

ART MAZE Mag

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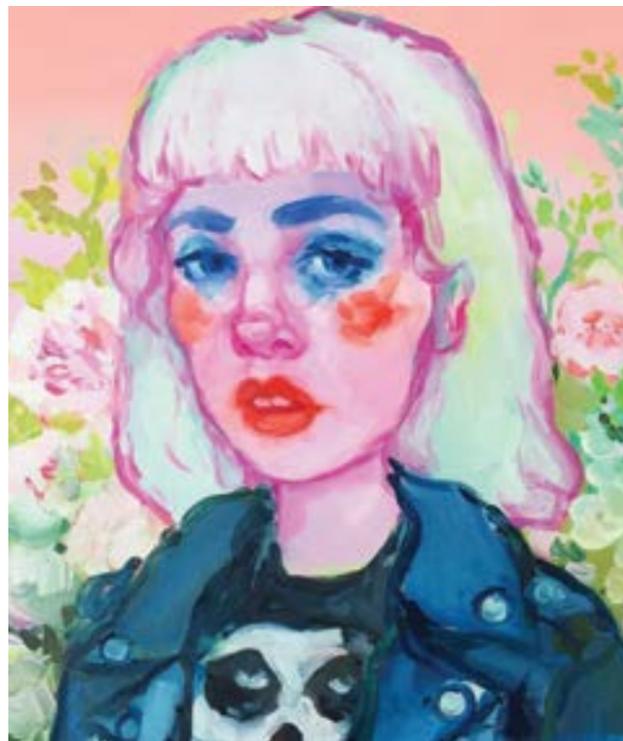


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Interviewed

Featuring:
Bradley Wood
Bree Delian, Retrospect Galleries
Blake Neubert: Death of a Coworker
Jen Mann (cover artist)

Bradley Wood's scenes of domestic life are anything but the ordinary, monotonous settings of everyday life. Each of his paintings is a window into lavish interiors; a theatre of opulence where paintings and artefacts adorn every inch of the walls and the wealthy lounge about in elegant gowns and suits, if they are wearing anything at all. Wood cleverly blends wit and social satire, as the excessive display of wealth he creates reveals this lifestyle as garish and almost ludicrous. We as viewers are turned into voyeurs, as we appear to be seeing these scenes from the outside looking in. We watch his subjects like specimens; trying to understand their lifestyle and perhaps discover who these people are behind the fur rugs, champagne and chandeliers. Referring to his paintings as "domestic fictions", there is an undertone of theatricality in the display of wealth that leaves us feeling that Wood's characters are performing, acting for the viewer as they play the role of the rich and beautiful housewife or the successful and interesting businessman.

Wood's use of thick, expressive paint strokes together with vivid patterns shape the atmosphere in his interiors, flattening his compositions. The shallow depth of each setting enforces the harsh angles present in Wood's work. Sharp diagonals, which are often the long legs of women, cut through the space while commanding your eye to follow. These angles are often mirrored in the boldly coloured patterns found around the interior such as drapes, wallpaper, or carpet. The subjects lounging in each scene often wear similar vibrant patterns that flatten and blend them into the luxurious items around them, as if they themselves are objects of indulgence. Interested in the complexities of living in a high-class environment, Wood balances the boldness of his patterns and angles with loose, painterly strokes of colour that soften the rigidity and demands of a life of status and wealth.

We were delighted to sit down and chat with Bradley about his day-to-day work process, career and life. Read on!

AMM: Female figures resting in luxurious interiors is one of the main themes in your work. Have you always painted this subject or did you start your artistic journey focusing on a different topic or medium?

BW: While female figures are well-represented in my work, I actually don't see them as the main theme. Men are quite present throughout my work as well.

I see all of the figures as actors. I use them as characters to create narratives involving people in luxurious settings. My work is a series of domestic fictions centered around the human condition. The luxury is a focus that comes a bit out of my subconscious – from experiences living in and absorbing San Fran during the height of the dot com era and subsequent crash, living in New York pre- and post-recession, living in the Trump era now. As a painter, I am interested in both the allure and complexities of wealth.

