

# OFFICE PAINTINGS

## KEREN CYTTER IN CONVERSATION WITH BRYAN ZANISNIK

Anybody invited to realize a project in 1646 is asked to engage in conversation with a previously unknown correspondent.

This conversation takes place via e-mail and stretches through the whole period during which the artists develop their initial idea into final results. 1646 invites the correspondent at the other end of this contact to figure his/her way through this actual process.

In trying to picture what result the artists' work is going to, such exchange can become a reflection on the amount of otherwise untraceable choices of the moment which make up to the artists' practice.

This issue is part of the exhibition by Bryan Zanisnik, *Office Paintings*, March 20 2015 in 1646.

This artist  
Bryan Zanisnik

This correspondent  
Keren Cytter

Concept and design  
Nico Feragnoli

# 1646.

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The Netherlands

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Jan 16: Keren Citter [KC] - Bryan Zanisnik [BZ]

Hi Bryan,

How are you? what are you doing? An what are you planing to show?  
Just curious.

Jan 19: BZ - KC

Hi Keren,

Thanks so much for doing the email conversation with me, I am so excited for it! I just need a couple days to get back to you, as I have a family member that's been pretty sick, so I need to take care of that first.

Excited for this! And will be in touch again soon

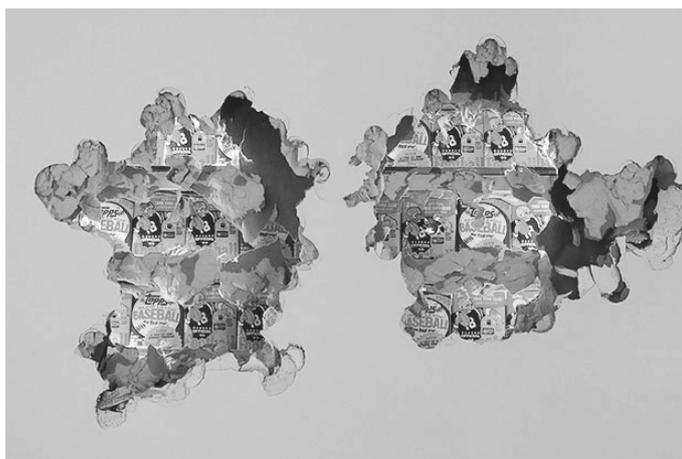
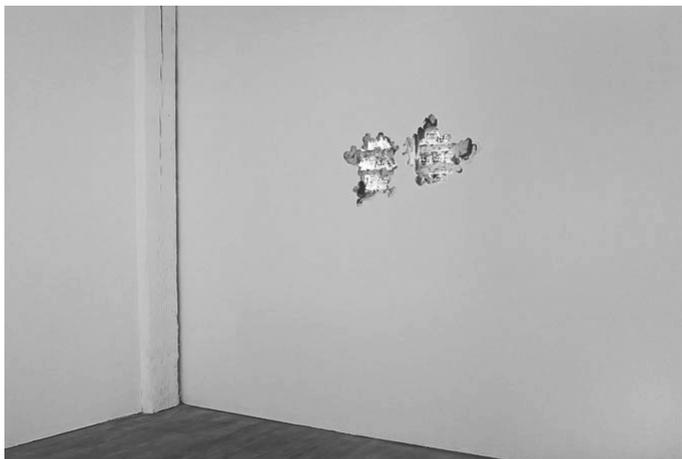
Jan 29: BZ - KC

Thanks so much for your patience. My life is starting to get a bit more in order, so wanted to give you an idea of some of the stuff I will be showing.

First I am planning on making a body of pedestal-like sculptures that have objects embedded in them. For the past few years my sculptural practice has primarily consisted of large-scale site-specific works. Recently, I've been interested in finding a way to direct the site-specific into something more autonomous and self contained. I've always been fascinated with medieval reliquaries, being these containers full of objects and relics from a person's past. I then began to think of the pedestal as a contemporary reliquary, a monolithic structure that could be torn or ripped open and there would be objects hidden inside.

I created a site-specific work in Chicago last year where I punched holes in the gallery's drywall, and then placed unopened packs of baseball cards from the 1980s alongside some tungsten lights. When you entered the dark gallery space it appeared as if there was a world hidden behind the gallery's walls, something glowing and ethereal. There was something very cinematic about this gesture that I connected with.

