

Joachim Lambrechts | In pursuit of happiness

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Explore the work from the very talented artist Joachim Lambrechts in our newest artist feature! The artist shares his series Silouetas from his solo show at the Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery in London and works from his upcoming show for Art Karlsruhe with Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery. In our interview he speaks about his past, the present and his plans for 2022.

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Joachim Lambrechts | Image credit the artist

Who is Joachim Lambrechts?

The munchies art club is proud to present their newest artist feature the wonderful contemporary Belgian artist **Joachim Lambrechts**.



'Smiling Crying' | Oil sticks, oil paint, enamel paint, spray paint and paper pasted on canvas
| 150x150cm | 2021 | One of the four Engel paintings for Art Karlsruhe with Kristin Hjellegerde
gallery | Image copyright the artist

Joachim Lambrechts (born in 1986) is a renowned urban artist from Antwerp, Belgium. In 2001 he began his studies at an art school in Antwerp.

Later he got very involved with the graffiti and street art scene in his home city and in 2004 he distanced himself from his academic education and left art school without graduating. In the years that followed, Joachim spent a lot of time experimenting with various approaches to graffiti and became quickly integrated into the Belgian street art scene.

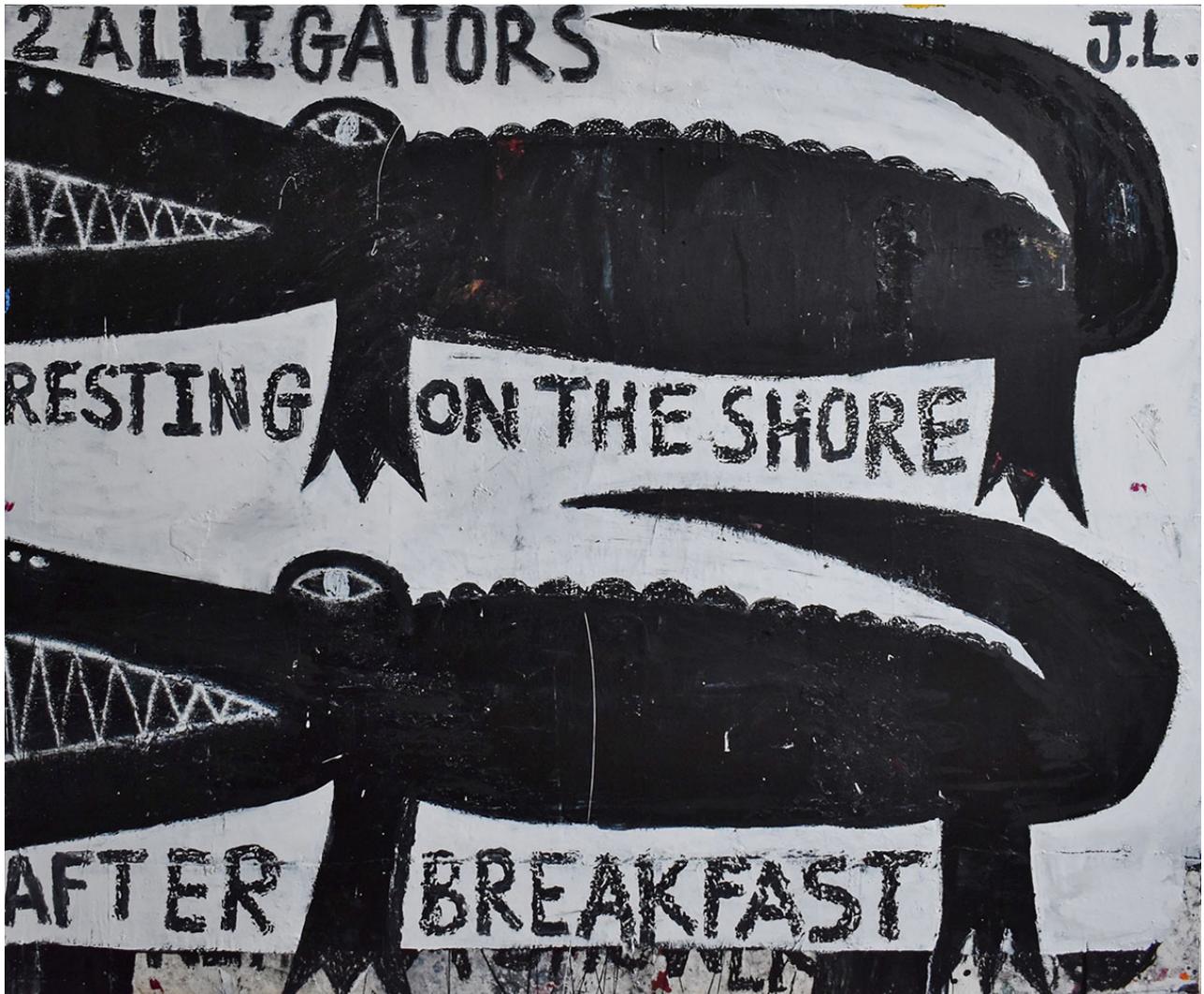


Solo show Silouetas | Gallery Kristin Hjellegjerde London | 2021 | Image credit Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

Since 2010, painting on canvas has been Joachim's main focus in addition to creating street art across Europe. In contrast to his murals, Joachim never makes preliminary studies or sketches when he starts working on a canvas.

Paradoxically, he feels freer within the four walls of his studio which is reflected in his paintings. They are the result of a more spontaneous process, and as such, possess a sense of urgency and innocence.

Text by Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.



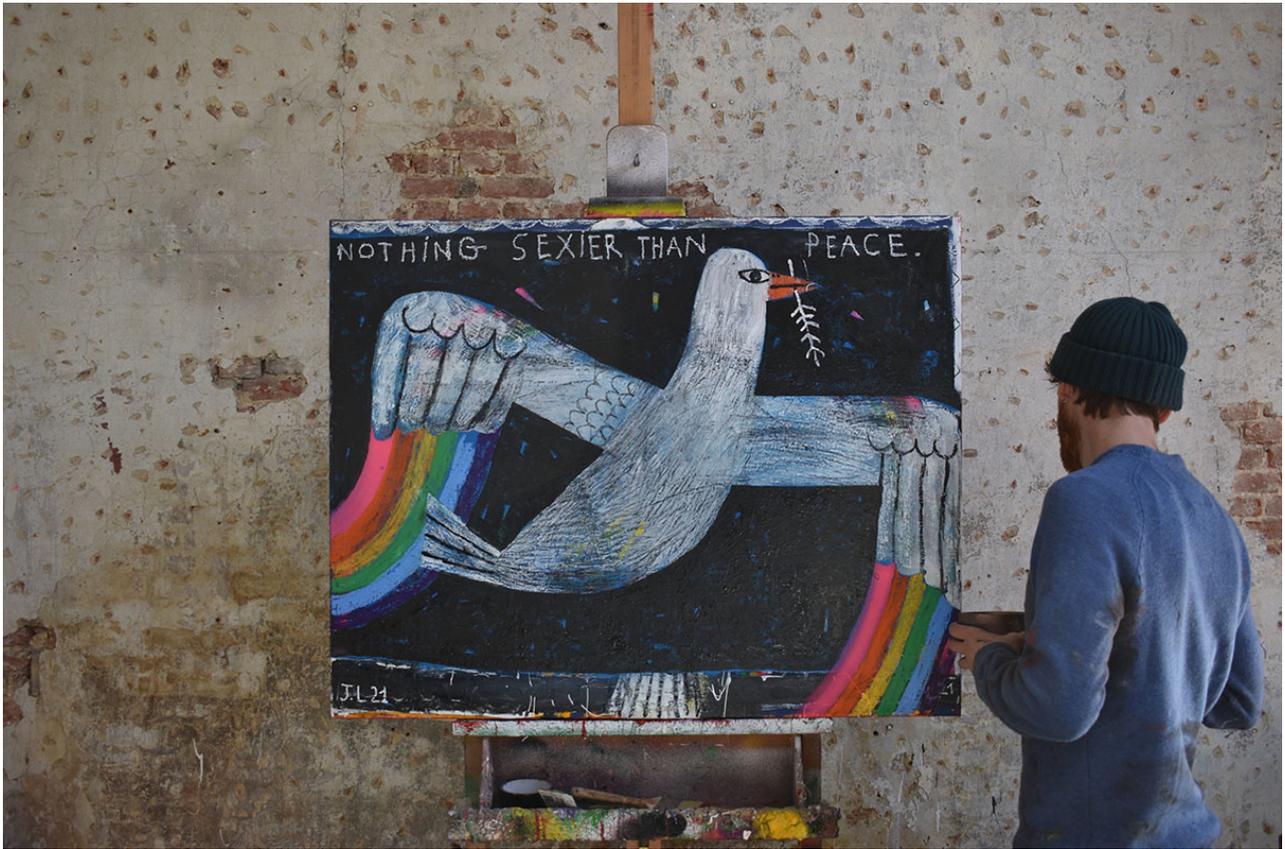
'2 alligators resting on the shore after breakfast' | Enamel paint, oil stick and spray on canvas | 100x120 cm | Image copyright the artist

