



# LODOWN MAGAZINE.COM

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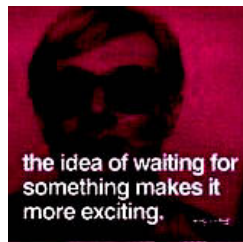


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## PAUL PRETZER

Posted by chris on February 10, 2009 at 10:40 PM

Paul Pretzer, a young painter with a dark, Baltic soul was born and raised up until the age of six, in Estonia. The painter now resides in Dresden, where he enrolled at Dresden University of Visual Arts - one of Germany's oldest and most renowned visual arts institutes - and where he initiated the liberation of his artistic path. The world created through his rather small-scale paintings, resembles fine, classic art on first glance but further inspection reveals a world of comedy and tragedy beyond this facade, with an often fine line between the two.

### Please tell us a bit of your history so far...

I was born in Paide (Estonia) in 1981 and lived there for 6 years. That was a time without bananas, Coca Cola and Walt Disney. Then my family and I moved to a little town called Espelkamp in West Germany. After finishing school and my civil service, I had the idea of doing what I wanted to do most: just to paint. So I began to study painting at the Muthesius-Hochschule in Kiel. At this stage I had little comprehension of what it meant to study fine arts. I thought you would have a schedule and paint still-lives, nudes and things like that. I didn't know anything about art after 1945. It was quite hard facing artists like Marina Abramovich or Joseph Beuys when you had already decided to become the next Ilja Repin. But I had good teachers and I learnt a lot about modern and contemporary art. After two and a half years I decided that I wanted new horizons and changed to the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Dresden. The most important thing about Dresden was that I stopped painting with the help of photos there. Initially, I started making little figures out of potter's clay which I then painted. Then one day - I think I was a little drunk because I had just got the money for a picture that I sold to Wim Wenders - I picked up a picture which had been getting on my nerves for a long time and painted a strange little mouse-like figure onto it. I didn't really plan to do it, it just happened. Blame it on Wim Wenders and the Amaretto... From then on I started to paint things just out of my mind. I realised that I have a huge fundus of ideas in my head and that there was a lot to paint. It was a kind of liberation because all the years that I had studied, I thought that paintings should be painted in a technically perfect way and that they should look realistic and so on. Then I started to paint pictures that looked funny and sometimes even a little silly, which were products of a completely different concept of how to deal with colour, composition and content. So with the change of my intentions there was also a change of results. Another really important thing was that now other people and I were able to laugh about my paintings, a reaction that is quite rare in the art world.

**At first glance, your paintings look rather classical... until you REALLY look at them and find the aspects that live in each story in your paintings. What is the primal inspiration of your art?**

My paintings are based on three main columns. The first two columns are the "classical" and also the

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Whitefield Brothers 'safari strut'

## LOTV

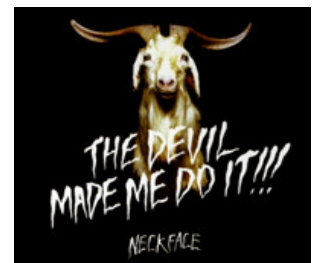
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most important ones: colour and form (composition). If these two things don't generate coherence, everything else is worthless. You could have a damn good story or a funny character but if there is no composition or incorrect placement and wrong choice of colours, you get an illustration and not a painting. If I put for example an orange or a white chicken in a picture it is not necessarily important information but it is primarily important on an abstract level. That's for example how Chardin composed his still-lives. So in my case, formal decisions during the process of painting can bring changes of content with them. Sometimes that's how I get stories that even I did not expect myself. So the third column is the story. The story gives the painting a direction. It is something that can create an emotional comment from a viewer and it produces feelings. What is important thereby is that there is no point. The viewer is always responsible for completing the story in his own mind. The challenge is not to tend to making comics although some comic look-alike elements are used. At the end it must be a painting and not a comic. Another significant thing about the mood in my pictures is the combining of two opposite things. The best paintings are those where it is not clear whether it is funny or tragic or good or bad. There must be this balance between both. That's what I am aiming for.

**There are some half-human, fiction based characters that appear in your works quite often as subjects, especially in your early paintings, the Mickey Mouse like characters appear heavily - what are the concepts behind them and where do they come from ?**

It is a little bit like in an old fable. You take trivial problems and transport them to another world with other personages. So the viewers can look at it from another point of view. The act of working with the Mickey Mouse like characters works so well because on first viewing they seem so familiar to you. Everybody knows mice like Mickey or Jerry and that is also the reason why I refer to them. I also grew up reading comics and watching cartoons – it is a part of our culture. But the striking point is that my mice don't do things Mickey and Jerry do. If a group of animals is standing around a little cat with its head cut off (Katzte Kaputt, 2006) it becomes unsettling because you would expect something different from a group of funny-looking characters. So the concept is to undercut the expectation of the viewers which I activate by using characters that look familiar at first glance. But this is what I say now. I don't plan my paintings on this theoretical level that I am writing on now. I always try to find a certain mood during the process of painting and afterwards when I get it I start asking myself why this or that works well.

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