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Recap: Pedro Matos
"Building Castles Made of Sand" @ Martha Otero Gallery



LANDON METZ INTERVIEW

The Legacy

You can look at Landon Metz's paintings and be effected on both an emotional and sensory level, but it is when you talk to him and hear the eloquent explanations of the theories surrounding his works that you truly appreciate how passionate and visionary he is. Landon grew up in Arizona, riding horses and playing the piano before a stint in Canada, soon moving to LA to study at the Art Centre. Landon now lives in New York with his wife and muse, Hannah of clothing label The Loved One, spending his days working at his studio in Greenpoint. His works speak to a sensuality, and trueness of material, deconstructing the act of painting itself to staggering effect. Landon also speaks to us about his musical project Myrrh, his latest works and his life goals.

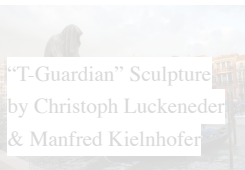
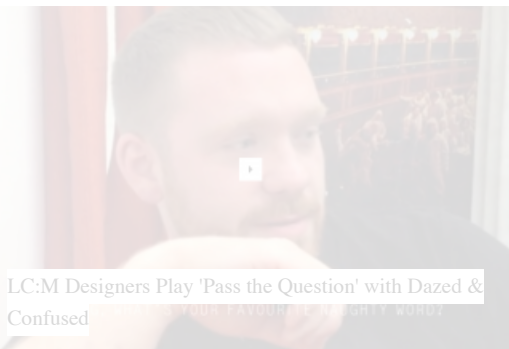
Megan Christiansen: *You have your finger in a lot of different pies, what do you tell people your job is when you meet them?*

Landon Metz: Haha well I'm a painter first and foremost for sure, that's the way I choose to project myself, but that's a really good question because up until this year I was doing a lot of different things for employment as well as my art. Basically half way through 2011 I transitioned most of my income to my painting sales. So at the moment my main focus is my studio practice, I have a studio in Greenpoint which I share with a fellow painter and I'm there at least 5 or 6 days a week working. I moved to New York in 2009 so between then and 2011 I was also doing freelance graphic design and art direction, photography etc. That stuffs cool but was just a way for me to make money and at some point I just felt like I couldn't really focus on what I wanted to do 100%, so I made the decision that I would at least attempt to make painting my full time job and by the end of 2011 that was a reality for me. There's also lots of other forms of art practice in my life, photography is a big thing for me, not so much for the medium but I feel like it's important to document my life. I feel this need for things to have this visual representation for people that aren't there. It's not so much that being a photographer resonates with me but it's just a way of documenting a lifestyle which I feel like is a bigger part of artist branding and tells a bigger story behind who I am and the person behind these abstract paintings.

MC: *So tell me a little bit about how you got to where you are now, so from*



So the first series of that theme I did in 2010 were all oil they were all more rigid and far more dimensional and I started to play with light a different way. I was painting straight tube a lot, I wasn't even using brushes that much and I was using a lot of pre-made colors. So that stemmed into the next series in 2011 on which is enamel. Enamel is an extremely different medium to oil, it has its own set of rules and you have to master it. It's far more fluid and action based and it plays



Piotr Uklanski: 'Untitled (Open Wide)' @ Art Basel Unlimited

how you got into art and then to making it now your full time job?

LM: It's really been a huge thing for me my whole life, I feel like growing up in the desert has really effected the way in which I perceive information and the way I process it, and my aesthetic tendencies are still really inspired by that harsh, minimal, subtle, palette of the desert. So I grew up in a more rural/suburban area of Arizona outside of Phoenix called Scottsdale. There was this group of brothers that lived across the street from us and there was this one guy, he was about 8 years older than me, who was really big into illustration. So I used to go over to their house all the time and watch him draw and just be really amazed by it, and then I would ask my parents to draw so I could watch them. I was really into watching people make art when I was a kid and even just watching them make things in general. I started trying to replicate things at a really young age. I got really into punk music when I was like 8 or 9 which sounds so stupid! I got really into the idea of sub-cultures at that age and I started toying with the idea of getting out of the desert with music. So I played in Punk bands and Ska bands in jr high.

MC: What instrument?

LM: Well I grew up playing the violin! So I would play the violin and ride horses and then I was like oh shit because I got into Ska and started playing trumpet and trombone when I was like 12 and then started playing bass when I was like 14. I'm still really into bass punk lines.

MC: Do you still play?

LM: Well I actually have a small music project that I started with this guy that I grew up with who lives in NY now. We made an EP in like a weekend last year and it just kind of sat around, so we revisited it recently and we still really like it. So we are actually writing a full album right now and we want to play shows again.

MC: Whats that project called?

