

In the Studio with Raphael Egil.

Words by

James Ambrose

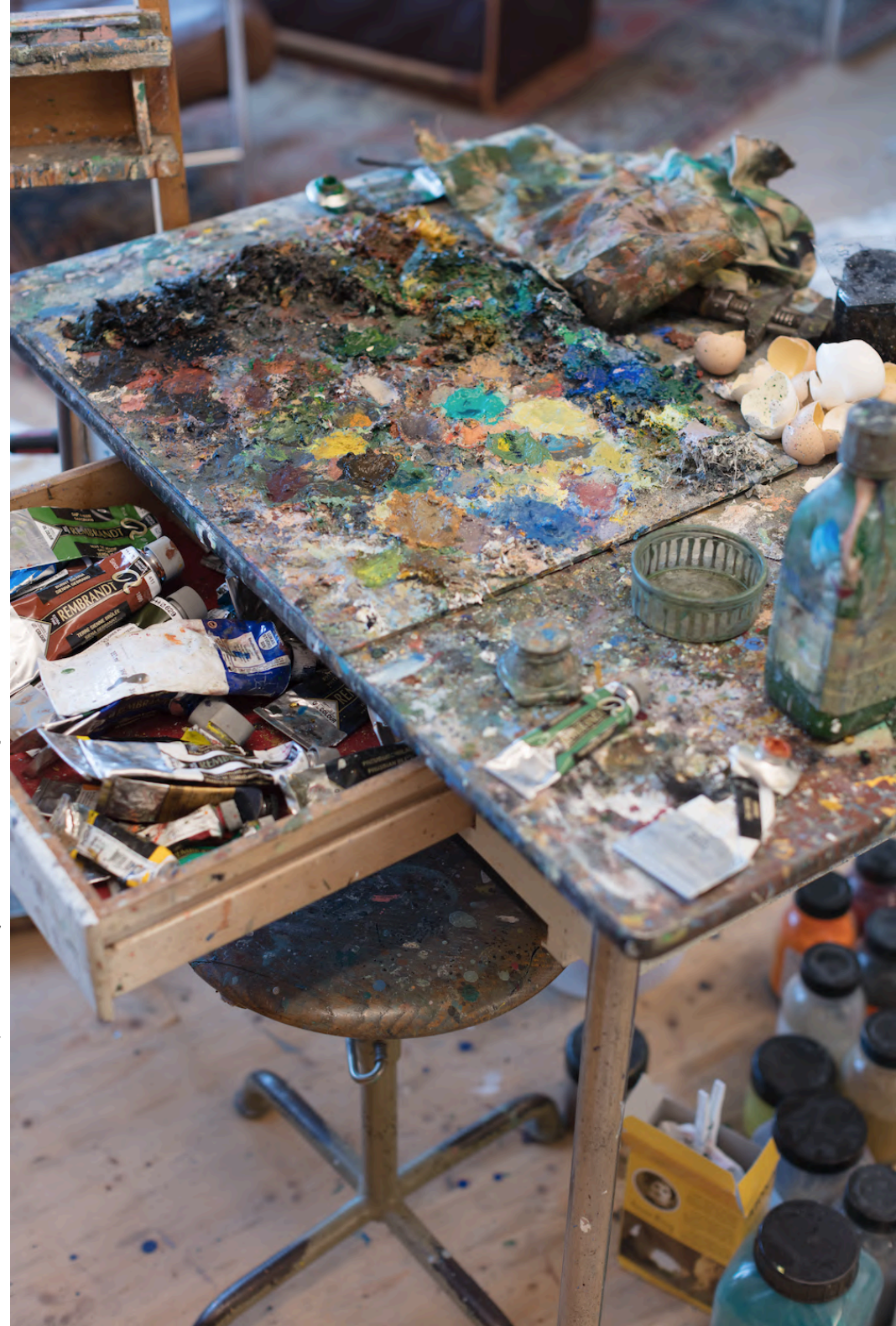


I wanted to talk a little about your journey as an artist. When did you know this was a path you wanted to pursue? Did it ever feel like a decision to you or was there simply no other option?

Perhaps in the beginning of my life I felt a specific but difficult-to-define connection to nature and other people that meant I always felt like an artist or a painter. So in the end that is what I decided to do, and there was no other option.

