak to each other, creating a narrative that transcends the abstract.

This shared experience is essential, creating a dialogue between the work and the observer, enhancing its narrative and emotional impact.

The Infinite Potential of Conversation

For me, the work extends beyond the physical boundaries of the canvas. It has infinite potential to engage with other works or objects, creating conversations between them. Gallery spaces transform everyday objects, imbuing them with new meaning.

Seeing a cardboard box in a gallery, pressed flat and hung, changes its entire context and impact. This transformation is essential for me, as it allows me to highlight the intense beauty and emotional energy I see in these objects.

Exploring the Sublime

I am interested in moving away from traditional narrative structures, embracing the idea that there is no single underlying truth, as suggested by modernist movements like Suprematism or Bauhaus. In a post-postmodern society, we question the existence of a contemporary sublime. For me, the sublime is not just about mountains or the sea but also about the emotions evoked by seemingly mundane objects, like a piece of cardboard. This exploration challenges the idea of abstraction as pure and invites a deeper engagement with materials and their potential.

The Beauty in Chaos

I find beauty even in the chaos, ugliness, and consumption of our culture. This perspective involves humour as a means of negotiating and communicating these ideas. The boundaries between the serious, the banal, the ugly, and the supposedly meaningless have shifted. I embrace this shift, finding beauty in the unexpected and the discarded.

The Stage as Narrative

In my work, the canvas or panel acts as a stage, and the gallery as a space for shared experiences. The relationship between fragments in my work reflects the communal aspect of art, where the viewer's interaction adds another layer of meaning.

Finding my way

Christine Stark: My father was a keen amateur water-colourist. When I was a child we would go out on summer weekends, Dad with his easel



Christine Stark
'Changed Up'
210 x 150cm, Household
& acrylic paint on canvas,
2023

and me with my pad and board. My sister and I were taken to art galleries from a young age and encouraged to look at art. In the surgery waiting room – my father was a doctor – there were gloomy Picasso prints on the walls, but I was more interested in my father's

medical books, especially his copies of the British Medical Journal, containing fascinating illustrations of a variety of skin diseases.

When I was about seven I'd pretend my bedroom was an art gallery and stick paintings and drawings all over the walls. Two years later, at school, I used (with her permission!) Paula Wright's long, thin, blonde plait of hair as a paintbrush – it had the perfect tip for dipping into a large pot of red paint! – for which I was severely reprimanded and ceremoniously sent home.

From eleven years old on I had very encouraging art teachers, though received low grades for "Art" because my work didn't fit the model of appropriate schoolwork.

Life as an artist

I did an art foundation course in Derby, where I would visit scrapyards to look at the colours and mangled shapes of the cars, and the way the different elements combined and clashed. I signed up to do graphic design, which was completely the wrong thing to do. I was a bit of a dreamer and ended up in London, waitressing and painting, but also looking at Matisse, Vuillard, Lanyon and others.

A painter fighting to get out

Eventually I did a City Lit course working very hard for this. One lecturer said to me, "You're a painter fighting to get out", which had a big impact. I went on to study at Chelsea and had the most amazing three years. There were some fantastic tutors there, and I learnt a lot from third-year painters. Artists who were in major London shows would visit, and sometimes there was the opportunity to talk to them about your work.

Captivated by red

During the first year at Chelsea I was initially quite lost, wondering what I was doing. But it was at this time that I began to be an abstract painter, looking especially at the Cobra group, and at works, such as Rembrandt's "The Flayed Ox", and, Soutine's carcass version of this same work, being totally captivated

by these paintings' construction, and the possibilities of red paint. I visited Smithfield's Market to take photographs, causing a minor rumpus when the people working there thought I was an animal rights activist gathering evidence.

Crashing beauty

During the pandemic I couldn't get to the studio, so started using materials that

were to hand at home. Though not a "*collagist*" as such, using just whatever was available became part of my approach.

Recently, the writings of Roland Barthes and of Walter Benjamin have been influential.

I have always been careful to have a job which allowed me time to go to the studio most days. Finding time to focus on one's work is a problem many artists face.

Come Together

John Bunker: I work the way I do because I discovered how a particular group of people, known in our culture as artists, behaved and how they found a relationship with the world, trying to find their way through it. When I understood it in historical terms, I could really appreciate what people in the past had done or tried to achieve. The many different social, historical, and political reasons why they chose to do the things that they did. A secondary school teacher had a massive impact on me.

The Theatre of Modernism

I was introduced to modernism through various forms, not just painting but also the poetry and theatre of modernism. This cross-disciplinary approach became a dialogue for me, which has continued ever since. It went in two directions: I was interested in the con-

frontational nature of making art, like punk music, and those who found their own path and had a very idiosyncratic relationship with making art. I was also interested in how they fit in or not within societal norms and ideas about what society could be, including societal and class identity.

Story, Talking, Telling

My early involvement in performance began with a theatre company in the north of England, focusing on improvisation and telling community stories. We needed a visual and physical language to tell these stories. I realized how choreography and formality in storytelling highlighted the importance of visual power.

Even the most abstract painting, when you put people in front of it and they start discussing it, creates a kind of communion. It's not just an

individual experience; it's a conversation between people.

All the different people

I don't believe a painting can be a singular thing at any one time. It's a combination of many elements that, when viewed by different people, create new experiences. I'm more interested in this dialogue than in individual revelations. The curatorial process of putting a show together, bringing paintings together, is fascinating to me because of the dialogue between the paintings and the people.



