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DANNY FOX

THE ART OF HONESTY AND
IRREVERENCE

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Thick layers of paint on large-scale canvases depicting boxers, horses, female nudes, birds, fruits and much more are reflecting the very own experiences of their author, Danny Fox. He comes from St. Ives, moved around London for some time, and now he's settled in Los Angeles. Fox is a self-taught painter who's been washing dishes to earn some money for brushes for many years. But now, his shows are being sold out

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His work is (and he seem to be, too) beautifully poetic, delightfully twisted, humorously titled and full of allegorical symbols. Just before the opening of his show *Mitre Delta* at Bill Brady Gallery on the 4th of December – just in time for Art Basel Miami –, we got the chance to talk to him about the struggle of being a real artist, why hasn't he graduated from a fancy university and how pleasant does the present look like despite all that.

Born in St Ives (Cornwall), moved to London in 2004 and now you seem to be happily settled in Los Angeles. Can you please give us a short intro to who you are, where have you been moving around and with what purposes?

In my early years, I moved around a lot. I lived in small English towns where not much happened. Life revolved around boring jobs but that was ok because boring was what I wanted. I mostly worked in kitchens where I would stay washing dishes for as long as possible, and when they tried to promote me to sous chef, or have

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daydreaming about taking a woman to the cinema – I was very reclusive in these years and completely lost the ability to talk to women.

I arrived in London in 2004 or somewhere around that time and lived in St. Agnes place, a well-known street of squats in South London, but it wasn't until 2007 that I actually settled in the city. I met a woman in a pub who let me live with her and supported me more or less while I painted, but I still wasn't selling anything. That lasted a couple of years but then it ended suddenly one day, and once again found myself in the jobcentre and on the dole. Through a chance encounter I ended up working on antiques markets and spent the next couple of years living on the road and in that world. Through the markets and the people I met doing them, I had a new source of material to work from. I saw a lot of naive art and learnt about history through the objects we were buying and selling. Eventually, in 2013 I managed to rent a bedsit in Kentish Town. It was the first time I had my own place and I was finally able to work day and night on paintings. Shortly after that, I started travelling and putting on shows with Liam Sparkes, whom I had met on the markets.

When did you start feeling the gravity towards painting?

Around the age of fourteen. Before that, I was just drawing or writing things. If I could time travel and visit my fourteen-year-old self and just show him a couple of simple things I could save fifteen years of hard digging.

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You never studied art in an art institution. How did you learn? Did you ever try getting into an art school?

I tried once because the woman I was living with wanted me to. I was rejected. I get asked about this a lot. I learnt by looking at books. Everything that can be taught in a school is available in books. I studied the masters first because they were the only ones in the very small library where I grew up. All those books were full of men and women who had lived extraordinary lives. I began to think this was more necessary than a formal art education. Also, I didn't do well at school, which combined with strange things happening in my life, the decision was made for me.

What do you think about the institutionalization of art and the 'false illusion' that having a Fine Arts degree makes you an artist? Do you think that art education could limit people's imagination or cut them by the same pattern?

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institutions though; most people aren't ready for the shit that life throws at them when they leave school, so they go to art school to prolong their time in the educational womb – and I can't blame them. People have parents that expect things of them. It is better than working the shit job. People go and make friends and have fun and learn how to drink, have sex and grow their hair. I understand it. I think of all the boys and girls who grow up in shitty towns so far from where it's happening, and going to art school is their best bet of getting out of that town and getting to it. I should have gone but I couldn't, I already knew.

Looking at your paintings, I often come across some things that confuse me at the first sight, but after a further investigation, I realize these are just symbols or doorways for me to enter your work. Do you want the viewers to be able to relate to your paintings or do you consider the artwork to be an expression of something yours and nobody else's? Do you work with symbolism?

Yes, the symbols are there. The allegory. When I'm making a painting I'm just trying to make a good painting. If the thing is looking good and it's telling a story of some kind then it might survive. I don't expect anyone to relate to the artwork, but if they find something in it that makes it all better for them, then that's all there can be.

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And do you have something to say about the audience nowadays not being able to fully perceive and understand the paintings (because they simply don't give enough attention to them)?