Interview questions:

Congratulations on being represented by the prominent Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery. Can you tell us a bit about how and when that came to be?

I had been following them on social media for some time, but the first time I really had contact with Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery must have been around the end of 2019, early 2020. I had just made the decision to stop making murals in order to fully focus on my work on canvas.

I was kinda looking for a gallery and started talking to Kristin (the founder of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery). She immediately liked my work and suggested I participate in a group show.



Joachim Lambrechts | Image courtesy the artist

Not much later she called me back to ask me if I didn't want to do a solo show right away. That sounded, as you can imagine, as an offer you can't refuse! Of course I said yes and started painting.

That first show was an instant success and they've been representing me ever since. Not only artistically, but also on a friendly level there was an immediate click. And that's just as important if you ask me. The whole team is so driven and passionate. Wonderful to work with!



Solo show Silouetas | Gallery Kristin Hjellegjerde London | 2021 | Image credit Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

You began drawing and painting at a young age, and received inspiration and support from your grandmother, who painted and loved the arts. I read she gave you a set of drums as a gift. Which was then followed by a band you were or still are part of called Mexican Seafood, inspired by the Nirvana song by the same name. How important a role does your music play in your life? If you received two amazing offers before your art career started, one in the music scene and one as an artist, which one would you have chosen?

Yes that's right! In my teens I played drums for a long time. What a great time! We were so young but had a lot of ambition! we played our own songs, rehearsed as much as we could and we loved gigs! When we went to play somewhere we were usually paid with beer! Real Rock & Roll haha!



In the artists studio | Image courtesy the artist

| *Art is really a deep passion that I will probably never get rid of!*

The band broke up as everyone got older and life got serious. But art has always been the common thread through my life. I have always painted and drawn. I can't remember ever starting it, I guess I just never stopped.

So I think if I ever had to choose between either becoming a professional musician or becoming a professional artist, I would have gone for a professional artist. I still love music but playing it was more of a phase. Art is really a deep passion that I will probably never get rid of!



'Skull with cigarette' | Oil stick, enamel paint, spray paint and paper pasted on canvas | 150x150cm | 2021 | Image copyright the artist

During your studies you began your career as a street artist, and looking through the web, you have done some very impressive work. When did you decide to work on canvas? Do you still do large wall projects?

Well, actually I've been making work on canvas longer than I've made murals. But it's true that I developed a passion for street art in high school. Many of my school friends did graffiti and introduced me to the Antwerp street art scene.

In the beginning it was just for fun and we just painted around. However, after a while I started to take it seriously, developed a style and started making bigger and bigger murals. Until in the long run I only did murals on commission.



Solo show Silouetas | Gallery Kristin Hjellegjerde London | 2021 | Image credit Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

But that also had its negative sides. There was a lot of preparation involved. I always worked from a sketch and often had tight deadlines. The rock and roll was gone if you know what I mean.

That's why I suddenly stopped making murals. Pretty crazy actually, cause I had just organized a street art festival in Belgium, traveled around Europe to paint and the orders started flooding in. But the fun was gone and I wanted to go back to the essence of creating.

That's why I decided to focus entirely on my work on canvas, within the four walls of my studio. Free and impulsive work, without always knowing what the result will look like. I feel like I'm painting for myself again and I can do whatever I want. The best feeling to create! So no murals at the moment, and no plans to do any soon. But who knows, maybe one day I'll get the urge to hit the streets again?



