

Interview for Mister Motley magazine (March 2011)

Irene de Craen (IdC): Can you tell something about the exhibition you're having at De Witte Voet at the moment? (the new work, the title of the show, etc)

Nick Renshaw (NR): Most of the works in this show I've made in 3 months leading up to the opening. Like most, if not all, of my exhibitions it is a developmental process, a flexible yet clear period combining previous work and ideas, ideas and concerns specifically related to this moment and this exhibition, and the very important and various stages involved in creating and making the works when ideas are clarified, included, thrown out, modified and finally visualised.

The title of the show is part of this process. It grows within and as part of the creative process as well as signifying the philosophical nature of the work. It is separate in that it communicates on a different sensual level to the physical characteristics of the exhibition, though it also emphasises some aspects of the ideas behind and used as inspiration of the works. Words have a very useful function in that they can be both clearly understood and also carry a duality, or even, appropriately enough being the title of this exhibition, a 'Myriad' of ideas. This duality, sometimes conflicting aspect is for me a very important element in the reading of the art I make, so a similar questioning and openness regarding the title is very appropriate.

Fundamentally the sensual qualities of the works themselves and the feelings, ideas and emotions they conjure are at the centre of any exhibition of works I make. The balance between this aspect and the umbrella of thought provoked by the title adds an additional layer to further enhance and emphasise the experience of the works.

IdC: You spent a lot of time in China. How does that influence your work?

NR: That's right, China is a focus for myself and my work. It feels somehow like a natural extension to how I've been working the last few years. Coming almost exclusively from a western european grounding, education and professional practice it seems like a necessary addition and complement to position myself now between east and west. The contrasting, conflicting and sometimes complete 'otherness' of Asia complements perfectly the secure and safe nature of life and work in the Netherlands and the UK, where I come from originally.

As an artist I'm interested in the human condition and when it is most apparent, most visible. Those moments when we are confronted emotionally and psychologically. The conflicts, contradictions and challenges apparent in China supplement my artistic practice. Their influence in my work is a continuing development, a process which will continue and increase the more I am exposed to their influence. It is an influence which is felt practically as well as conceptually.

IdC: Cermamics is a very popular medium at the moment, but you've been using it for a long time. What do you like about it? When did you start working with it?

NR: Yes ceramics does seem to have become more popular recently. Quite an interesting thing as I've been involved and using it for more than twenty years. To me it has become part of myself, part of my identity as an artist. By this I mean that it feels so natural that I take the issues and problems which this unique medium confronts one with as totally positive aspects. As working with other mediums demand, painting, photography or video for example, there is a level of expertise and familiarity which allow for a freedom of expression. Ceramics is an even more demanding medium technically, but my comfort and skill allow me to express my emotional and conceptual ideas to a much more complete level than would otherwise be the case. To me it is a special medium as one can connect extremely directly, actually physically, can express practical and conceptual ideas, and it connects us all to a very ancient history, without having to explain these facts they are subconsciously and constantly there.

IdC: (Some of) the sculptures seem to be self portraits. Are they?

NR: The work that I make has absolutely some level of self portraiture. Though my work is much more about a universal human condition. One can't perhaps ever get away from the personal nature and influence one imparts on ones work so better to recognise and value this.

Practically I do also use mold making techniques quite alot in my works, and the fact that I'm quite interested in the human figure as a subject means that for practical purposes I use myself as a model. The fact that some might recognise me in some of these works is an interesting and positive result, though hopefully the works will be just as, if not more perhaps, complete and succesfull should one not recognise me.

IdC: What can you tell about the cake with the little man on it people were eating at the opening?

NR: Nice you noticed the cake! Though actually it has nothing directly to do with the exhibition, apart from the fact that a very dear family member made it for all the special guests who attended the opening. The decoration of the figure is a nice connection they thought of, so not my own instigation! And it tasted good of course.