Some Images here:



With this recent work in mind, I began thinking about using drywall to construct the pedestals. The objects will be free standing in the space, but using the drywall would suggest they were potentially ripped from the gallery's own walls. Of course the one thing I am wondering for my show at 1646 is whether drywall is readily available in Europe? I imagine it is, but also know that construction materials in Europe can be quite different than in the U.S. Originally I was thinking of using drop ceilings as a material, but after speaking to a friend in Amsterdam, he told me it might be difficult finding drop ceiling tiles in the Hague. I guess Europe hasn't embraced tacky office design as much as we have in the U.S.

This then raises another question for me, namely, what objects will I embed in the pedestals? In the U.S. I use a lot of objects that are particularly American, and that connect with my past. Baseball cards, laser discs from my childhood in the 1980s, and inexpensive glassware come to mind. For my show at 1646 I want to source the materials in the Hague, but I won't truly know what I will use till I arrive there.

Beyond all this, I will also be showing a series of recent videos. But I thought that before we talk about that, I would fill you in on the work I will be making on site. Below I attached a jpeg of one of the pedestals I am working on here in the U.S. in my studio. It's still a work in progress, and rather than shipping it to the Hague, I'll leave this one at home and make all new ones there.

Bryan

Jan 31: KC - BZ

Can you imagine which objects you will place in the pedestal? I'm just wondering, because many times when I'm going to a place with a site specific mood, I plan to decide what I do in the place itself, but actually I already imagine what I will do there. Somehow my imagination always meets reality, I'm forcing it to follow my expectations. So do you try to imagine what will enter the pedestals?

Have you been to Den Hague before? For how long will you stay there?

Also let me know about the videos how they'll be projected and their content. I'm curious !!

I hope all is well in your family by the way.

Take care and thanks for opening up and talking to me :)  
Best

Feb 9: BZ - KC

For me it's much harder to imagine what I will place in the sculptures until I arrive in The Hague. I've actually been to the Netherlands a few times before, and even to The Hague once in 2009, but still I don't have an idea of what materials I will source. It's a similar experience to a project I did in Guangzhou, China in 2011. For that project I decided to source all my materials in China, even though I had never been there before. I knew Guangzhou was a large manufacturing city, and was curious to see what was available that wasn't readily available, or economically feasible, for me to acquire in the United States. In the end I chose objects that were particularly Chinese, but also resonated with American culture. For example, I bought hundreds of pounds of peanuts, a common item in Chinese cuisine, but also something found in bars across the U.S. I mixed these peanuts with piles of dirt and made large mountains on the floor of the installation. Another product that really fascinated me

in China were these hand-engraved plaques that were given to workers for a certain achievement. They reminded me of college diplomas or a corporate award that would be found in the U.S. I bought a few hundred of these plaques and had titles of my previous performances translated into Cantonese and then engraved onto them.

Of course China is culturally much more different from the United States than a country like the Netherlands. I know that most materials I could source in the U.S. I could also find in the The Hague. For me what I really want to do then, is observe. Walk into shops, warehouses, junk yards, and see what particularly objects are before me. It has something more to do with discovering and physically engaging objects than it does with predicting and planning them.

As for the videos, I am hoping to show a series of videos, some projected and some on monitors. The relationship of projections to monitors depends on the space, and I don't think I'll truly figure that out till I arrive at the gallery in March. One of the most important works that I will include is the two-channel video "Aquarium Paintings," which is my most recent video, and also relates to the title of my show at 1646, "Office Paintings." I attached a link to it below.

<http://www.zanisnik.com/Videos/aquarium-painting.mov>

Bryan

Feb 14: KC - BZ

I really liked the video! It would fit perfectly to the sculptures I think. I thought maybe to ask some quick questions just to know more about you and the spirit of things. I hope its not a problem and feel free to skip questions. For how long are you planing to be in the Netherlands before the exhibition? Can you tell a bit about yourself? What ever crosses your mind? Do you like traveling? Do you have daily fears? (fear of heights, claustrophobia etc.) What is your current mood? Are you afraid of happiness? Are you impulsive? Does it matters? (I'm just thinking its good to have some short Q&A so the readers will have some kind of an image of the source of the work. Do you have some kind of a continuous source of inspiration? An image or a vision you are trying to recreate over an over again? Feel free to avoid all of this questions, criticize me or even ask the questions you want to be asked. Let me know what you think!