Joachim Lambrechts | Image credit Axelle Degrave

In your newest series, *Siluetas*, your use of text not only functions as a visual label, or a humorous tag but also as a framing tool. I also noticed that all your canvases are painted black or a dark color on the side, giving the work a framed and finished look. Can you tell us a bit about that?

Words do indeed play an important role in the '*Siluetas* series'. They add humor, always show the title of the painting in question and sometimes literally give a word of explanation. Although that's not really necessary because the images are usually clear enough on their own and the words just literally describe what is being depicted. So you could ask whether the text is not superfluous? But their main function is indeed their compositional importance.

They often keep the painting in balance. if I exaggerate I would even dare to say that in some cases the text is just as important as the image itself. In a few paintings the text runs all the way around, from corner to corner, so that it indeed seems as if the text is given a frame-like function. But that's not really the point. As I said, I work very spontaneously and often the text just ends up where there is room for it, without really thinking about it. But that doesn't mean it isn't important. On the contrary.

The black sides of my paintings have purely an aesthetic value. For some reason the sides of my canvases always get super dirty while painting. Actually, simply because I work super chaotic. So I once started painting them black to cover that up. But in a way I really liked those black sides, and as you say it gives the paintings a finished impression. So I kept doing it.



View Solo show Silouetas | Gallery Kristin Hjellegjerde London | 2021 | Image credit Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

Where do you work? Do you have time schedules, special processes?

Recently I moved to a new studio, just outside Antwerp. My previous studio became too small to work properly, so it was time for something bigger.

Another great advantage of a studio outside the city center is that it is much quieter. Before that I heard sirens all the time, honking cars, shouting people, moving trams, etc. I like the city, but when I work I find it more pleasant to be able to do it in peace and quiet. So, very happy with the space I have now.

I work as much as possible. Usually Monday to Friday from about 10am to 6pm. There really is a pattern in it. You can just compare it to a normal working day. It happens that I also work during the weekend, but usually I keep those days off.

Little rock and roll here, I know! I wish I could give you a juicier answer. Haha!