In my paintings of women lounging, I'm drawn to the whimsy and the absurdity of opulence and how that can be explained with thick, rich, luscious oil paint. Even though my paint application is completely different, the qualities of late 18th Century Rococo artists like Fragonard are what first got me interested in this idea. I've been pretty focused on it for the past decade, though there has been a definite evolution in my approach to the subject matter.

AMM: You mention that you play out fictitious fantasies in your work in a voyeuristic view – what led you to this fantasy 'world'?

BW: It started when we moved from Williamsburg in Brooklyn, back when it was more of an artist's community, to Westchester, NY. It was a drastic change. We literally went from living in a bare, open loft next to a concrete factory (a place we loved, by the way) to this perfectly manicured suburban (and very foreign) land. I was completely fixated on a few large homes nearby that reminded me of the house in Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*. Then it became a bit of a modern day *Great Gatsby* scenario. I began to imagine the eccentric characters who might live there and what might be happening within those walls.

AMM: It fascinates us how such dramatic figurative interior scenes in your works look so effortless in the way they are painted. How long does it take you to complete one painting and what's the process from finding an idea of what to paint to a finished piece?

BW: My process starts with drawings from many different references. It's always a mash-up from quite an extensive visual research library of imagery I've collected over the years — everything from architecture and fashion to cinema to my own photographs to *Tom & Jerry*. The process is somewhat similar to that of a filmmaker as I search for inspiration and piece together bits and parts for my mises en scène. I will literally have forty black and white printouts scattered on the floor. I might be inspired by a nose I like from one reference, a chair from another. I love the drawing stage, the possibilities of it all. Each drawing can become something completely different based on the decisions I make — the colors and patterns I choose, the thickness of paint, and looseness of the strokes.

When I am in this painting stage, I'll usually have about seven pieces going at the same time. When I'm working on one, I'll often get really excited about what I'm doing and be so sure that I've really got something, and I'll move on. Then I'll circle back after doing several others and realize it's not as good as I first thought and I'll work on it some more. This whole part of the practice can happen, for the most part depending on the painting, relatively quickly. There's a looseness to it. It's the finishing touches that can take a while, when I start obsessing over the details — those are more time-consuming as well as the most nerve racking. But they're also the most rewarding and give the painting its soul.

AMM: What are your studio rituals?

BW: Every day pretty much starts with coffee and Glen Gould. Other rituals would be writing random thoughts and drawing in a black book, palette mixing, doing color studies, long bouts of uninterrupted painting, ignoring phone calls, stepping away from time to time to sit in a folding chair on the roof, taking a five minute nap when I need to re-energize — always fixes me right up, sitting there staring at the paintings for an awkwardly long amount of time before walking out the door.

AMM: What does your work represent to you and what do you hope the viewer takes away?

BW: My work represents a commitment to tradition and a genre far bigger than myself.

I flirt with the idea of the work being a bit of a cultural mirror. It's funny, people are constantly telling me they see themselves in my paintings.

AMM: What are your biggest challenges to creating art and how do you deal with them?

BW: Longevity, prolificacy, balance. I just finished a pretty intense schedule, and now I'm excited to have a little bit of time to take some bigger risks, not be afraid to try something that might not work, scrap it and move on. It's a challenge to keep work fresh and to evolve when you are constantly producing to meet show deadlines. It's also important to take time away from the painting and be inspired, or simply rest. I recall an interview where Peter Doig said the time not painting can be just as important as the time painting. I don't plan to ever retire, so I'm still striving to find the right balance.

AMM: How long have you been a full time artist? Do you have any advice for those who are just starting out and strive to build a strong artistic career such as you have?

BW: I started painting later in life, and I'm fortunate to say I have been a dedicated full-time painter for the past 4 years. It took most of my life to be able to be in the position I'm in.