Feb 22: BZ - KC

I don't really think of my work as particularly diaristic, so I am not sure if those more autobiographical questions apply to my practice. Obviously I use my own body in much of my work, and this physical engagement has a personal resonance for me. I also use my father in a lot of my work, and in fact in "Aquarium Paintings," he is the character who is leading the tour of the enigmatic structure in the landfill. In using my own body and the body of my father

I don't necessarily think of us in very autobiographical terms. Rather than this work being about my own personal life, or my fathers, I think of us as filters through which ideas mutate, travel and transform. For example, I'm interested in exploring materiality and its relationship to anxiety, collecting, hoarding, and the archive. When I take ideas such as these, and travel them through my own body and the body of my father, something interesting comes out the other end. A part of our bodies become entangled with these ideas, but ultimately it is not about us as individuals. With works such as "Aquarium Paintings," you learn nothing significant about our own lives, and in many ways, I think it is kin to being an actor in Hollywood. Al Pacino and Robert De Niro have portrayed gangsters dozens of times, yet I don't believe either of them are murders in real life. I am able to separate the character from the performer, and while that can be more difficult in an art work, I am interested in exploring this autobiography disengagement.

Here's a link to another work I'll probably be including in the show:

<http://www.zanisnik.com/Videos/modality.mov>

Best,  
Bryan

MAR 14: KC - BZ

Hi Bryan,

Sorry for answering only now. Travelled and encountered astounding personal changes (for the long run). Anyhow I'm back on track.

I think no one expect Al Pacino to be a gangster. Things are not that literal, but I know for example that Al Pacino refused in the beginning to act as a gay man in Dogs day afternoon but then asked to take part in it when he was jealous another actor was asked to do it. So there is some kind of connection between the actor and his parts. In that case the actor is an old fashioned Macho. I wouldn't imagine him having a similar career to the one of Robin Williams or Daniel Day-Lewis - their own character is leading to them to certain characters. Anyhow, will watch your video now.

Impressive video! What do you consider as your main medium ? (I might be so impressed by the video as I didn't see the sculptures yet). It seems you are dealing with sculptures also in your videos but you are quite free with editing and story telling. It's a liberating experience to watch them. I can see the connection between them to anxiety and hoarding. Will there be any image to the invitation of the show?

Please let me know what you think. Shall we wrap it up? Shall we edit it a bit?

Keren

BZ - KC  
Hi Keren,

I love your read of the 'macho' artist, and that's so interesting that Pacino wouldn't play the lead in Dog Day Afternoon initially, because of the character's orientation. I didn't know that!

It's funny you ask me what my main medium is, as I never really know what to say. Since I finished graduate school in 2009 my practice has kept expanding. What began as video and photography grew to include performance, sculpture, installation, writing and even recently began working on a series of textile works. If I met a version of myself at a party, and he told me all the mediums he worked in, I would dismiss this artist immediately. That must be the part of me that is still grappling with an old fashioned, modernist ideal - that an artist works in one medium, hones a craft perfectly, and expresses himself in a very definitive way. Ultimately for me, this ideal never made sense with my work. I love the messiness, the freedom in moving from medium to medium, the way in which the context, and even the forms, weave into each other. My thesis advisor in graduate school, Paul Ramirez Jonas, once said jokingly that a good exhibition needs: "something on the floor, something on the wall, and something moving." We laughed about this a lot, but I think there is some truth in it.

Yes! Lets wrap up and edit. How should we move forward with that? Do we edit or does someone at 1646 get involved? Thanks, and I attached below the invitation image we've been using.

KC - BZ

Let's ask 1646 to do the edit and also try to see what points we should focus on - or what will lead to another thing. Also I couldn't open the image of the invitation. Btw - I think your friend was right - I also think that a good exhibition should try to use the space completely. I'm almost always trying to involve objects with the presentation of the videos - to give a reason to their existence in the exhibition space.

MAR 15: BZ - KC  
Hi Keren,

I spoke to Clara and she said they usually leave the conversation unedited. I am ok with that, so if that's ok with you, we really don't need to do any final editing. I think there's something nice about keeping it in a raw form.

And here's the still we've been using for a lot of the invites.