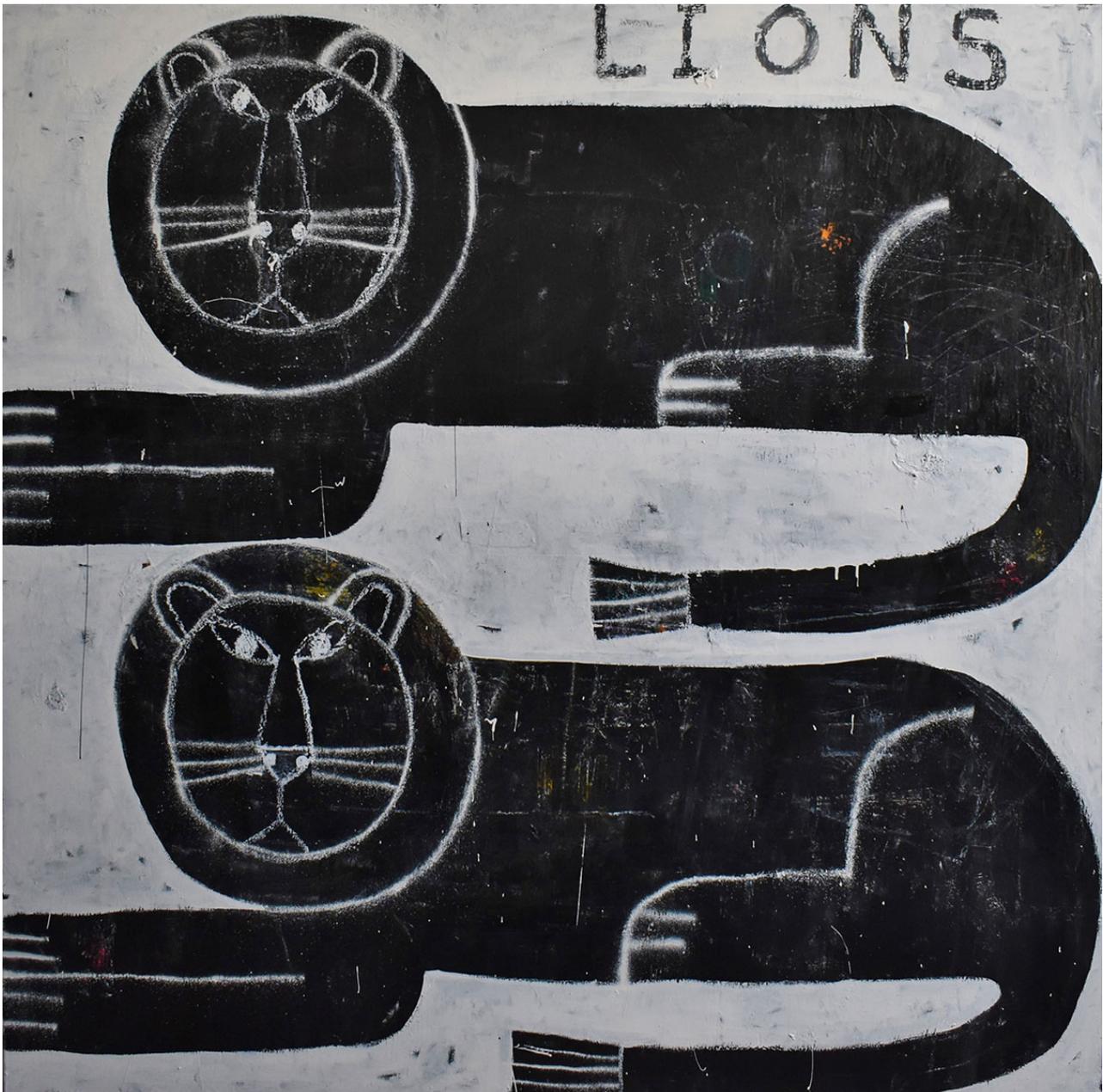
In the studio | Image

Your previous series called *Allegro*, music plays the major role. Now a series in black and white named *Silouetas* (silhouette or shadow). You describe your practice as a free creative expression, letting the artwork happen spontaneously. Is that what titles are for? Keeping you on course? Or is a certain thematic dominating your mind, and the title develops as you work?

The titles usually follow later. I mean, I never actually start with a title that I then turn into a painting. Of course it happens that I have an idea of what I want to paint, but even then that idea may change completely during the process. Sometimes I don't know what I want to do, but then I just start. The real inspiration often comes when I'm already painting.

In the case of 'Allegro' I did indeed work around the theme of music. What I especially like working on one particular theme is that it can challenge you to paint certain things that you wouldn't otherwise. For 'Allegro' I have painted musical instruments that I have never painted before, and of course you learn from that. That's always interesting.

When I started making the show 'Siluetas' it wasn't really my intention to make a whole series in black and white. The first work just happened to be in those colors. It triggered me to make a second, then a third, and a fourth, and so on. After a while I became obsessed with the black and white and couldn't stop. I wanted to see where it would take me and decided to make a whole series of it. During the process I started to think more and more about the black figures and started to see them as shadows. That's why we decided to call the show 'Siluetas'. The predominant use of those two colors made it a very cohesive and pure series. By making all those paintings I got the feeling that I have really found what I want to do. So I plan to continue developing the possibilities of black and white in the future as well.



'Lions' | Enamel paint, oil stick, spray paint and paper pasted on canvas | 150x150 cm | 2021 | Image copyright the artist

Your solo exhibition at the gallery Kristin Hjellegjerde in Berlin, called *Allegro*, scheduled for January 2021, took place digitally because of covid and restrictions. How did you experience this change of events?

The past two years have indeed not been easy for many sectors. But as is human nature, we adapt and look for a way to make it work. Just like other galleries, 'Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery' has indeed invested more in digital marketing such as virtual tours, after-movies, interviews, social media, etc. But they have also simply decided to let the entire gallery program continue. Nothing was cancelled.

So it's not quite right that '*Allegro*' was only able to continue digitally. All works have actually hung in the gallery. Only the gallery was of course closed to the public (visit was only allowed under strict conditions) and I was not able to travel to Berlin either, which is of course a shame because you have worked hard for it and are looking forward to it.