...A window into lavish interiors; a theatre of opulence... by Bradley Wood



Bradley Wood, *Sitting with Franz*; oil on canvas; 38 x 29 inches



Bradley Wood, *Dad's House*; oil on canvas; 80 x 100 inches

Bradley Wood, *Hamptons Power Suit*; oil on canvas; 40 x 40 inches



For me, producing a lot of work is key, and recognizing the small opportunities as steps to bigger ones. While I was based in New York, my career started at a really great, smaller gallery (Parts Gallery) in Toronto that believed in my work and gave me a chance. I worked really hard and over the course of a few years, I started getting more and more recognition, which caught the attention of Angell Gallery, a gallery that represented some pretty big Canadian artists, which I'm still with today. Simultaneously, I worked with other smaller galleries and consultants who showed my work at fairs around the world, starting at first with Affordable Art Fairs, then eventually doing fairs like Context, Pulse and VOLTA. I think it's important for artists to find ways to get their work out there and be patient with the process. Stay focused on always producing your best work, not being afraid to experiment and evolve as an artist.

AMM: You show your work in many international art fairs, particularly in the US and recently in Hong Kong, China. How would you say these two art scenes differ and how are your paintings received by the audience abroad?

BW: Art fairs are a bit of a litmus test. I've actually found that my subject matter seems to be understood universally. I'm grateful to galleries like Sim-Smith and Angell Gallery who have helped to expose my work to many different audiences around the world.

AMM: You paint the imagined lives of others inside their walls, but what might the viewer find looking into your home?

BW: My wife beautifully lounging as she stares into a laptop, my kids running around like Gremlins in the background, my dog taking up most of the couch, and me watching the Tennis Channel with an icy martini.



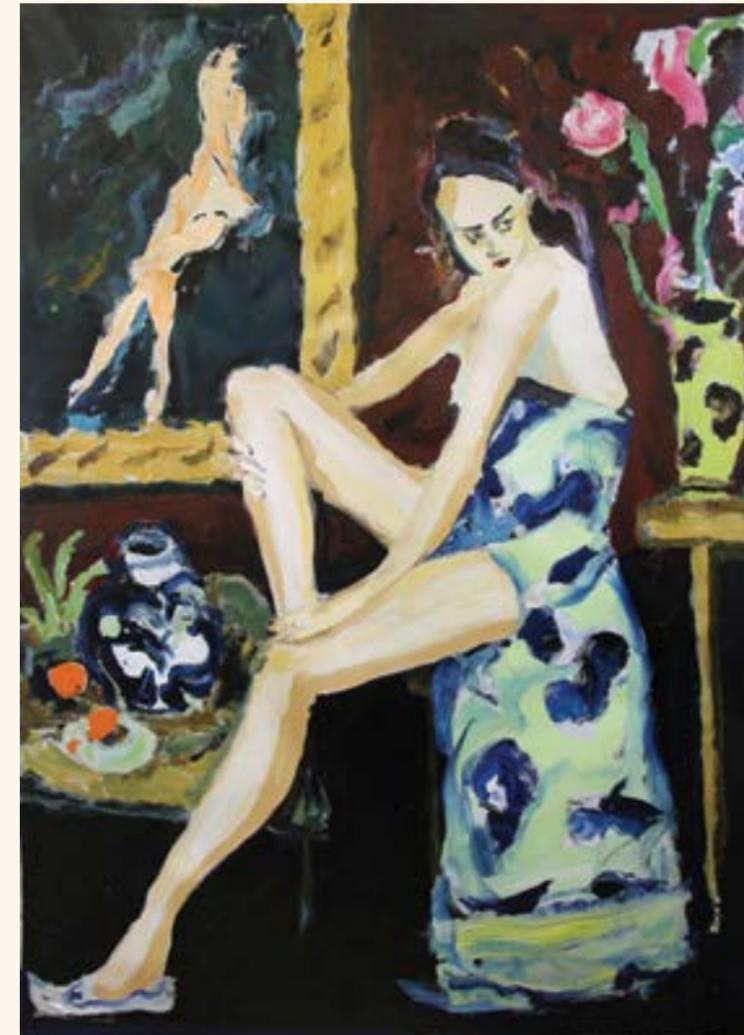
Bradley Wood, *Grumble's Brunch*; oil on canvas; 34 x 24 inches



Bradley Wood, *Pinchurst*; oil on canvas; 40 x 30 inches



Bradley Wood, *Colloquy*; oil on canvas; 82 x 65 inches



Bradley Wood, *Sicilian Suite*; oil on canvas; 66 x 44 inches