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Interview: A Tête-à-Tête with German Artist Matthias Bitzer

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With Germany-based artist Matthias Bitzer debuting in the country, Indian art enthusiasts are set to have an experience of a lifetime. Close on the heels of his debut show in Mumbai, *Luxpresso* speaks to the award-winning painter and installation expert about his show, life's inspirations and his artistic journey thus far.

Winner of the prestigious Otto Dix Prize in Germany, Matthias is known for working with multiple media to create abstract sculptures, drawings and paintings. Drawing unending inspiration from 19th century icons of literature, music, dance and films, what makes this artist's works a must-have for collectors is his contemporary play of visual language, which is based on modernism, combining of figurative portraits with abstractions and geometric designs. Bitzer is also known for creating unmatched and intriguing installations that are sure to

ignite the thought process of his audience. His installations are inspired by his profound interest that questions the authenticity of the construction of reality and hypnagogia (transition from wakefulness to sleep) through his works. Whether it is a canvas or abstract installation, both have hidden layers of personality and a clandestine identity.

Here's our interview with him that is sure to give you a glimpse into Bitzer's journey as an artist.

Flow of Creativity in Bitzer's Art:

What was the thought process behind combining vintage style portraits and geometric patterns in your paintings and installations?

The portraits are starting points in a way. Each figure functions like a path into its own abstraction. The motifs embedded within these works are ways of considering the figure through another visual component that may, or may not, act to underscore the essential feeling or mood I want to convey. The geometry is important in the sense that it is an organisation tool through which I am able to deconstruct the essential expression within a portrait. Every painting encompasses the trajectory of a journey, in that each work has a beginning, middle, and end.

What is your perception of creating artworks that combine reality and hypnagogia?

Hypnagogia, for me, is only possible if it moves both against and with the reality of the world. It is an altered sense of consciousness. I attribute it to an almost sleep like state that removes one from the conventions of the world. I find this often at night; oscillating and melting images on the edge to dreaming. The space of absence is very important to me. It is an that idea reoccurs in my work, and it shapes much of how these meditations on hypnagogia emerge.

How do the 19th century icons inspire your work? Would you aim to select portraits from 16th or 17th century?

The protagonists that appear in my works evolve from manifold sources. Time and place are not essential conditions for embedding them into the work. Some are drafted from fictional characters from different stories, and some are historical figures.

Is there a particular piece from your personal work that is your favorite?

The works that persist in my memory are those that anchor a circling thought. Sometimes, different works need each other to function, but once in a while there is one that gathers these thoughts into one form—these works for me sustain the entire exhibition format.



Muse, Inspiration and Personal Collection:

Do you collect art? Which are some of your favourite pieces?

Yes, but I am not a collector, per se. One of the works that I never tire from appreciating is a framed poem written by artist David Thorpe. It is in the style of William Morris, and is an ecstatic love letter to humanity.

Which artists' works do you admire and find your inspiration in?

I admire many artists, but the ones I find most inexhaustibly intriguing are those who build their own mythological systems that move deftly between the reality and the inherent mystery of the world. For me, they are such artists as Odilon Redon, Malevich, Ugo Rondinone, Sonia Delauney, Francis Picabia, Guiseppe, Agnes Martin and Mark Manders among many others.

The Indian Experience:

This is your debut in India. What do you expect from this exhibit?

I must admit that this is only my second visit in India, and I do not feel I can proclaim any expectations with real authority. It is an honor to be showing in Mumbai with Galerie ISA, and I find it exciting to be able to have the opportunity

to reach new audiences, whatever that may bring.

Any insights on your next collection?

The exhibition format is increasingly useful to me. I find that with each show I am attempting to tell an abstracted story of how one moves through space, as if different points on a shifting ground. Each body of work is a continuation of the next, while still retaining its own character.

What should art enthusiasts look forward to at your show?

I can only say that I hope that the exhibition and individual works will convey their multivalence. Nobody should be confined to the experience of looking at art within a set of parameters—my aim is to allow room for the world to seep in.

Get a glimpse of Bitzer's intriguing installations and thoughtful paintings at Mumbai's Galerie ISA from 3rd February to 25th April, 2015.