

Interview with Kasper Heron Koebke at Art Kopenhagen 2010
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PS: Kasper, you are here because you won a place at the Exhibition as a prize from the Danish MyArtSpace.

K: Yes, it is like a Danish Forum, you know, like, you can put up your object on the website, and it's a lot of upcoming artists. I have never participated in any competition before, but I was at a time in my life where I thought perhaps I should do it. Then I did it and I saw that I was in the final 20, and I thought, wow, well that's fine, but I'm not gonna win. I was very sure about that because, I saw a lot of the other Art and I was very impressed. I was just happy to be in the last 20.

PS: What kind of Art was submitted?

K: All kinds of Art, you know, like drawing as well, but also painting and sculptures and everything was there and I think there was about 130 in the competition, so a lot of different kind of Art. When I found out that I had won I was actually alone at that moment. I got an e-mail and then I went on their website and on the front page there was a picture of me there, and it said 'the winner'. It's not very often that I get blown away. I'm very in control most of the time but at that moment I was just like, what? I was walking in and out, I didn't know what to do, I didn't get any job done that day, but it was cool.

PS: You've been at this years Burning Man Festival. Was that a cool experience?

K: Yeah, very cool, and I have to go back next year, that's for sure. You have to be positive to understand it, and that's what they wrote on their website as well. I should be able to explain it to people in some way, but it's so difficult because you have so many impressions when you're there. It's very hard to explain the Burning Man, even when you see a lot of photos, but you only see the photo in 2D, and you have to experience the Burning Man in 3D and 4D and 5D, because if you don't, you don't understand. It's amazing, you have to go there if you have not been there. Next year I'll go back without my canvas and without the film crew and just be part of it.

PS: You were there painting, you had a commission?

It was not a commission, it was a Danish film crew which wanted to do a film about the Burning Man and they asked if I want to be part of it and want to go with them because they wanted the Burning Man to be seen through my eyes and through my pencil. So I went there and I did this life drawing, that was a commissioned piece. I have to be done in about one and a half months, but this here (Kopenhagen Art Fair) is actually my last big gig, so I now have a lot of time off from exhibitions and so on, so I can focus.

I had been doing a lot of other exhibitions, like Burning Man, but also other Festivals here in Denmark, been doing this life drawing, had some different workshops, workshops with kids and so on, so it's been a very, very busy summer.

PS: The workshops, are you holding them here in Denmark?

K: Well, the workshops, different people call me up and say they want to do a workshop with their class for example. This could be in an Art School or a public school, something like that. I don't put up my own workshops, but I do it when people call me. I do a lot of this life drawing as well, because I want to get people in, in the process. Normally you just see the finished piece, but you don't know the process. I want people to know and understand the process. I'm not afraid of telling my process. I know that a lot of artists are afraid or just don't want to tell their secret, if you can call it a secret, how they do what they do. But I don't care, because I would be very glad to teach people, that's why I do my workshops.

PS: Do you ever use projected photography onto the canvas or do you always work free hand?

K: I do it free by hand and I divide my canvas into a lot of spots, and then I make my scetchings first, and when I'm done with scetching I start doing all the details and the shading and all that.

PS: Do you work off photographs?

K: Yeah, I go out and take my photos myself.

PS: So everything you draw you've photographed yourself?

K: Yeah. Except for the piece that I'm working on now, because it's an old school which isn't there any more. So I got like 400 photos from them, with all the surroundings of the school. I mix my art drawings with a lot of photos.

PS: How do you decide on your motive?

K: Well, almost all my drawings are commissioned, so people have something that they would like a drawing off, but I decide what I want to draw, so it's not like they decide. They might say for example, 'we like the New York Skyline, what can you do with it?'

PS: And then you go to New York yourself (to take a picture)?