LM: It's called Myrrh. (laughs) When we were writing the music this thing happened to me where I actually think I was addicted to burning frankincense and myrrh in my studio, I think I was addicted to the smoke from the incense if thats possible...So the smell would just stick in my skin and my hair which meant I always had this permanent perfume! So when we were recording and something didn't feel quite right I would just start burning incense to get in the zone. So we were like dude we have to call this project Myrrh because thats basically all it's about, so for better or for worse I made the music while I was on incense! (laughs) The first EP we made was super pschycadelic and trippy, kind of this seedy, 80's synth, punk sound - so for the album we aren't really even thinking about it but it's a more accessible version of the same thing and it's got more of a dancey beat which I'm psyched on.

MC: So how did you go from playing in punk bands back in the day to making abstract art?

LM: Well when I graduated high school, I went to Canada and ended up traveling around for like a year and a half living in a punk house with 7 or 8 other kids and thats where I started toying around with making visual art. So I moved to LA and went to Art Center and worked in an Art Direction job for a while, that job was important for me because it showed me that I can't really have a "job!" The one thing that always felt right was when I was making something just for the sake of making it, which was true to my vision and didn't have an ulterior motive. So I moved to NYC knowing I couldn't have a "job". I got to there and everything just changed, I thought I knew things and I was like "Shit! I don't know anything!" I learnt a lot just from stepping foot in New York! New York changes you, you either adapt and grow with it or you just get kicked out! Especially in such a specific game as the art world, you learn how it works, you learn what the position and role of everyone is and just stupid things like the types of glasses people wear! People that collect art always wear statement glasses! It basically took me two years of being a part of the community here and going out to things, learning the market, understanding conceptually what was going on, what my place is and my relevancy in the contemporary art world. I really don't think its possible without coming here and being a part of it.

So on the last day of December 2010 I was in Quebec at Hannah's dad's cottage and I started making something along the lines of a New Years resolution, but it ended up being this set of goals for my entire life. So I just ended up thinking about when I die, what is the voice that I want to continue on, is there going to be one, do I care if there is one...

rules of gravity. Oil can build up and stand 10 feet off the you want it to, but enamel is a flat surface and the way it light is completely different. Also the way it responds to itself is a whole different thing. I've always had an interest being ambivalent and negative space not being a means to but an end in itself, it's not just blank space and empty for reason. It's defining the color and the form of the paint, there is equally as important as what is there. In general interested in altered perceptions of reality and perceiving environments in a way that is outside the inherited collective consciousness. You know, looking at the color relating to its greenness instead of relating it to a tree. Its relationships to other things that you have experienced it but it's about creating new situations for you to experience the present moment. So I got really interested in that amount of space and the way forms float through that and dance, choreographing that form in negative space. So in that sense I stopped priming my canvas because I felt like I wanted notion of space and its ambivalence to a medium level as canvas as a medium in itself. Not only am I defining what negative space is, I'm defining what it is made of.

MC: So with "On Water" can you tell me a little bit about the experimenting with the dyes and what has come out of the process?

LM: So for a year I was working in oil, then another year with a little bit of oil and I started thinking about what the natural profession would be. I was searching around for a medium and I was doing a commission in acrylic. I liked could water it down and make it sort of act like dye and I decided I should just use dye instead! So the progression conceptually was this idea of, like I said before, the break what it means to make a picture. I wanted a medium that present on the canvas but would not cover the canvas, it become part of the canvas. This new series has been about the texture of the canvas present the whole time and the between medium and canvas is being blurred more and more. Where color and form start and end now no longer have dimensional boundary or a textural difference. It's hinting notion of interconnection which is really important to me.

I want to choose mediums that have the ability to speak to a voice, to have a 50/50 interplay between the artist and the work. It was all about me the work would look really different, it about my vision. I'm choosing these things and utilizing forces like gravity. The pieces take at least three days for the dye to completely dry and in that time gravity pushes the dye direction because my surfaces are never really flat. So my have become mason jars and Palm Springs bottles.

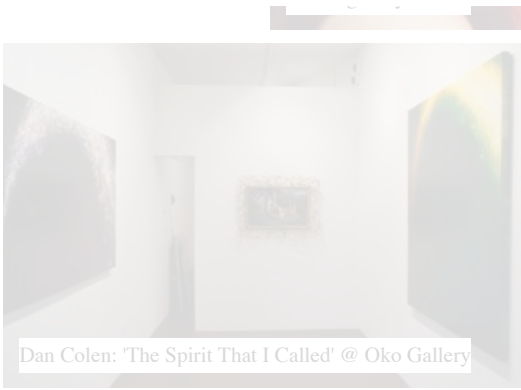
MC: So you are actually pouring the dye on?