What does a normal day in the studio look like? Are there any rituals or processes you follow religiously while in the studio?

It's a nice thought that my appearance in the studio every morning at 8 o'clock has something to do with religion. All culture grows on repetition and habituation. Usually in the morning I start with painting and do this for perhaps two hours. Then I do something else like office work, reading or writing. By the middle of the afternoon I am often dissatisfied with the morning's work and so I take new decisions in the paintings. And so in quite a short time, there will be a lot of changes. That having been said, the truth is that every day feels different and there are so many points that are attracting and challenging me, inside and outside of painting, that a day can develop in a way that makes me think that nothing I have just said about my daily ritual is true.





'Ohne Titel', 2020. Oil and tempera on canvas, 120 x 150 cm, courtesy of the artist and Cassius & Co



What is it about being an artist that you love?

Painting is not logic or science, it doesn't make sense. But, there are connections to logic and science, or maybe disconnections is a better word. And if I want, I can feed these disconnections and let something grow. This growing is what I love most.

In regards to the work itself, does each work hold its own narrative?

In terms of its own painterly development: yes. But I consider this as something only related to narrative in the widest sense. The reader of a text builds and develops his

own sceneries in his mind because reading connects with pictures in the brain's memory, but paintings are different. A painting opens a cloud: inside, there is nothing but humidity.

Will you have the composition in mind before you start the process of painting or will chance and instinct play a major role in a work's creation?

This is an interesting question and it's difficult to find an answer. It's not possible to see or plan the process of a painting in advance. Even if not intended, paintings mostly surprise me and the most convincing result comes directly out of struggling and insecurity. So with that in mind, the first step can be anything from some residual paint spread out on an empty canvas or the accurate transmission of a drawing, it doesn't make any difference.





Installation View, New Works, Michael Werner Gallery, Cologne, 2020

How do you title your work?

I just name it. Usually, the subject gives the title and the title doesn't illuminate the content. If I title it 'untitled', this is just the affirmation of the fact that language is different from painting. But in the end I think, everything in the world should have a name.

What informs the decisions you make in terms of colour?

A new colour raises the question of either staying near or going far away from what is already there. My own curiosity paired with a lack of imagination makes me try out colour constellations directly on a started painting. I do not have preferences in relation to colour. When I was

young I made lots of studies on different colour theories, but this does not at all help with being a painter.

Cézanne's *Bathers* is a series of works that have greatly inspired a lot of your most recent work, can you talk a little about its importance to you and the reasons these paintings first inspired you.

It is totally obvious that the bathers are a problematic subject because of the I and the We. Cézanne's problem was that he could bring something to life without touching it. It is this animated distance between the I and the We that attracted me. It took courage to paint these pictures, because I usually choose something banal as platform for a painterly problem. Spectacular and narrative things may stay in the viewers' heads but I target the body, and anyway, Cézanne is an exception.





'Häuser und Nachthimmel', 2017. Oil and tempera on canvas, 160 x 120 cm, courtesy of the artist and Cassius & Co

I know from our conversations you make use of a wide range of source material, is there a **process for the** compilation of this material and the use?

There is always or mostly an initial point that comes directly from reality, something perceived, or which is taken from or made into the border of the canvas. My most commonly-used sources are sketches made while looking out of my studio window. Otherwise, it almost all comes from the books in my studio. It is not a large library, but there is enough material for a lifetime. The process of compiling these is linked closely to the formative experiences of my own life. I grew up in a Catholic surrounding and the Crucifixion of Tintoretto in San Rocco in Venice made a strong impression on me when I first saw it as an adult. An intensity that didn't exist in the village where I grew up. So I have been looking at this a lot for my recent paintings.

I would love to get your opinion on the state of the contemporary art world as it stands? Do you think it is in a healthy place?

The art world always has the same health status as the rest of the world. There are problems and there are hopes. Time decides what will stay. At the moment, there is so much of everything that it is difficult to get an overview. One thing I would say is that I hope that art can be engaged with the production of the whole world, and that the gap in attention for works that have been marginalised in the past can become smaller. From altar to field. And probably, just for the sake of the overview, we will need some new things to look up to soon. I like when things grow.