K: Yeah, I've been to New York several times. That one I actually got from a guy, the one that I drew this picture from, but if I have the possibility I go out and take my photos myself, because I look very much at how the picture is composed. It is very important for me that in the foreground and the middle and the background, there has to be something interesting in each place, because that brings a certain depth to the drawing and that is very important because I want

people to get sucked in, you know what I mean? That I can do if I bring something very close to them, then the depth of the next level is easier to see for the eye. So every artwork is very carefully composed, there is nothing in it that is not there for a reason.

PS: I read that you are related to Christen Købke (Danish painter, 1810 – 1848), so you come from an artistic background?

K: Yeah, I have the interest I would say. Some people talk about that 'you have it in your bones', well yeah maybe, something I do, but on the other hand, if I didn't want to do it, I wouldn't do it. I have a father who is very talented, very smart, very bright. He works with computers for the government and he does a lot of things with that. He's very good with drawing and he taught me a lot of techniques, while I was very young. I learned it from him and then I just continued doing it. So if I got it in my bones from a guy who lived 200 years ago, I don't know. I think I got the interest from him.

PS: You didn't study Art?

K: No, I'm self taught. I've been studying Business at Roskilde University, and I studied something called Performance Design there as well, which is about making events, exhibitions for example, concerts and so on. That's what I thought I was going to do but then I got this commission of a very large skyline, 6 metres long, and then I got the next one and the next one, so now I'm doing that.

PS: How long have you had your manager for?

K: Well, the reason that we work together now, I did an assignment for him like a year ago. I've done a lot of assignments for a lot of people but we just felt we had a connection you know, a business connection, and thought we can do something. He and my dad are the only two guys that I dare to let put up my exhibitions when I'm leaving, so I can go, and I know that they will do it right.

PS: You don't have a gallerist?

K: No, I don't. I think it's a long process. The art industry is a very tough business and if I should find a gallery, if I want to be part of a gallery I have to make sure that it's worth it. If I can see that it's good for my art, then I'll do it. If I don't, then I won't.

PS: How could it be bad for your art to have gallery representation?

K: I don't know. I don't know yet. I have to find out. When I meet new people, of course I like to sit down and talk to them and get a cup of coffee, but I'm always a bit sceptic. I don't just take everything for granted. On one hand it can be very, very good to have a gallery, I know, of course, because all the artists have it, but on the other hand, maybe it's not. I don't know what that maybe is but I have to find out.

PS: Have you ever worked abstract?

K: No, not in pieces that I use for exhibition, not at all, because the reason why I draw what I do is that I learned to draw what I see. My dad didn't say to me, 'well, try to draw a dragon that flies above the city', no, no. He says, 'here's a can, draw it', or 'here's a bottle', or a pen, 'draw it', and I was just sitting there and drew it. That's why I draw what I do.

PS: So you're dad got you into it. Was he pushing you?

K: No, he never pushed me. I was going to do something else and it just came. I got a phone call because a guy had seen a drawing that I did just for fun and so he had this fashion store that he wanted to have this 6 meter long skyline for, and he asked if I could do it. So it was very large scale as well, and I said, 'well, I work with pencil'. He said, 'I don't care, I have a fashion store, I don't know what you do but can you do it?' I thought I'd try and I had about one month before my studies started again, and I said, 'well ok, I can manage'. So I worked like 250 hours of that month on that piece. Then I got the next commission while I was working on that one because it was in the fashion store which was open for people to stop by, and then I got the next one and the next one and so on.

PS: Which future projects are coming up?

K: I'm booked for the next eight months with art drawings which were commissioned and my manager does a lot of projects on the side with my drawings. We have done this wallpaper and we do events as well, workshops, exhibitions and that's what he takes care of, of course I have to be part of it.

PS: Information about these is available on your website?

K: Yeah, it is. On the website it also says everything about this live drawing, because this live drawing is actually a very good event. Many companies hire me to do this event like for a week, where I'm sitting at a company somewhere else and just drawing. Perhaps they have a camera and the camera is showing this on a very big screen so people can watch from a far distance as I do it, the camera following the movement of my pencil.

PS: Do you have any exhibitions coming up?

K: There is something coming up around Denmark, but I'm not quite sure now. People can follow it up on my website.

The end.