John Bunker
'Skin Flower (1)'
70 x 60 x 50cm,
Cardboard, acrylic,
ink, pva, screws,
2024

Talk to Me

In my paintings, I seek a strong identity. When you put one strong identity next to another, you get a dialogue that becomes much more interesting. It's all about taste and points of view. I look for strong visual presences that can talk to each other in different ways. My art is involved in that process.

Composition conversations

Collage plays a significant role in my work. It involves compositions within compositions and conversations within conversations. Objects and images constantly relate to each other, allowing viewers to engage with these visual experiences. I believe a painting is a mix of

received ideas and the artist's ability to reposition them.

To be a good artist, you need to understand the history of making and where the imagery has flowed from culturally and historically. That has always fascinated me.

A frenetic storm of History

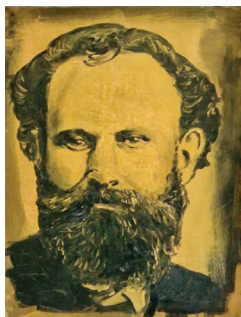
History influences my work deeply. I'm very interested in the writings of Walter Benjamin, looking at history through the lens of modernity and how history has been decimated, pulled apart, or become a frenetic storm of changing realities. The idiosyncratic approach to making art within modernity interests me. Abstract art becomes a place of contention and difficulty because it doesn't give you immediate narratives to latch onto. It's a place for change and transformation.

The discarded world

Using my personal relationship with the material world and combining discarded objects, gives my work a sense of immediacy. *Collage* forces materials from different worlds together, creating surprising visual shocks. The creative process is a dialogue between the material and with the viewer. The work doesn't exist until someone sees it; context is everything. An artwork's strong identity forms new relationships when it encounters new contexts.

Spacehopping

Pascal Rousson: I first studied in France, my native country. The college I attended wasn't great, and it was a difficult time for me. I was quite young, around 19 or 20. The education system in France is quite rigorous and academic, with a strong emphasis on conceptual ideas.



Pascal Rousson
'Manet', 35 x 27cm,
Acrylic & varnish on
canvas,
2017

When I was there in the 80s, painting was completely out of the picture. Yes, it was quite the opposite. For two years, I did very academic stuff, like three-colour graphics, but people didn't take it too seriously because the focus was more on the concept, the idea – very much conceptual art. French art has always been a struggle, I think, because it can be very castrating for artists.

Moving on

I left France because I found it frustrating. At the time, I was with a girl who wanted to go to Switzerland, so we went to Geneva. The school there was amazing – very experimental. You could try everything: photography, video. It was very open, like the NXT Academy in Amsterdam.

There was a massive connection between the two. The experimental environment and the squat movement

in Geneva created a massive energy around music and art.

I worked with some incredible artists who were passing through Switzerland and were invited to the school. Yes, people like Mario Merz and others. It was an incredible time. I also worked at the Museum of Contemporary Art and for a gallery in Geneva, which was quite influential.

Anything is possible

It was a big influence because it showed me the importance of experimentation and improvisation. Working with different mediums and being in an environment where anything was possible was very liberating.

After that we moved to Dundee in Scotland because my partner wanted to study electronic imaging there. Dundee was very different – much poorer and rougher, but also very open and welcoming. I started doing landscape stuff mixed with comics, which was a new direction for me.

Mixing it up

It was a smaller, more connected community. People were open and friendly, and it was easier to meet people and make interesting connections. I started mixing traditional Scottish landscapes with dark, comic elements.

Moving to London was another big change. It was much more vibrant and full of creative people from different fields. I met a lot of filmmakers and artists. London was an amazing place for that.

Being in the middle

My work is very much about examining and sometimes satirizing the art world. It's not just about the intellectual, detached view but about being in the middle of it all and making comments through my work. I mix popular culture with high art, creating a dialogue that questions norms and conventions. I find trends frustrating.

The market often dictates what's popular, and it's not always about the quality of the work. There's a lot of packaged, easy-to-understand art that sells well, but I'm more interested in challenging that and exploring deeper, more complex ideas.

Freestyle

I don't feel stuck in one place or style. My work is always evolving, and I like that flexibility. I'm currently exploring the romanticized image of smoking through my "cigarette paintings," and I plan to push that further. I believe in the importance of experimentation and the ability to shift and adapt. It's both.

The process is important to me, but I also want to provoke thought and conversation. My work often has layers of mean-

ing and can be interpreted in different ways. It's about creating a space for dialogue and engagement.

The thrill of the new

I'm excited to continue experimenting and pushing boundaries. I want to explore new ideas and materials and see where they take me. The studio is my space for experimentation, and I love being there, creating and discovering new possibilities.



The Coincidence Gallery

The Coincidence Gallery is an artist-run venture formed in 2023 by Gisli Bergmann and Patrick Bryson. Its purpose is to encourage open conversation and enquiry about contemporary painting, in the form of exhibitions and publications.

@the_coincidence_gallery
@gislibergmann
@arthanog

Follow QR code for references and text from previous shows.

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Previous Shows:

- 'There are No Things, Only Relationships', 2023
- 'The Morality of Attention', 2023
- '...Perhaps, A Narrative of Possibilities', 2023
- 'Let's Talk About Intuition', 2024
- 'Home, It's So Moving', 2024
- 'Common Place', 2024

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Stow Brothers Estate Agency

In 2014, Andrew and Kenny Goad launched The Stow Brothers, an estate agency with a fresh, straightforward approach to the property market. The brothers' vision captured the zeitgeist — from a single shop in Walthamstow, they have now expanded to a team of 50 local specialists, with branches throughout East London. Stow Brothers are delighted to support local artists.

www.stowbrothers.com

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