

Robert Priseman

Interviews Alison Pilkington

RP: Thank you so much for agreeing to this interview Alison. I've been an admirer of your work for over a decade now. One of the facets of your style I most enjoy is how you employ different painting techniques on the same image. So, in *The Visitor* for example, you have some areas where the paint is applied so thinly it mottles, alongside other areas where it is applied in a vigorous "painterly" manner. How did you arrive at this method of working and does it cause you any problems?

AP: I like to work quickly and intuitively using experiences of working with oil paint that has built up over decades now. Knowing when to leave something alone is a long process and can only come from lots of miss-steps and wrong turns with the material. However nothing is really a mistake just another learning process, at the end of the day its what pleases me that remains in the work.

RP: I'm particularly interested in your use of humor and visual puns. This is very rare in painting, historically and in contemporary setting. Even *The Laughing Cavalier* by Frans Hals isn't laughing. What attracted you to the use of humor in your work and how do you think you manage to be so successful at it?

AP: Humour is so subjective really is it? What one person may find funny another may not, I am drawn to humour in art myself and I try to inject some into my own work but it is difficult to articulate how this occurs I'm happy that the viewer might find humour in my work but it isn't entirely intentional as I've said before, I please myself and hope that this might connect with the viewer.

RP: Can you recall your first attempts at painting, and what where they?

AP: I'm not sure if you mean as an adult as I have always painted since I could hold a brush! But as a teenager it was the one activity I always enjoyed in school so it seemed natural for me to go to art college and study art. I do remember as a teenager experimenting with lots of different techniques that I had seen in books such as Picasso and early 20th century expressionist artists like Gabriel Munter and Emile Nolde

RP: Who are your influences?

AP: I think influences are wide ranging and change all the time I do like to look at historical paintings from the 17th century and I am lucky to have access to great museums in Dublin and London and across Europe to see great work.

RP: Your paintings have the feeling of being insights into the landscape of a strange and quirky mind. I personally have no idea how an artist could arrive at images like the ones you produce. Being rooted as I am in the real and physical world. This is one of the reasons I admire what you do so much, it is completely out of my own experience and ability. Could you offer some hints as to how you arrive at these bizarre and wonderful images? Is there a process you engage in?

AP: I am interested in how to express and internal world, most of my work explores this. I try to convey a sense of a world in flux, that has elements of the real or observed and of the imagined or felt. My process involves lots of drawing and painting until I find something that feels right to me. This process happens over a long period of time so my painting process has developed over many years. I hope that my work shows a commitment to exploring ideas through the process and materiality of paint.

RP: Thank you so much Alison.

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