It's not the fault of the audience.

What do you draw? Are these characters people you know or are they fictional?

All fiction has its roots in reality.

What's up with the horses?

What's up with the horses?

What's something you know you do differently than most people?

I eat with my knife in my in my left hand.

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The painting is done when the hatred stops.



I would like to talk about the titles of your paintings. They earned a lot of my attention. They take your eyes and mind for a trip through the artwork and navigate you to the understanding of it in a very poetic way. How do they occur? Is it a result of hardcore thinking or do they smoothly come to you as you paint?

I like the way you put that (laughs). Let's say the best ones come out smoothly; don't push too hard, you might do some damage!

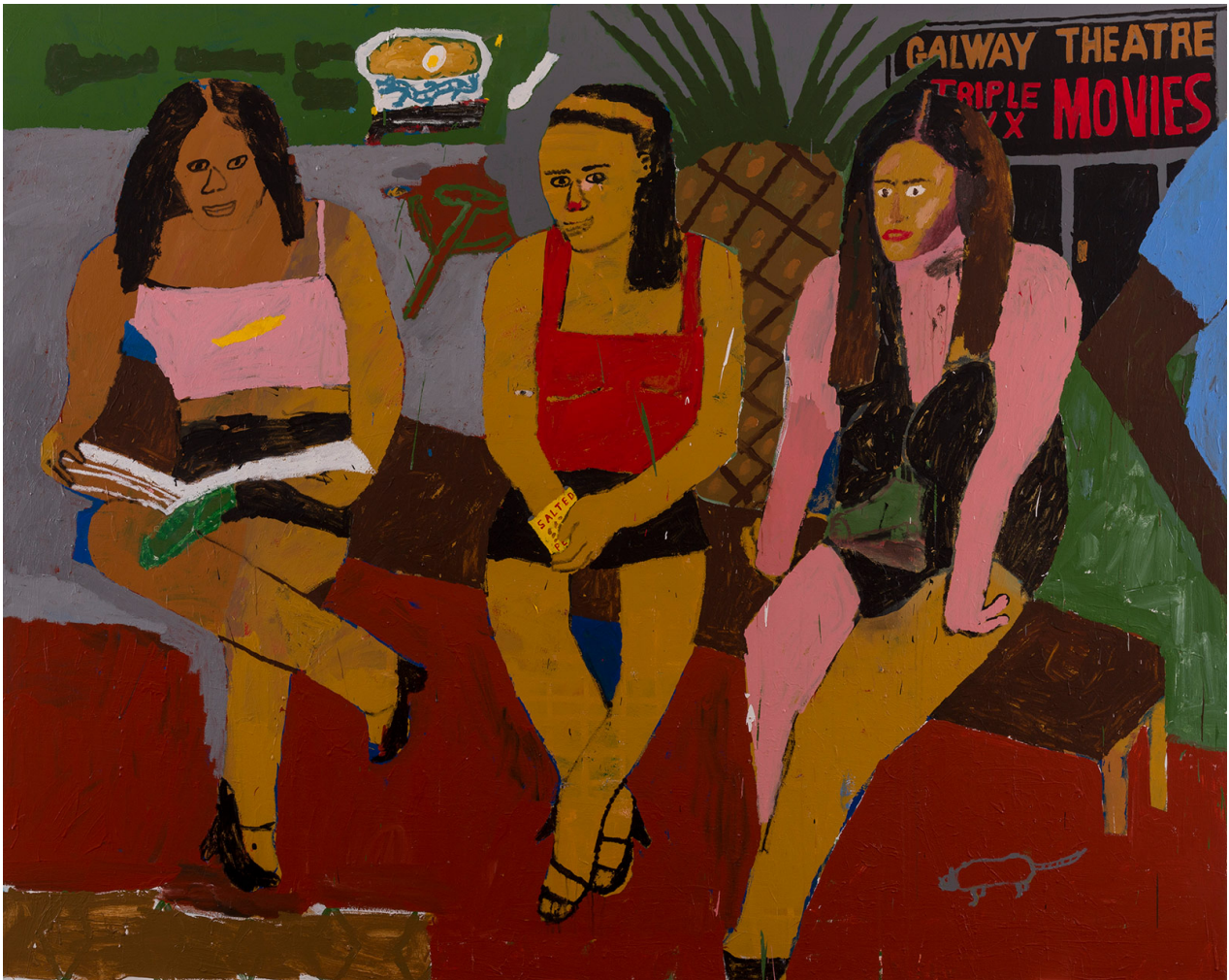
Do you have any ritual connected to the way you work/paint?

