

THE UNCONVENTIONAL PAINTER

The work of artist Kadar Brock has made the critical success leap from in-demand to wait-list. Here, Fernando Mastrangelo checks in on how he's navigating these new waters.

PORTRAIT BY MUSA ALVES

Fernando Mastrangelo: Everywhere I go, I hear the name Kadar Brock. Your sanded paintings and dust paintings are popping up everywhere, and your market is getting extremely strong. There must be a waiting list since your process is so labor intensive. How are you navigating this stage of your career?

Kadar Brock: I still have a long way to go. I'm thankful to be able to be in the studio full time, doing what I love, after years of hustling at art-handling and assistant gigs. I'm also fortunate to have some great gallerists, like Toby Clarke from Vigo Gallery and Almine Rech Gallery, who navigate the non-making parts, so I can just keep creating. **I've been watching you grow as an artist for almost 10 years now. I never knew what to expect from your shows, but now you've really settled into this new language.**

Looking back on my work from the last 10 years, I really just see two modes of making things—directly “painty painting” and then ritualistically pressuring that way of painting. The works I've been doing for the last five years, the sanded ones among them, but also their immediate predecessors, are in the latter category. I'm really excited about the entirety of what's happening in the studio. Those sanded works are an integral part of that larger ecosystem, and making them generates a lot of material for other works.

Your work makes me think about Rauschenberg's

***Erased de Kooning*. But here you're erasing your own possible history to make a new one. Is this something you think about?**

That's really spot on in a lot of ways. The act itself, of course, this negation, but also the two different relationships to painting embodied in that one piece. I think about this stuff and its ramifications all the time. People have a tendency to focus more on the aesthetic objects I make, but the history of each work's making is equally important.

Do you feel pressure by your market success with these works?

From a financial standpoint, I'm sure my galleries would be stoked if I could pump out a lot of these, but the process of making them is what it is. And that process is slow. As I mentioned earlier, each body of work feeds off of and generates other bodies of work, so from a studio standpoint, they all have to keep going. I've been really fortunate that as new modes of working arise out of this environment, they're being encouraged and supported by my gallerists.

How do you avoid becoming a trend in this crazy art world, and continually grow as an artist?

These are two very different things that have the same solution: Just keep working.

Did you want to destroy the past paintings when you first started to sand the layers of paint off your current works? What was going on in your life and career that made this happen?

When I first started undoing “painty paintings,” as I now call them, I'd already been priming and sanding on pen-and-marker drawings in another body of work. This was the next logical step. Why make a mark that's a symbol of gestural abstraction to negate when I've already got perfectly good, actual, gestural abstract paintings I can negate?

Will you ever hire assistants to make the paintings for you?

I recently hired an assistant who helps with making some of the sculptural works; the temporal limitations of the medium makes having an extra set of hands incredibly helpful. Otherwise, I think it's important that I make the works, start to finish. There are too many minute decisions that are made every step of the way to have someone else involved.

Who's a young artist that you follow, respect and feel that they are making great work and why?

I recently bought a monoprint by Sofia Leiby that I'm stoked about. Her work inspired me to start drawing again—which was something I'd left out of my practice for a couple of years. Beyond that, I'm continually inspired by my best friends and studio mates Matt Jones and Mark Thomas Gibson, and my girlfriend Stephanie Gonzalez-Turner.

What is your greatest goal as an artist?

To keep making work, all the time, for the rest of my life. And to make works that give people some sense of joy.

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—Kadar Brock

