

MARC STANDING

by KEVIN JUNK *mar. 1st 2013*



Sydney based artist **Marc Standing**'s paintings are driven by curiosity about our unconscious. They are lucid strolls along dreamscapes with oil on canvas that resembles illustrations, colours that contravene the sinister details. We talked with Marc about his dreams, birds and drag queens.

An usual question for the start: Do you remember your dreams? Not particularly, although at times I know I have had strange surreal dreams. My memory at times can be quite appalling!

You lived in South Africa and are currently based in Sydney. Was moving a nice decision? I was born in Zimbabwe and studied in Cape Town, South Africa before moving to Australia. In between this time I also spent a little time in Europe. I now spend my time between Sydney and Hong Kong. I think moving around has always informed my work. It would be hard not to be influenced by one's current surroundings. Spending a lot more time in Asia for example has had such a huge impact on my work and subject matter. Visually it is an incredibly stimulating place. I love travelling and seeing new places and feel lucky to have had these experiences.



Your style is very illustrative, on the first glance the material you use is not obvious. All these layers must be hard to paint. Why oil on canvas? What is so great about oil paint is that you can use layers upon layers to create a rich surface. It also has a vibrant luminosity to it which I find hard to replicate in other mediums. I've always appreciated the work of other artists where you try and work out what went on first, what was left to breathe through the canvas, what was blocked out. To me painting is a layered process and in that process the piece will dictate to you what needs to be done.

Do you plan your images in detail beforehand or is it more of an intuitive procedure? It's definitely more of a spontaneous procedure. I may have an idea of an image I would like to incorporate in the work but I prefer just to begin with creating a surface then deciding on what to do next. To get ideas going I also like to play around with collage making. I suppose this is where the ideas of layering come into play too.

Since 2011, you seem to work more with images that are a lot more rich in motifs. A conscious decision? I think to a degree. I've always had a fascination for masks, and of things wrapped and shrouded. For me the work in 2011 was the beginning of a new direction on how I was using the surface of the work and of exploring colour on a much wider scale. The working process was a lot more spontaneous and subject matter has become a lot more assessable to a larger audience. Having wanted to break into the Asian market has also had some effect on subject matter. Feng shui and superstitions do influence what an audience in the Asian region will have in their home and is something that has to be taken into consideration.

What about the birds that appear quite often in your recent paintings? Birds have always been a strong motif in my work. I remember one of the first paintings I did when I was about thirteen was in an art studio where I painted a taxidermy crow. In many cultures birds are also seen as the gateway keepers between the living and the dead, the earthly realms and the heavenly realms. I find this a fascinating and beautiful analogy of life and death. There is also nothing quite like them on earth. They are fascinating creatures imbued with such rich historical myth and mythology.



How do you see the difference between the tonality of your images and the sometimes sinister motifs? Colour has always been important in my work. One can use it in quite a psychological way. If an audience views a colourful piece one assumes automatically that it is beautiful. I think once you have drawn a viewer in they are more likely to keep looking and be more susceptible to more sinister, unnerving imagery.

What's more appealing to you: kitsch or camp?

I would probably say kitsch although I have always had a thing for glitter, sequins and drag queens....

What inspires you to the stories you tell in your paintings?

The world around me inspires my stories. I'm also interested in the idea of identity and how we relate to the world around us in an age of multiculturalism and globalization. I'm becoming more and more inspired by the natural world. I love the work of the naturalists, of cabinets of curiosities, of the macabre. Our world is a fascinating place.