From Paris to PRIMITIVE Modern – Introducing Artist Bob Meyer



Drawing by American artist Bob Meyer

By Glen Joffe

Years ago I collected the drawings of Bob Meyer, an American artist living in Paris, France. Bob is a theatrical director, writer and actor, but in my mind, first and foremost he is a visual artist. His pencil drawings always struck me as magical, almost hypnotic. He has the best line I've ever seen. In just a few movements he can lasso all sorts of feelings and emotions and tie them together. His drawings are ethereal. They sometimes appear as if they were rendered from the threads of gauze. At other times a single continuous line suddenly imparts movement, weight and dimension. The great French art dealer Daniel Kahnweiler said, "The true measure of artistic genius is the ability of the artist to create a new visual language." Art speak aside, Bob's visual language is unforgettable. The moment you see one of his works, you're hooked.



oil on canvas · 35 x 45cm" rel="lightbox"&gt · Be Careful What you Wish For (detail)

It had been a long time since I'd seen Bob. Although Paris is not a typical destination for Primitive; reconnecting with Bob recently became the motivation to go there. *PRIMITIVE MODERN* is about to be introduced and I wanted to discuss with Bob the idea of presenting his work. It took a while to track him down, but when we met up at a park in the Marais District, it felt like no time had passed since our last meeting at least fifteen years before. We were both older, but all in all I don't think we aged very much. We made our way to a Moroccan restaurant famous for cous cous and the conversation began.

Bob filled me in on his theatrical work. He is the founder of the Gare St. Lazare Players, an English speaking theatrical company that performs in Paris. I remembered his connections to Hollywood and his devotion to playwrights like Samuel Beckett, but it was his visual art that interested me most. Bob made it clear he was working more than ever creating art, and I was pleasantly surprised to hear he was now painting and doing lithography as well as drawing. I was anxious to see if he would be able to carry his line over to painting and how his work would look in color. The next day I traveled to his home and studio along the River Seine to find out.



oil on canvas · 80 x 60cm" rel="lightbox"&gt · Above: · Sisters (detail) and China Boy (detail)



50 x 60cm" rel="lightbox">

Is there such a thing as an idyllic life? Probably not; but there can be idyllic locations and living right next to the Seine river in France just might qualify. Bob lives in a small village where everyone knows each other. Across the street from his home is his studio, which is in a cave. That's right; his studio is in one of three caves on his property. Not too long ago one of them collapsed, so he started working in a room perched atop another, accessible by a very thin, almost upright old iron ladder. Carefully ascending, I poked my head inside and immediately I was struck by a pastel painting he was creating. Immediately, it was evident he had not only been faithful to his line, but his work had gained power and presence with the addition of color.



pastel · 25 x 18cm " rel="lightbox"&gt · He Waited For My Birthday and Then He Dumped Me (detail)

Back in Bob's home we chatted about his work and I filled him in on *PRIMITIVE MODERN* and how we plan to include contemporary fine art along with tribal and ethnic art from all over the world. For many years, we have said, "The basis of modernism is found in what we do at Primitive." *PRIMITIVE MODERN* is just an extension of that understanding. Over wine, bread, and cheese flavored by a healthy dose of optimism about the future, Bob agreed to accept the commission of an exhibition called "The Key," based on his current work. It will feature paintings of old children's wind-up toys – the odd, eerily endearing ones that are now long gone – toys like the duck riding a tricycle that goes in circles once it's key is turned. Bob reminded me each time one of those toys was wound up someone's imagination instantly became engaged, without hesitation. *There remained no doubt in my mind Bob's works would do the same for all our imaginations!*