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METAL



DYLAN SOLOMON KRAUS
BREAKING THE SPELL

Turning exhibitions into an opportunity to think beyond the single painting and consider the whole body of work as a tableau, Dylan Solomon Kraus presents from today until June 16 his third solo exhibition with Peres Projects and his very first in Berlin. Under the title of ExHypnosis and being shown coinciding with Gallery Weekend Berlin, the Ohio-born artist shows his belief that we need to be full wakefulness in order to approach the challenges of our times. About seeing the world in more connected ways, his relationship with technology and digital tools, and his perception of the current art scene, we asked him in this interview that you can now read below.

How are you and where are you answering from?

I am well, thank you for asking! I write to you from my studio in Berlin.

You're now presenting your third solo exhibition with Peres Projects and your very first in Berlin coinciding with the Gallery Weekend Berlin that kicks off this Friday. What do you like most about this gallery?

Yes, it's very exciting to show during Gallery Weekend Berlin, there's lots of cross-pollination happening. I like working with Peres Projects because they are very professional and experienced with what they do and that allows me as an artist to do my job better.

Could you tell us briefly about the two previous exhibitions you presented with them? How are they similar and different between them?

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Shows are an opportunity for me to think beyond a single painting and consider the whole body of work as a tableau. I like to balance each body of work with imagery that comes both from my inner world and the outer world. The difference between the shows is a refinement of my techniques and more clarity in the ideas. This show will be my largest to date which is very exciting. Also showing in Berlin is like being on my home field right now so that's extra special.

Now it's the turn of ExHypnosis, your new exhibition that can be visited until mid-June. If you had to define this new project in just one sentence, what would it be?

“Seek and you will find.”



How long have you been working on it and what emotions have been stirred up as you have progressed through the creative process?

My paintings are like those 1000-year-old soups, I never have a static moment in my studio, I'm always working and reworking over the canvas so some of these works have been going on for years. I formally started working on the show around the new year and I usually work 7 days a week because I love to paint. I work through my emotions in my work: loneliness, fear, anger, joy, lust, and my anxieties about the world. Art is a way to transform those feelings into something I can be proud of.

I'd like to know more about your relationship with hypnosis, is it something that has always interested you? Can you tell us more about this?

The title is ExHypnosis which means to break hypnosis. Hypnotism is when people are slightly unconscious and under the influence of the hypnotist. I think we need full wakefulness in order to approach the challenges of our times, so I am interested in breaking the spell and ending hypnosis, the snap of the fingers as it's sometimes represented in movies.

In the fantastic video that Peres Projects has released for *ExHypnosis*, you talk about how repetition can be something positive. Do you feel that in the art world, there is a tendency to continually surprise, to do something radically new or different from previous work, which is not always positive?

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Repetition for me is how I refine my process, it's like playing an instrument, first, you learn the instrument and then you can be creative. I think each artist has to find that line for themselves between the familiar and the unknown. The wider art world doesn't always know what it wants but once the dust settles it's easier to see what had substance and what was just empty gestures. I always like to return to certain motifs, I often want to try them again in new ways but I also am always searching for new motifs that describe my ideas and feelings.



What would you like viewers to feel when they enter the gallery to see your new exhibition?

I would like to inspire people to see the world in more connected ways. From the birds tweeting outside the gallery to the far-out properties of light (time/space) pouring in from the windows. I want to bring attention to our connection as human beings to the earth and the cosmos so we know who we are better.

When seeing your paintings I feel a deep sensation of intimacy, introspection and even nostalgia. What is your favourite time of day to work and where do you feel most inspired to create?

I am a morning bird, I wake up with the sun! I jump right into the studio first thing. I always feel clearest in the morning and I try to channel that energy into my most challenging problems of the day first then I gradually do the more busy work tasks. By late afternoon or evening, I'm ready to relax and socialise.

You also say in the video that you decided a long time ago not to work with computers or Photoshop, why? Do you feel that the essence of your work remains more intact if technology does not come into play?

I recall being in school in 2010, there was this immense pressure to know Photoshop and have a website, neither of which I ever did and I'm glad for it. I always thought that my energy would be better spent finding alternative solutions. They say "We shape our tools and our tools shape us," which is true. I always find it funny when I recognize something in a painting from the first page of Google Image results. I like to go out and take my own source images and draw them myself, because for one it makes me a better more attuned artist and two it's more unique and special that way, mistakes and all. I think Photoshop can be a great tool tho, Da Vinci would have loved it, it's just a personal choice, no shade at all towards using it.

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And what about social media like Instagram, do you use them to promote your work?

I used to enjoy Instagram when it was like the wild west, now I mostly use it to share my work with people. Living in a new country on a different continent, it's helpful to keep in touch with a wide group of people that I might otherwise lose touch with. But in some ways Instagram feels like a self-built cage, I wish it was more creative and not just programmed to be addicting. Think of the possibilities if it was less of a one-dimensional surveillance tool, imagine if it had higher goals than just scrambling one's mind in an echo chamber...



Do you think the international art scene going through a good moment?

I see huge strides in the field of painting right now... people are waking up and pushing the line in new ways, challenging themselves more. There's more pressure on artists now to be better. To stand out you're literally competing with every painting ever made. Art is also becoming more mainstream which is both positive and negative. The availability is good but also truly 'good' art isn't always recognised and it's important to not be too influenced by the current wave. Look back at an old issue of Art magazine from 10 years ago you'll hardly recognise anyone, the good stuff takes a while to be appreciated. I actually barely pay attention to contemporary art, I feel my dialogue is more related to fields like history, science, philosophy, and anthropology, so I'm not the one hundred per cent best person to ask as I keep my head in the sand to some degree.

Is there anything you can tell us about your projects for the coming months?

I've really put all my energy into this show, I've hardly looked over the easel. I will travel a bit after the opening and return to the studio refreshed. For me, I mostly just paint and let everything else fall into place. I look forward to working without the pressure of a looming solo show tho, that will be a nice change of pace!

– Words by David Alarcón