



Prospect and Refuge

Artist Q&A:

Bendix Harms

David Surman: I have a couple of questions that I'd like to ask each artist in the show and then some more specific ones. The experience of artists has diversified greatly in recent years so it's always intriguing to get a sense of where and how they're working.

The exhibition is inspired by the ideas of Jay Appelton, particularly his observation that our ingrained comprehension of the landscape influences our aesthetic sense. Could you describe your journey to the studio or place in which you make your work, the place itself and your view from that place.

Bendix Harms: My „Journey“ is very short: just 30 meters away from the mainhouse of the farm.

It's a new building which my wife Mari Kollerup has planned – covered with wooden douglas panels from our own forest..... so the view into the landscape through a big panorama window is fantastic - close to kitsch..... where you can see a part of the forest, fields, a little creek and many animals. This view is a big counterpart for my paintings, because it detects each kind of weakness on a canvas within a second.

DS: Should a studio be a comforting place or an antagonistic zone with potential artistic hazards? Do you clear away obstructions to make a clear way toward opportunity or do you trap yourself in order to find new intensities?

BH: The most important thing in a studio is, that the each-day-life must be far away – it must be like being on the moon...that's my salvation; that's the point of no return in a positive way.

DS: The farmstead of Østerfælden where you live with wife artist Mari Kollerup and your cat Mamon features frequently in your work--especially in the motif of a house with many windows or holes with the family of people and animals inside. What does it mean to you to paint this home refuge and receive it as a subject?



BH: The subjects are my decisionmakers and they become decisionmakers because of their relationship to me – that's the starting point and in the end of this process we have to reach the boiling point. This point separates all, and when a narrative motif doesn't start to talk on a canvas... then the artist is guilty – always.

That's the reason why my Contentism started with Mari in the noughties and why it continues today with the mainhouse of the farm and the leader-cat Mamon in Denmark.....HUGE Relations let me receive precise orders from the Subjects.

DS: In your paintings you use all kinds of liberated technique to make the image, scratching, spackling, palette knife and so on. The overall effect is of visual and surface energy, lines and angular shapes radiate outward and give a vivid impression of living energy. These painted halos and glows and emphatic frames, do they have a spiritual dimension?

BH: I would never use the term „energy“ ...it's always oil-on-canvas – a state of material, but it has nothing to do with energy...you can paint fast or slow, thick or thin - technique has no value in itself - it has to do with the orders from my subjects and the state of my antennas...how they can translate these orders into oil in a matter which is adequate to the subject and adequate to the history of art. When all fits, then I can bring my subject to talk or to sing. So: there is no space for a spiritual dimension, because my brain is fed from an experienced world.

DS: In many of your paintings the birds and cats and people seem to have a fierce fighting spirit, they sing out loud and declare themselves in their fortress nests or homes. We are seeing war again in Europe, and I wanted to ask if you had a clear idea of what art and especially painting can do in such a time? Will such things find their way into 'contentism' --your creative philosophy?

BH: Ho.....this is difficult....really difficult: it's a kind of paradox, because oil on canvas is a weak weapon.

The painting „Guernica“ from Picasso is a good example: a beautiful painting in grisaille technique with a perfect composition and some open mouths and eyes.....but - I mean: WAR is 100.000,00 times more brutal, bestial and destructiv...to me it's acting like poison; it occupies my brain and paralyzes my art-thoughts - a BIG negativ sign...but: such a war can be a big challenge too, because Contentism means, that all subjects from the real world are potentially paintable – it just depends on the quality of the relationship to the subjects, their optical qualities and the consciousness of the whole art-history.

War is an overpowerly counterpart... actually impossible to have NO relationship to such a monster- content..... so this could find his way into my Contentism-Universe.

SIM SMITH
+44(0)7920 102284
MAIL@SIM-SMITH.COM
SIM-SMITH.COM



DS: I was looking through your list of exhibitions and, perhaps I'm wrong, but it looks like this is the first time (or one of the first times) your paintings have been shown here on our little islands. Do you think about your paintings travelling all around the world as you're making them? What attitude do you take to your work once it leaves your studio?

BH: No...there isn't a single thought during my painter-sessions about the journey they will make.

But when the paintings are leaving my studio....then I feel both: pain and joy. Pain is the price I pay for my Contentism, because it based on my own experiences. It would be easier to send paintings with rectangles and squares on it into the art-world... but pain is my welcome barter trade; my currency.

And Joy? Yes...of cause: I love the imagination, that my closest subjects Mari, Mamon, Rufus and all feathered friends are continuing there life in oil all over the world....this let me feel electric!

DS: Thank you for your time!

BH :Thank you for your questions!!