Not these days.

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to the third dimension of pottery and some sculptural pieces. Can you talk a little bit about this shift?

It's just nice to do something other than paint, sometimes; it can get boring working the same old canvas over and over. I'm showing some pots I made a few years ago in a show in Miami. The show is called *Mitre Delta* and opens at Bill Brady Gallery on the 4th of December. It's mostly still life paintings with some weird abstracts too. They were all made a few years ago when I was moving away from figuration – I've come back to figurative painting since then, but I really wanted to show this group of works together, and ceramics are part of that.



Of all the things you can do, other than painting, how did you end up digging your fingers into clay making pots?

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objects that I find on the street and place them next to paintings. It just adds another dimension, literally. I started working in clay because a good friend of mine is a master potter, his name is Sam Hall – he works in St. Ives. He let me work in his studio and helped me with the firing process, etc.

In addition to the exhibition in Miami, what are your future plans?

I have another solo exhibition in Luxembourg opening in March 2018 at Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery, and also a book coming out with v1 Gallery to coincide with a solo booth at Chart Fair with them next year. Those kind of things are the only things I can predict. I don't know what I will be doing in between, I don't really make plans. There's never anything I want to do, I just get up and get to the studio at some point and anything that gets in the way of that is annoying. Sometimes I like to stay home and away from the studio, sometimes for a few days even. I try to pretend there is no studio and when I come back things look different. I like to take long walks through the city in the evening, which seems like an unusual thing to do in Los Angeles.

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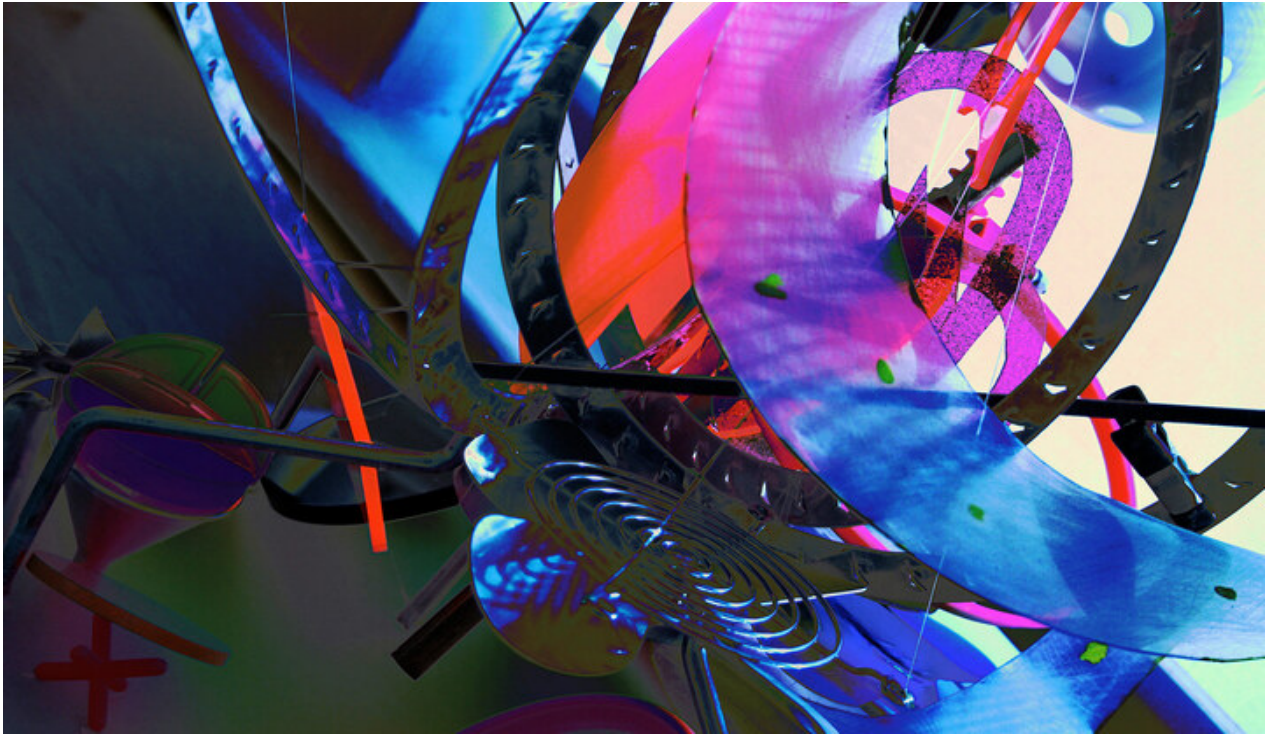
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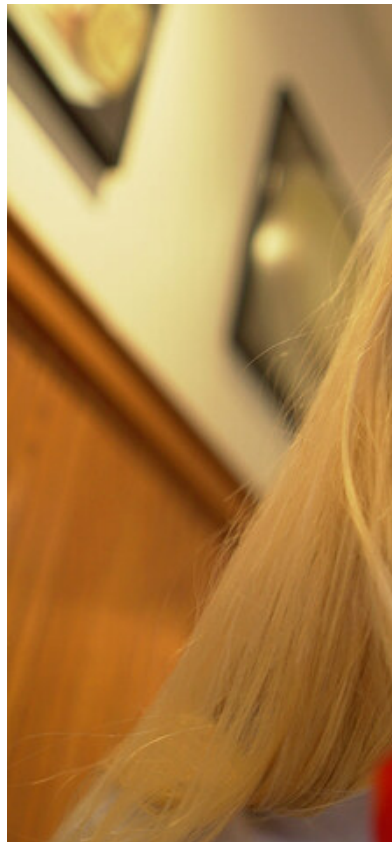
When it comes to art, this artist sees it as a way of living, a tool to express himself, a path to freedom or even a weapon, read on to understand why.

