

AT THE CROSSROADS OF FINE ART AND POP CULTURE: EXPLORING THE TENSIONS WITH PHILIPPE HOERLE GUGGENHEIM AND HG CONTEMPORARY.

by Brittany Knupper

Philippe Hoerle-Guggenheim grew surrounded by art. “My love for art was passed on to me by my grand-mother and my mother. Both avid collectors, they instilled in me great admiration for the old masters and the new. From Klimt to Dubuffet. Our house in Bonn, Germany, was always open to artists. There were visits to painters’ studios, trips to museums and constant art talk at the dinner table. I didn’t develop a formal education in art, I developed an instinct and a passion for it at a very young age.” And though he ended up pursuing a career in finance originally, “I kept very close ties with the art community, hosting private events in the US and Europe.” And as the art world shifted and became more diverse and dynamic, he felt the pull to immerse himself in it full time. “I found myself wanting to follow my own aesthetic compass and explore the incredible potential for renewal and audacity offered by new social interactions, digital technology and pop culture.” And so he launched his own gallery, HG Contemporary in 2014. Pursuing some of the most provocative and raw talents of the



Philippe Hoerle-Guggenheim, Natvar Bhavsar, Janet Bhavsar and guests

day.

HG Contemporary is committed to “exhibiting internationally and locally acclaimed artists, whose processes and backgrounds are unique, diverse, and relevant. With their uniqueness our mission is to create value for collectors and artists alike.” With extensions of the gallery (originally in Chelsea) now in Brooklyn, Madrid, and Napa Valley, the gallery is committed to developing “an international contemporary program that is ambitious as

well as diverse.” In fact, for his opening exhibition, he had works by contemporary artists RETNA and Natvar Bhavsar but also legendary pop art by Warhol, Dali, and even John Lennon. The gallery’s commitment to diversify and represent all forms of art and artists carries with it a goal to maintain a “clear vision about producing exceptional art exhibitions as well as a deep understanding of visual culture’s function within and beyond the walls of the gallery.” This approach also includes a digital path, including digital installations, video, and an online element, which is currently underway.

He recently opened an exhibition in Brooklyn titled “Living Confection.” He brought in local street artists to paint murals on all of the available wall space, as well as contemporary fine artists (like Alexandra Grounds) and sculptors (like CÉVÉ who creates large sculptures of teddy bears, reminiscent of gummies) to create tension and juxtaposition within the space. He named it “Living Confection” because “I was interested in examining street art for what it is - sweet, bright, beautiful, but temporary. Just like candies and pastries. I wanted to examine



14 ART OF THE TIMES Carl McCrow “One Less Gun”

artofthetimes.com



Carl McCrow “One Less Gun”

how we consume various kinds of art. Street art can be just as moving as a painting or sculpture, but there is always tension or risk, because it can be painted over at any time. It is in its essence, temporary.”

And on the basement floor of the Brooklyn gallery was a giant floor length installations called “Presence” and “Rebirth” by Franz Klainsek. The entire floor was covered with vertical upside down nails, and strategically placed lights to cast shadows and create lines and spaces between the nails. He created the floor as a piece of performance art. “Klainsek spends several days balancing one gold nail after another on their base. He does this deprived of sleep, food and with minimal liquids. “Presence” is an immersive performance art piece that evolves into a



Alexandra Grounds Installation

multidimensional installation. The concept of the piece is a full commitment to the present moment.” On the walls are copper hammerings which give the impression of shapes underneath the surface, struggling to emerge. “Klainsek’s creation is driven from the power of natural force. The moment in which creation comes from destruction. In full commitment and trust, the artist devotes himself to the cycle of death and rebirth to which life in the material world is bound. As he strikes the copper with his axe, the work emerges. The works reveal the depth of simplicity — the raw cuts within the copper plane; a declaration that from this space of openness, the end becomes the beginning. In this perfect unfolding, each strike is a birth. The inspiration came from Klainsek’s commitment to making the

work come “alive”, taking the relationship with the work beyond the surface. Through a process that is both physical and emotional, the plane transcends into a living object.” This exhibition is on display until November 11th, 2018.

One of the most prominent recent shows for the Chelsea HG Gallery was dedicated to the works and journals of Dan Eldon. Eldon was one of the youngest ever war photojournalists, raising money as a teenager to travel to Africa and who was tragically stoned to death at the age of 22. The gallery displayed the photos and journals of his travels, which Eldon turned into multimedia collages. “In the pages that fill his bulging journals, Eldon reveals imagistic insight into his extraordinary perspective on the world. Filled with snapshots of his life growing up as a young expatriate in Kenya, explosive images taken in war-torn Somalia and detailed drawings of the world around him, the journal works blend the photographic reality with the transient ephemera of his everyday to create a vivid blueprint of Eldon’s imagination.” The works’ multi-layered complexity recalls the photo collages of early 20th century artists such as Hannah Höch and John Heartfield.

“While both tell of worlds submerged in chaos, Eldon’s works seek to find equilibrium within the madness. From page to page, Eldon’s style and rhythm shift and evolve, reflecting his exploration of the world and his place within it.”

HG Contemporary currently has the following exhibitions: “Frans Klainsek: Rebirth” at HG Contemporary Brooklyn. Opening in HG Contemporary Chelsea is a full exhibition of CÉVÉ on October 10th. And in November is a special photo exhibition titled “Depicting the Invisible” in honor of Veteran’s Day. A powerful portrait series by artist Susan Barron shows the faces and stories of veterans suffering from PTSD, with a portion of the sales going to nonprofits that support the cause. ♦

You can also view the collections on <http://www.hgcontemporary.com/>



Napa Valley HG Contemporary