But apart from that, the show was a success.

I don't have the impression that the art world has suffered greatly from the covid restrictions. On the contrary, at one point a gallery visit was just about the only thing you could do for entertainment, because it can be done quite safely. I even think that a lot of people (re)discovered art in the past two years. And that's quite a positive side of the medal, isn't it?



Solo show Siluetas | Gallery Kristin Hjellegjerde London | 2021 | Image credit Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

There is a video you made for this digital event on Vimeo. There you talk about the fact that when you paint you can listen to the same song repeatedly. Was there a particular song you listened to when making Siluetas?

Haha yes, I often listen to the same song while painting. It helps me to stay in a certain state of mind.

When I was working on 'Siluetas' there were days when I listened incessantly to 'Under The Pressure' from 'The War on Drugs'. It is a fairly long song of about 9 minutes. What I really like about this song is that the last 3 minutes are taken up by a kind of monotonous, almost psychedelic solo. You almost go into a trance when you hear it, love it!



'Fruit bowl with cherries' | Oil sticks, enamel paint, spray paint and paper pasted on canvas | 150x150 cm | Image copyright the artist

When you informed me, you would send only black and white artworks for your feature, I was a bit worried the article would be too somber, but the works are magnificent and the lack of color does not change the splendor of your work. In the Siluetas series, your work process began with colorful layers for texture before finally applying layers of black and white paint. Was that inspired by your work process on the 'El Capitán con flauta', from the Allegra series where you found his jacket too colorful whilst working on this piece and spontaneously covered the color with white paint?

Glad to hear this and I totally agree.

The predominant colors are indeed black and white, but that doesn't make the works gloomy at all. In fact, if you take a second look at the works, you will notice that they are full of color.

These are indeed underlying layers that become visible through cracks and scratches in the black paint.

That technique is not inspired by 'El Capitán con flauta', but it is an understandable comparison because of the similarities. So I understand why you're asking that question. No, It's a technique that I developed just by experimenting.



'If you drink the blood, you become the blood' | Enamel paint, oil stick, spray paint and paper pasted on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2021 | Image copyright the artist

But you know that black paper for kids that you can buy at any hobby or drawing store? We used to call it magic or scratch paper. If you scratch in it with a needle or whatever, all of a sudden all kinds of colors appear. This way you could make fun and surprising drawings, because you never knew what color you were going to find. The technique I use in my work reminds me of that and maybe I was unconsciously inspired by this.

Who knows...



Leon Peligroso | Oil sticks, oil paint, enamel paint, spray paint and paper pasted on canvas | 150x150cm | 2021 | Image copyright the artist

You use Spanish titles quite a lot. Where does that come from?

Good question. I don't speak Spanish but I can tell you that I have come to really appreciate the Spanish language in the last few years. It's definitely a language I'd like to learn. I also just love Spain and their culture, the food, the art, their climate etc.

Sometimes certain words or phrases just sound better in another language. And I think a lot of things just sound good in Spanish. That's really the only reason.



Joachim Lambrechts | Image credit Axelle Degrave

You have worked together with two of our featured artists, ED Broner at the Breach Miami show and exhibited together with Hunter Potter at the Fran Reus gallery in Spain. Were you present at the exhibitions and did you meet in person with Ed or Hunter?

Yes correct. Two great artists! I really love their work. I know them both from chat, but unfortunately I have never met them in real life. I had a lot of contact with Ed at one point in particular. He curated the show in Miami so we talked regularly on Instagram or had a video call, because sometimes that's easier. But both the Show in Miami and the Show at 'Galeria Fran Reus' (Palma De Mallorca - Spain) took place in full corona period, so again, I was not able to go.

Anyway, I hope to meet them both someday. Always interesting to get to know people. By the way, at the end of March I have a solo show planned at 'Galeria Fran Reus'. The first time I have a solo show there, so very exciting. This time I will definitely try to go there. A good excuse to learn some Spanish already!



'When the owl wakes up at night to kill, we sleep' | Enamel paint, oil stick, spray and paper pasted on canvas | 120x140 cm | 2021 | Image copyright the artist

How important a role has social media been for you in your career as an artist?

