

Niels Smits van Burgst

Studio-talk:

Mainly I see my painting as a social observation statement

17. June 2014

H.Th. (*Heyer Thurnheer*)

Trying to generate good results in your practice as a painter you keep on working permanently, producing industrial-like painting after painting without break.

N. B. (*Niels Smits van Burgst*)

Yes. Like this I try to keep myself in good technical form and to free me from too much thinking.

H.Th. : *It's always the figure in your paintings, on its own or in a group in a kind of after-postmodern-attitude of permanent affective self-show that finally questions identity.*

N. B. : The man I paint is usually absorbed in the busyness of his own stories in which he is involved. So I paint him always as figure in a film-still-moment of a storyboard.

H.Th. : *It's a sort of paused moment in a self-performance life-show.....*

N. B. :In which the protagonists interact always towards a spectator, maybe another person that is not visible in the painting or towards a camera.

H.Th. : *In the series „stills on masturbation“ you worked after photos that you took of yourself. You're the performing actor as well as the painter and also the first spectator of this work.*

N. B. : It's a repetition about an act like other acts or actions within a bigger story-set.....

H.Th. : *.....and every spectator from the audience will interpret it in his or her own way.*

N. B. : The moments I paint are not particular moments in the sense of importance, they're not meant as clou-moment but just as a moment like others. Of course I choose them particularly, but not because of importance reasons in the narrative of stories but because of painting recitals.

H.Th. : *After a period of painting from photographs that you made from friends and exhibition-spectators, you started to paint after anonymous images from the internet.*

N. B. :I always try to find images in which I get the point where I feel, yes, with this particular character in his particular story I want to spend my time with painting as an act of an image inventing interpretation of what I have chosen as forward lean.

H.Th. : *There is always this attitude of modest euphoria that is in your paintings, it's not one of the more intimate feelings like shouting, doubting, pain, uncertainty, being in love, dementia etc.. How comes?*

N. B. : It's about easy-going-subjects and being okay as nowadays society's reality that is moderate board in a luxury way, a blind just moving around without really caring for something but just for great fun. This is what I'm going to paint. And what I call „modest euphoria“. Maybe I also know a bit of this tendency to get depressed if I don't keep myself busy and upgoing. This is the people I paint: Keep up the good spirit.

H.Th. : *And the stories which go a bit deeper, they are somewhere behind or below. Right!?*

N. B. : Yes, some people criticize that my work is shallow, because I just paint the surface. And not what could be underneath it. Of course there is a hypothesis saying that humans have a deep mind and stuff like this, but I never got there. It's a guess that behind the surface there must be a lot and I couldn't find it in the reality

of society's behaviour to paint this kind of attitude instead of this glint of „society on permanent stage in the public space“.

H.Th. : *We recognise mainly party scenes with alcohol in your paintings. Smoking that makes you thinking of coke or whatever party drugs. There are scenes in a painting studio or in the nature, in a park. There is putting on and off clothes, self-poses, sex and computer obsession. In some paintings you suspect conflict with law, criminality. Is your painting a kind of society investigation, critique or celebration?*

N.B. : Well, I would say..... I think it's a mixture of it all.

H.Th. : *In your private life, do you also celebrate this social being with others, for example, do you go out every evening with friends for a beer and good company?*

N.B. : No, not at all.

H.Th. : *To me you make spontaneously a very converse impression. To me you seem to be a social very open-minded person who welcomes everyone to be part in whatever situation*

N.B. : But it's not like this at all that I am interested in getting into an every-day-life-interaction with the other, but yes, I'm kind of painter-like interested in the other's visual and story-set presence.

H.Th. : *But in your everyday life, for example when you're around for shopping or whatever, is it not the case that on every corner you meet somebody with a glimpse, a hello which might lead into a short neighbour's or colleagues' "little-daily-things-talk"?*

N.B. : No, really not at all. I try to get not involved in society's everyday conventions, but of course I try to get a grip of the world around me by watching its visual appearance carefully. It's always a kind of visual observation that I have in mind. And it's not a morally evaluating observation at all, it's just a visual interest to understand. I'm always focused on the question if I see an image that could be an interesting start for a painting. That's why I photograph a lot or I browse the internet, watching thousands of pictures trying to find a photo submission that people share for this purpose.

H.Th. : *In your paintings action is always paired paired with this mood of anonymity and at the same time public viewing , it's not about knowing nor really caring what to go for in life....you said your painting is partly a ceremonial investigation of liberalist society, critique and celebration in one.....*

N.B. : Well, it's a kind of critique and celebration at the same moment, yes. But mainly I see my painting as a social observation statement.....yes, I would prefer this term.