

Meet contemporary artist Joe Madeira

by John Bingham

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In April, you staged an online exhibition 'Setting the Scene', showing iPad drawings from 2016 through your website (curated by Paul Carey-Kent). How did this come about and what were your ideas for this online show?

In 2016, I began making work again - this time using an iPad and the Apple pencil. I was posting the work on social media, and it was very gratifying to see the response from people I care about and admire. I began noticing that certain subjects and ideas like absurdity, voyeurism, exhibitionism and ambiguity were creeping into the work, and I thought it deserved to be brought together and presented in a coherent manner. The online show also coincided with the launch of my new website.

Is there a specific reason why you chose to show the drawings online rather than a physical exhibition?

www.joemadeira.com

The work was made digitally so naturally it lead itself to be shown in a virtual form.

I'm a huge fan of your potentially sexual drawings of this year and feel like they're a little more established than those of 2016, do you feel like they are progressing/evolving?

Thanks, John. The work is constantly evolving and I'm constantly learning the technology of working with a digital tablet. It's been a learning curve using a pencil that can be many tools at once. I like to use the Apple pencil to do things you're not supposed to do with it - like I've created this brush that draws pubic hair so the harder you press, the thicker the hair gets. It's freaking awesome!

Back to the potentially sexual ideas within your drawings, did you have in mind (either before or whilst making) what they'd be about? And what has the overall reaction been to them so far?

I work in a very intuitive way. Sometimes I know what I want to do and it comes out looking like shit! It's when I let it go and don't try to restrain myself that interesting stuff happens. I try not to think too much when I'm drawing - thinking doesn't help much. I do, however, know when the work is right or wrong. I usually start by drawing an architectural space and then fill it with stuff. I think I need a notion of a space before I can draw. Maybe these spaces are a sort of stage where I can bring characters to life?

Are your works inspired by autobiographical events?

I think all artists' work is autobiographical in one way or another but I don't feel that I'm consciously pursuing past events. I notice stuff and then I get hooked on it. It stays fermenting inside my head sometimes for awhile until it pops out. My brain is like an incubator of shit which needs flushing regularly. I do laugh a lot when I'm making work, then I pause and the brain starts getting critical: 'Have I gone too far? Should I be doing this? Fuck it who cares!'

You graduated from the Faculdade de Belas-Artes de Lisboa in the year that I was born. Tell us more about your move to London and what you got up to at the Royal College of Art in 1996?

That makes me feel pre-historic - cheers buddy! I did a MPhil in post-modernism and self-identity at the RCA which involved looking into notions of gender and male identity through photography and performance art. I was interested in self-portraiture in photography as a means to exploring the self, gender and my sexuality. It was an amazing time and I was very lucky to have had Dan Fern, John Stezaker and Christopher Frayling as my thesis supervisors. They were very very inspiring. Also, during that time, I founded Incubator Omniartists with two acoustic designers from the Royal College of Music and a choreographer PhD student from Guildford University. We worked collaboratively exploring improvisation in fine art, acoustics and movement, and we got Brian Eno to help us realise our first performance 'ColourSteel' which took place at the RCA.

What's next?

I have now closed CABIN gallery which I ran since 2014 and exhibited Jonny Briggs, Kate Lyddon, Charles Richardson, Aglae Bassens and Zhu Tian to name a few and have now converted it into my studio. It gives me more space to experiment with sculpture and installation and who knows, I might return to performing again - watch this space.

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