I'd be lying if I said it's not important. It's just part of the game these days. I use it intensively but in a constructive way I think. Platforms such as Instagram are just super useful to reach a large audience, to network or to get in touch with other artists, galleries, collectors etc.

Of course it also has its negative sides because it often takes a lot of time, you have the 'Fear of missing out' and the dopamine that is produced in your brain when you get a lot of 'likes' works almost like a drug. And that can be very addictive.

In the beginning I sometimes suffered from this, but now I have found a much better balance. I think you just have to think of it as a tool, and like any tool you have to learn to work with it.



'Rainbowmaker' | Oil sticks, oil paint, enamel paint, spray paint and paper pasted on canvas | 150x150cm | One of the four Engel paintings for Art Karlsruhe with Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery | 2021 | Image copyright the artist

In your life so far it was always clear that you are an artist at heart, and yet there was a time you call turbulent, when you were working in factories, had no aspirations, and then returned to art (thankfully) And yet it's still a profession that doesn't guarantee a salary, who and what supported your decision to go for it, anyway?

For starters, you should know that I had a fairly turbulent childhood. I could write a book about it, but the bottom line is that I realized early on that I was going to have to do everything alone, and that I should expect little help. Not mentally or financially. On top of that, I never even finished high school and struggled for years with an alcohol addiction. I've been sober for 12 years now but back then I was as demotivated as anything.

When I became a father at 21 I had to make choices, because suddenly I was responsible for someone else's life. The priority then was money and a roof over our heads. Therefore, I started working in factories and warehouses. Day after day and year after year I became more unhappy, because that really wasn't what I wanted to do with my life, but I felt like I was trapped.

At some point I realized that I had two options. Either I would work in factories all my life, or I would walk away from it, start painting like a maniac and never give up until I could make a living from it. I chose the second. It sounds easy when I put it that way, but it took years to get the ball rolling. But ever since I made that choice, I've always believed in it.

To answer your question, and it may sound corny, but the desire for a happier life has pushed me to go for it.



Joachim Lambrechts | Image copyright the artist

You have achieved what so many emerging artist only dream of, a famous and prestigious gallery that represents you, you are part of the Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection, connecting and partaking in international shows worldwide, must be mind-boggling how has your life changed now that your path is such a success?

As you could just read above, I had to work very hard for everything and the road to where I am now was anything but easy. So of course it is nice if all the effort you put in pays off. But I feel like I've only just started and I'm at the beginning of my career. I mean, the road is still long. Or at least I hope so, haha!

I am also very grateful to be able to work with 'Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery'. they support all their artists in a great way and the opportunities they give us really allow us to grow and develop ourselves. A good gallery is really invaluable to an artist! I measure my success by how happy I am, and in many ways I am happier than I was 10 or 15 years ago. So yeah, I'm doing something right I guess...



Joachim Lambrechts | Image copyright the artist

What one advice would you give emerging young artists today?

The advice I gave to myself: Never stop!

What happens now? It's been quite a year for you. What are your plans for 2022?

I just finished a series of four angel paintings for 'Art-Karlsruhe', an art fair in Germany. Initially, the fair went on next month, but due to covid, the organization has decided to postpone it to July. My work will be on display there at the booth of 'Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery'. Then in March - as I just mentioned - there will be a solo show at 'Galeria Fran Reus' (Palma De Mallorca - Spain) which I am currently working on. Later this year a duo show is planned with the great 'Rune Christensen' at 'Galerie Wolfsen' in Denmark, something I'm really looking forward to as well. Together with 'Artflasch' I plan to release a screen print sometime this year and of course I will also

continue to work with 'Original Paper Works' who will release some of my original works on paper. And then there are a few more things we are working on, but I can't say much about that yet.

Anyway, I'm really looking forward to this year, and the next, and the next...

Short CV

Siluetas, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London (2021)

NOW NOW, Breach Gallery, Miami Florida (2021)

Pavillion, Galeria Fran Reus, Palma De Mallorca (2021)

Allegro, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, Berlin (2021)

On the Spur of the Moment, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London(2020).

Follow the artist on Instagram:

A big thank you to the very wonderful and amazing artist Joachim for sharing his work and his story with us and our viewers!

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