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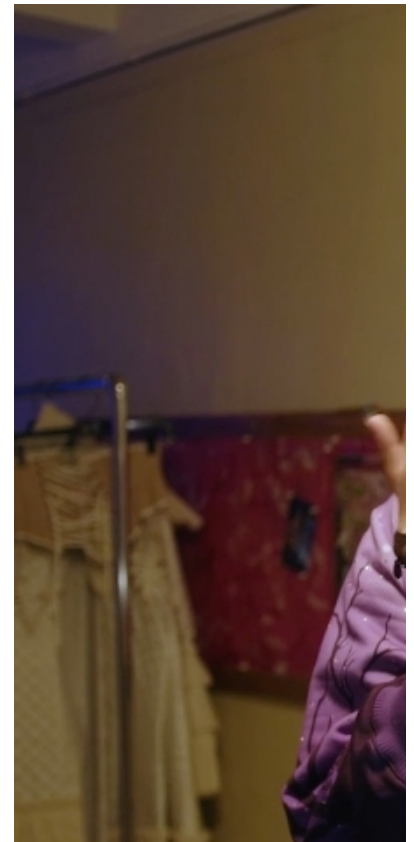
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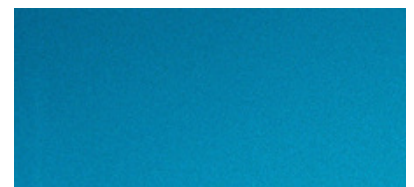
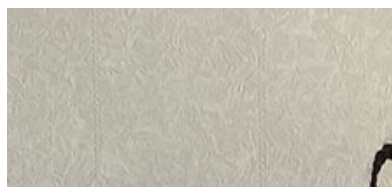
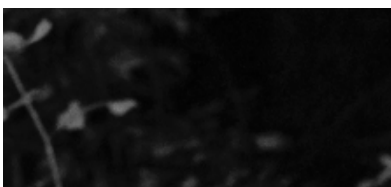
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