

Andy! Oxidation paintings by Mambo

A project by Kristofer Paetau, Rio de Janeiro, 2008



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INTERVIEW BY HEIKE WETZIG

Did Mambo piss at command or spontaneously, according to his nature? He seems to be a true friend to his master. But you might have arranged a clandestine manipulation, confronting us with a Warhol-like series of art production in a continuation in time and by accident. What is the difference between this work and Andy Warhol himself pissing a painting?

I first met Mambo and his master Eugenio over a year ago when I was in a residency in Rio de Janeiro. Eugenio was working in a circus and he had just bought Mambo who was only a couple of weeks old. At that time I already wanted to realize the piss painting project with Mambo but he was too young and my residency was ending soon. When I moved from Berlin to live in Rio de Janeiro one year later, I contacted Eugenio to see if we could go on with the project now that Mambo was one year old and I had all the time I wanted. It took Eugenio about one month to train Mambo to piss on the copper painted canvas each time he said "Andy!". Then we made the first walks together, filming Mambo in action. By the way: Andy Warhol used to ask his friends, assistants and some visitors to piss on the canvases. So the main difference is the dog and the process of teaching it to piss on a canvas at command and to film this 'painting process' that takes place in the streets.

What do you think about the artistic process and the obvious aesthetic value of this ongoing series, and how about the selling price?

I always liked the animal art productions that I saw on television when I was a child: elephants and monkeys painting beautiful abstract - or even figurative - expressionism. I liked the idea of trying to make 'conceptual' abstract expressionist paintings with a dog and to parody Andy Warhol whose oxydation paintings I like very much, because they are parodies of the abstract expressionism that was the 'official art' at that time in the USA. The fact that paintings made by an animal can be as beautiful or even more beautiful than paintings made by human beings is also thrilling me. And I like the fact that a chemical reaction can produce beautiful paintings randomly. But my main interest lies in the beauty of the concept. This work is a parody, a joke if you want but a joke which produces beautiful paintings and which took me a long time to prepare and to carry out. I don't know anything about the selling price. I've never sold a single artwork in my life, but I'm still hoping for the best.

Do you love dogs?

Depends on the dog. In my family we always had a dog called Tina. When Tina died my parents bought another female dog of the same race and called her Tina too. At some point I lost the count, there must have been at least three or four Tinias. Right now I am more fascinated by birds. In my small room in Rio I live with a cockatiel which is imitating other birds and I am thinking about having a parrot.

You might have some basic ideas about the so-called bad taste, about popular culture and art, about communication, art amateurs and animals, or the importance of wit (in art). Would you like to talk about that?

I think bad taste is essential. Bad taste is not the same as lack of taste, it is a parody of - and an attack on - good taste. Art needs bad taste, popular culture, amateurism and amateurs (lovers) - maybe also animals - in order to create emotions, wit and beauty.

Dog piss on copper painted canvas, 30 cm x 40 cm. Ongoing series.







