

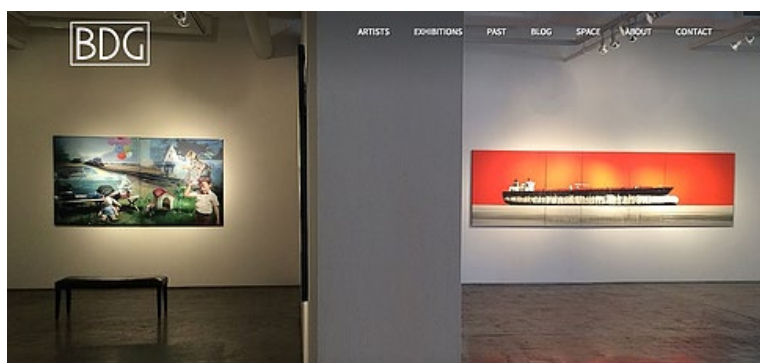
# BERTRAND DELACROIX GALLERY

March 30, 2015 | Mani De Osu



“What’s important? For me what’s important is that at the end of the day, when I’ve hung a show, I go home and I’m happy, I’m proud of what I did and I love what I have. Every single piece I have here I love, I wanna own, or I own, or I have a similar piece by the artist. That’s what’s important to me. Is that it makes me happy. I mean, it makes me even happier when I sell it, then it says I’m doing something right.” Spoken fondly like a true artisan speaks of his craft, or a devout artist of fulfilling his purpose, so says Bertrand Delacroix of the Bertrand Delacroix Gallery as he reclines in his chair after a day of doing just what he loves, hanging a show.

Stephane Joannes’ Tankers, the lead exhibition in the 4 room Chelsea gallery, is a collection of oil paintings on canvas presenting carefully painted oil tankers. Painted so carefully, in fact, it looks as if Joannes has taken the mediums straight from the ships themselves.. The smooth sheen of the paint that laces the strong color backgrounds to the canvas reflects the light of the gallery almost as if you were seeing the sun shine off the hood of an old automobile. You can see Joannes at the dock’s edge collecting the oil that spills over old barrels into jars and taking them back to the studio to get the wet, drastic black that distinguishes the age and future fate of these giant beasts. Joannes is thin, and tall, and has eyes that descend deeply, just as the water was that carried these tankers. He looks and feels like the work he creates. Just as artists do. In the room immediately behind the first and largest room, Frederic Deprun has his paintings hung and though they could be considered diametrically opposed to Joannes, they somehow seem to work together. Deprun has created a world that can only exist in the memory, when the innocent perception of childhood overwhelms ‘perceived’ fact and things unify themselves in the most intricate colorations and arrangements. There is a balance between the languid solitude and the brightly colored enthusiasm that offers a robust expression of human emotion.



As you move onto the third, and smaller still room, a bronze sculpture of Pan reaches out of the wall and with gaze fixed at 45 degrees, his companion on the opposite wall entitled Gravitas, also sculpted in bronze, is in mid-attempt to push himself free of the wall, displaying the muscular understanding of artist Nicholas Pugliese. The Italian sculptor has a classical flare to his work and shares the room with a New York based painter, Elizabeth Allison who has an early 20th Century feel in her watercolors, brooding grey’s and blue’s that nourish a fitting environment for the sculptures, giving the atmospheric soundtrack for the struggle these figures are in the midst of trying to free themselves from. The fourth and smallest room holds the oil paintings of Stephane Erouane Dumas with his forests of singularity trees, calmly rounding out what has been a capsule artistic odyssey of thoughts, ideas and expressions. All in all, you feel as if you have just been introduced to the body of a living, breathing being. The walls each glowing their own personal contribution to the function and process of the entire entity.

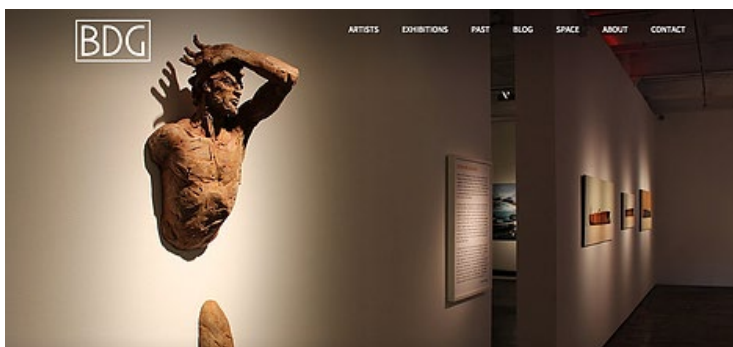
This composition is the art of Bertrand Delacroix. This is the purpose that fulfills him and this is the reason he keeps long hours at the gallery. He loves beautiful things. I wager his sensibility comes from growing up in France with an internationally renowned and well respected painter as a father, Michel Delacroix, whose naif style and subject matter are all highly romantic and sentimental, but I feel it has mostly to do with the type of person he is. He has a genuine desire to make things better. At one point, Bertrand would have loved to have been a veterinarian, and has always held a close relationship with his family. To better something is to move it towards unity. Holding the family together, stitching the life back together, bringing together two unlikely things to reveal the likeliness that is the result of their union; beauty being the highest resulting example. Beauty is the result of things coming together, the end product a new manifestation; a new gem of the creation brought to the surface after ages and ages of compression, pressure and force moving the composition into its final form as something quite unrecognizable from its original parts. For instance, if you look at each artist in the Bertrand Delacroix Gallery individually,

the pieces will tell a different story than when you hold all of the artists in mind at once which allows the multiple perspective fragmentation to inform multi-faceted levels of understanding in what has now become a whole entity in the psyche.

