

Dylan Kraus's "Night Light" At Entrance Gallery

Fellow artist Claire Christerson talks to Kraus about his artistic milieu of nature, magic, and wordless exploration.



Interview: Claire Christerson

Photo: Olimpia Dior

Images Courtesy Of The Artist And Entrance Gallery

Dylan Kraus is an artist who I can always have a passionate and genuine discussion with about nature. He is someone who I'll walk away from thinking, "Wow, I love art so much." Kraus' passion for art is contagious and it is evident in his latest body of work, entitled: Night Light, a show of small paintings, depicting scenes from nature. He is able to translate the complex, yet simple feelings that come with surrounding oneself in nature; and in doing so, finds the quiet within.

Claire Christerson: Hey Dylan thanks for being here.

Dylan Kraus: You too Claire, good to talk to you.

CC: I really like how simple your top quote of your press release is, but so meaningful. Do you want to start by talking about the magic that you feel in painting?

Quote: "I like painting, I think there's magic in painting"

DK: Yeah, well I think, on a really basic level I just feel things like perspective and how two colors next to each

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other look like there's space or dimension between them. You know, that in a way, is a basic magic- kind of unlocks a little space between things. Like what's there, what isn't there; and illusion, that's the basis of my belief about magic and painting. The perceived transformation of two dimensional to three dimensional, I think is really cool and I have always been fascinated by what eludes to space and I think that when you can have space or light in a painting, it really possesses something. Like all of a sudden, it has a gravity or weight to it, and I love that in all genres of paintings. I guess I'm just looking for weight behind or inside the work. So I just was interested in trying to find that, for myself and see what my observations created when they were all put together in practice. It's magic in a non-fantastical way; the process of painting in my head is a really cool dialogue without words. A clear place, not intellectual, it's like exploration.

CC: It feels uh... and this where I feel like you and I have a similar connection, to how we work, is it's very intuition based- do you feel that these paintings in particular really come from intuition?

DK: Yea I guess- I wish they were more intuitional like. For me at this point, when I am intuitional, I just make messes. They are things that I'm not yet comfortable with, that's why I am fascinated by more intuitional artists, like Miro or Kandinsky. To me-really they were like puzzles, trying to connect formal geometry. I love nature, it's sort of the most complex thing you can witness. You look at an iPhone or a really nice detailed piece of clothing- (silk or embroidery,) you know it's really nice. I love feeling it- feeling the detail of things, but nothing compares to ... you know.. I saw a dead bird the other day, a really nice little songbird in a window and its shape was amazing. It's an illusion in itself..a bird without its feathers- this kind of worm..but this coat that it wears, that's so sculpted and birds too are in motion, and they always are making these incredible geometric forms.

CC: I feel like the most incredible bird in terms of movement is the owl-

DK: Oh yea, a beautiful animal-incredible. I read that it has a small fringe on its feathers, that break the air, that make it fly silently, and I've witnessed a couple of owls. They are amazing, they fly huge and they're silent, crazy to see something so big, moving so much, while being completely silent. I feel like what I was interested in was...If you ever had a bird just land on your windowsill or land up close to you or stare at you, there's this unique time in between time. If you run into a deer in the woods, you're staring at each other, and you know it's gonna leave, you know it's gonna end and you sort of wait for it and witness it while it's there and it darts off. I like that visit. I'm really interested in that and I like these pieces to be kind of like a visitor that you somehow get to witness before it flies off.

CC: Do you want to talk about the painting involving the Northern Lights?

DK: "The Aurora Borealis", yeah, it was the first painting I made. I've been working on probably the longest, I was interested in that sort of Renaissance light. It's a funny painting because the mountains are depicted in the daytime, that's why they sort of glow, I just imagined them illuminated by the Northern Lights. I spent time in Montana as a kid, and I saw the little flickers of the Northern Lights, it was really cool and I was just touched by those landscapes. Flat and then mountains, so from thousands of yards ahead of you it's just nothing. And you know...these mountain ranges in the background that just get lighter and lighter and then you have this huge sky above it. I was really just influenced by that experience of space. I'll have dreams where I'm familiar with different levels of space- I'm in a small room, I'm in a big room, or I'm in a wide open space and that scene for me is about holding that wide open space which I think is just cool. It's open to you with a triangle, coming from the bottom.

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CC: It also to me feels the most mysterious, in that you don't have an animal in the piece, but it allows your mind to look to off into the distance and think about maybe what's even behind those mountains.

DK: I guess that the subject of that painting would just be the sky, but the sky is nothing without the land, it's kind of like an open painting, you just go right through it.

CC: Can you talk a little bit about the butterfly in terms of it being a symbol that speaks to you?

DK: Well yeah, I have my own like deeply personal associations, so to me, I actually am really speaking my own language, it really has no significance but to me. You know the butterfly's amazing- visually there's so much in a butterfly. Materially there's nothing, it has this huge presence with these big wings and you see it from another angle and it's flat! This tiny little bug...so visually I was just fascinated by them, flapping... they're amazing, really something. For me, they balance the show. They are like deconstructed birds, visually because they're made formally with the same shapes, they mimic each other, the forms of wings of the bird, the wings of the butterfly.

CC: Do you want to talk about some of the artists that you've been looking at recently that you're inspired by?

DK: Yeah, I get a lot of inspiration from art history, I think that's my main connection to art. These (paintings) have a lot to do with a lot of people, I think that color wise they have certain references like one of my first favorite artists that (I don't even know why I like them so much, but I do know now,) is Blinky Palermo, and other people like Josef Albers. I'm interested in people who are using color, Palermo I think used color to really create space, or "after image," to create something between worlds. They're really cool and they're really simple. I see Palermo in a lot of these colors: the red and the Veronese green, the teal.

Then you know subjects, inspiration, (like I was saying) about birds and feathers. Nature I think when you look at it, to observe it is the most complex thing, it keeps going and going. You know I love the romantics, I love Blake. And this time, I was really inspired over the summer just going to the MoMA looking at art and seeing what spoke to me, looking for inspiration. I was really drawn to Cubism, Fauvism and all those cool

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breakdowns...You know...they look fun to paint, I wanted to do something that was fun to paint. They looked really free but based on a vision that I could see clearly and also broken up. I was also looking at guys like Franz Marc, I was really inspired by his story autobiographically and I relate to the time I feel like those guys, you know what the industrial revolution was to them is what the digital revolution is to us. You know really parallel. Some sort of parallel unease...you feel like things are cooking but you don't know how it's going to boil over.

CC: Sometimes the easiest way is to communicate through symbols.

DK: Well yeah, you turn to what gives you strength, but gives you a sense of guidance or something to hold on to. Yeah, that's why these are also at night, it's a quiet, reflective, dark time.



“Night Light” is open from November 11th- December 17th, 2017, and is on view at Entrance, located at 48 Ludlow Street, open Wednesdays-Saturdays 12-6pm