LM: Yeah so I'll pour it and the canvas initially wants to the water beads a lot, so I have to pour really subtly and then I use my hands to press it into the canvas and the work the path that I have created with my hands. Usually the work is by chance, so maybe one thread of the canvas is way down the rest, or maybe a piece of dirt fell from the ceiling onto canvas, or maybe I stood on it, and I'll use that to randomize start the piece. From there it's like a dance, a back and forth me and the dye, the canvas, the light and allowing all of that to have a voice. There in no way when it comes to me physically making work that I am interested in thinking about anything about responses, intuition and something that comes from somewhere else.

MC: So what's the next step?

LM: I'm going to do the dye thing for a long while, I'm also interested in combining it with the oil and the enamel but finished with just the dye yet. I'm also interested in taking the canvas and maybe doing some sculptural work that utilizes similar vernacular of form and color to not replicate myself but speak to them and bring it out into a physical space that enhances the paintings, or relies on the paintings to exist been researching how to make my own pigments from stone minerals, so I would love to attempt to make a dye out of turquoise color from patina copper. I'm interested in that step and that even gets deeper into the world of emphasizing the medium itself and the importance of the picture being the medium because it's not just dye anymore. But we can't really think about it, I just do it.

MC: You said you made a crazy list about your life goals, what legacy going to be? Did you figure that out?



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MC: *Woah heavy...*

LM: (laughs) Yeah so I ended up making this lofty set of goals that started at my death and worked their way back to realistic things that I could actually be doing. So that's how I decided 2011 was going to be the year where I made art my full time job and then 2012 so far has been really rad!

MC: *So why do you make art?*

LM: It's really just the fact that I don't have a choice. When I'm in the studio and I'm working on a painting, there's nothing that feels better than that connection, the intimacy between me and the mediums, and the sensuality of the scale and standing over it. It's just really indescribable. It's the only thing I've ever done which fully activates every part of me, as a being, it uses everything I have inside of me. This is it, it's the only thing I have to do and I feel really blessed for finding that and finding a medium that I have such a strong connection to.

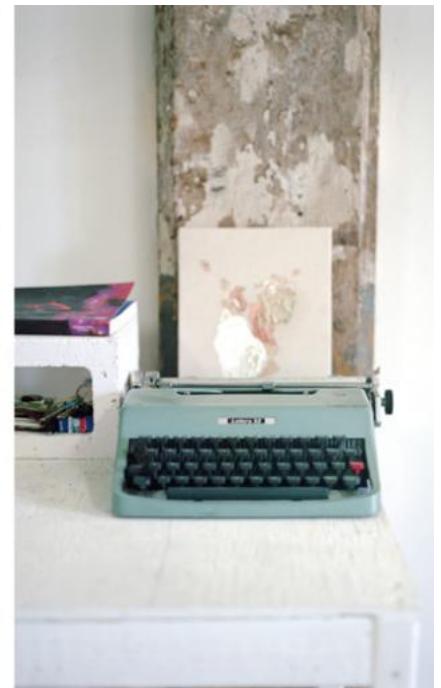
MC: *Can you tell a little bit about the overarching themes in your work?*

LM: They kind of stem from that notion of a oneness and an interconnection not just with the work, but my life stance in general. The themes that I'm interested in right now are I've started working with dyes, so switching over to that medium was obviously an intentional decision. The themes that I was touching on before were basically a breakdown of the structural hierarchy that has been implemented in the history of painting, like what does the notion of a picture mean? What is the subject matter of the work and what is the paint's position and role in communicating that picture? Why painting? What is it about the subject matter that requires the use of paints? So that's why my work is abstract because the subject of the work began looking at the act of painting itself, my paintings are about painting!

LM: (Laughs) Yeah...I have a really strong desire to effect people see themselves in their version of reality, the way we learn what is real and what isn't real, and the breakdown hierarchy of information. In all honesty I feel like art, vis especially, has the ability to enhance people's lives in a way a lot of things can. I mean music has a similar effect - when you really want to associate reason for things, find the judgment give it this place in their own little structure of what it means why it exists and whether they like it or not. I'm interested in things that break all of that down. It's always my hope that what I'm making will appear natural in a way that you can't but it makes you feel a sense of peace, or harmony, or joy or you just feel a connection to it that you can't articulate. The legacy that I hope to be leaving is a large body of work (paintings) that hint at these other ideas and these other ways of perceiving information and just existing in general. I'm interested in leaving a body of work that is not only beautiful but takes a different place, it takes you out of the system that you've been in and gives you a hint at a different way of being, it allows you to stop running around in circles and just appreciate this world for the sake of it existing...I want to have a large body of work, that resonates with a lot of people and I want to have it all over when I'm dead! (laughs)

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Megan Christiansen
Photographer - Clément Pascal



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