Now, people find beauty in countless different ways, guided by their upbringing, influenced by their surroundings, colored by their experience, but there are certain things that are found universally to be beautiful because of the proportion of their structure. The culprit of this mathematical perfection is of course the Golden Mean, which is the basis for the form of all things, and the fundamental building block of Figurative Art, and when asked if he felt there was a waking up or growing trend in the Art World he responded immediately,

“Absolutely; Figurative. Figurative. What started centuries ago is not dead and there was all this installation and contemporary stuff and the broken toilet in the middle of the room with feathers on it painted in pink and all that’s gone with the recession, thank god.”

And it’s true, Art was in the midst of a structured deconstruction with Modern Art, but had a complete breakdown after Andy Warhol’s contribution of Pop. The structures learned in the past were largely strewn aside for the instantaneous glamour of moment, fleeting as it is. This leading the way to a widespread mass consumption in the misconception that Art is anything one says it is. While in the grandest scale yes, everything is Art, (that being the brilliance of Warhol) but the distinguishing factor between the semantics of ‘art’ and ‘Art’ remains its purpose. Is the purpose simply to express oneself? Or to reveal something previously hidden that is universally recognized? Next, what is the use of the work that is being created? In its composition, is it bringing physical health to the viewer? In its subject matter, is it giving guidance to its audience? Telling them something indispensable that they must not live without knowing? Does it bring spirit to the room? Does it enliven the hearts and minds of those that witness it?



Since opinion is infinitely subjective, the thing to do is stick to what you love, and it must have been exciting to grow up the son of a man who walked the Boulevard Raspail in Paris with the likes of Picasso and Chagall. Men of legacy and artistic integrity that lived and breathed their work, in the time when it was the purpose and the meaning that gave Art value, not good PR and the free pouring of champagne at a glitzy opening. Delacroix says he sticks to what he knows, which is Figurative.

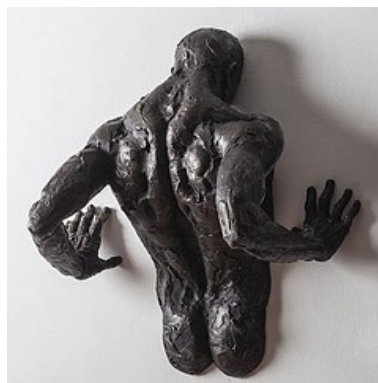
“Art started in figuration. It didn’t start with abstract. Abstract’s great but I think there’s definitely a return towards Figurative and that’s what sticks when everything falls and that works for me because everything I show is very figurative. So I think there’s definitely a trend going back towards what we do best.”

Figurative is more approachable to a wider audience, and has the ability to communicate more articulately its message than does the common thread that spouts out of the Contemporary Art of the moment. And this is where Subjectivity rears its many heads, each having its own mind, eyes, ears and mouth. Each having a right to its opinion and its preference, but like all things under the order of nature, it too must surrender itself to the position of where its neck begins. Though any more, it is hard to say whose neck starts where and who is calling a shoulder a jawbone trying to swindle their way to the top. This neck race has gotten more and more asymmetrical between the large conglomerate galleries, the auction houses and the independent operators; shoulders, elbows and knees being thrown into the mix under the guise of the democratization of Art, but which is really the gutting of the marrow, flesh and bone leaving just the dry husk of appearance making it less and less available to those it is saying it is being opened to.

“It’s been a tough ride but its fun and I love it. That’s why right now we’re moving forward with a space down in the LES, opening two more galleries.” He has had Axelle Fine Arts in Boston for ten years, the Bertrand Delacroix Gallery in Chelsea for six, Axelle Fine Arts New York for five years come November down in SoHo, and soon to be a double gallery space opening in the Lower East Side, and though things have been hard, Delacroix is clearly doing something right. While the gallery in Boston is closing its current location to move to a smaller space but in a better location, BDG and Axelle NY are both undergoing similar moves, but without the closing of their structural predecessors.

“But for galleries its really difficult to stay in business and that’s why all of the galleries are moving out of [Chelsea] and the big spaces because the taxes and rents are so high, so now we have Target and we have the electric cars (Tesla), we have a press agency moving next door and all the galleries are moving out.”

It sounds strange. Target in Chelsea. Even if it is just their headquarters and not one of their chain establishments, Target? “Target is right next door, yeah, they have 30,000sf upstairs and two beautiful galleries moved out and they turned it into their party space. We have the electric cars, that’s been a couple of years now. To the right here, Betty Cunningham moved out, she’s now on the LES in a 1200sf space and we’re moving down, we’re signing a lease very soon. We’ll still gonna be here, I’m going to ride my lease, but I know I can’t stay here, the rents have gone too high. Like SoHo. We moved from SoHo to here, now the new area is the Lower East Side.”



So goes the endless roundelay of the human endeavor in this dollar centric society we have created. Real estate politics seem only to be evolving into faster, more ostentatious affectations of themselves and more and more harmful to the nutrient source that feeds and sustains them. There must be a way to return to, or reach for the first time perhaps, a way of business that holds its standard of value in the unshakable truth of principle and valor. Where a successful transaction is one that has come with respect of both parties’ dignity and intelligence, and the value of exchange is equal and substantive according to its innate properties and purpose. Like the Renaissance borne forth from the Middle Ages, the rebirth, the return to the Classics or Fundamentals, so are we at the crest of a new wave where we must turn our heads back to retrieve our heritage so that we might step forward into the future with a full arsenal of knowledge. “All our knowledge has its origins in our perceptions,” said Leonardo Da Vinci in his notebooks. So we must address our perceptions, and in the Grand Master’s belief that visual art is the most comprehensive tool for understanding the universe, Bertrand Delacroix is doing his part by loving his art of composing beautiful figurative work that helps us to question and contemplate this human existence.