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Article by Barbara Russ

“ Don't let the empty cases of beer fool you ”

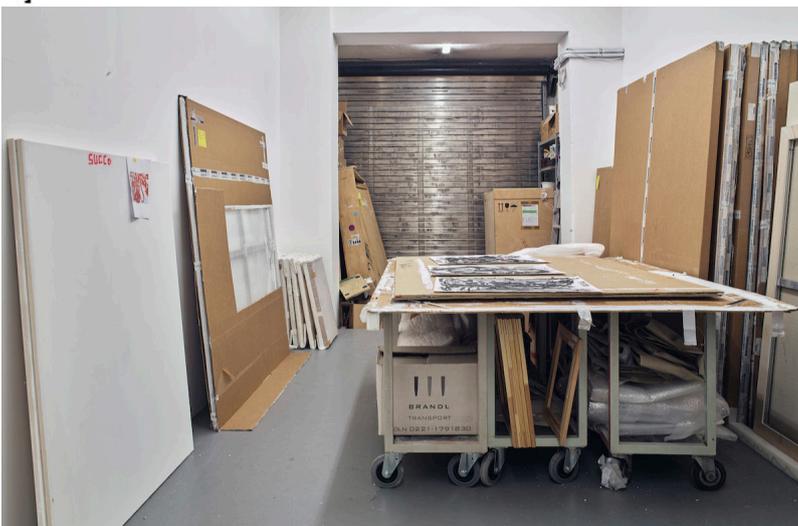
A visit in Chris Succo's studio: The silver-grey roll-up door is being lifted after ringing Chris Succo Studio's doorbell. Behind the shutter appears a man with messy blond hair, all dressed in black and a band sweater. We walk past a black Mini and a storage area towards the main studio with its red couch. A Thrasher magazine lies on the table, there's also a box of Vans sneakers, a couple of skateboards, guitars, stacks of books and, surprisingly, a few boxes of Smythson stationery. "A lot of the daily work is, believe it or not, ordinary office stuff like cataloguing and archiving", he laughs.

Succo, who has shown internationally in New York, London and Los Angeles, is one of Germany's leading emerging painters. His most coveted series of works, known simply as the 'White Paintings' have a spray-painted layer of lacquer underneath layers of white oil paint that allow for hints of color to shine through. Major collectors and MoMA trustees are buying his work and the waiting lists are long. "There are lots of things that go into a painting. It's comparable to poetry. A lot is going on in between the lines," Succo explains. Speaking of poetry; Art is not Chris Succo's only activity.

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“ The new work is not relying on aesthetic possibilities. It’s more revealing, it’s a new question. ”



The Price You Pay For Not Being Alone With Your Dying is the title of the poetry collection he co-authored with his writer-friend Paul Wassermann. The two met in London in 2009: “I used to write songs and lyrics for the bands I played in, but I never reached the level of rawness that I wanted. It’s curious how the two of us achieve this level of immediateness — it’s like jamming with a band. It’s kind of a collage technique. We discuss story lines and sentences, and then an attitude develops that shapes the piece we’re working on. Some of the poems are romantic; others are quite harsh. You have to read them with an open mind.” The first edition of 300 copies is nearly sold out.

They worked on the book for five years, they’re working on number two now: “I’m not a collaborator and Paul usually works on his own as well. We are both still surprised that it works out so well. We both feel it refines how we go about our respective work.” For instance, most of the titles of his paintings like Don’t Let the Empty Cases Of Beer Fool You are actually sourced from the book. Another of his main interests is music and he is in the process of returning to performing, currently founding a new band and a record label. Succo’s latest exhibition ‘Skin N’ Bones’ opened at London’s Almine Rech Gallery earlier this year. With it, he has started to shift his practice towards a more narrative style.

Black lines take the form of an afternoon at L.A.’s Gun Club or sunny morning at Chateau Marmont — memories of places and people he remembers from his recent work stay in L.A. and his travels. Alex Bacon, in the accompanying text to ‘Skin N’ Bones’, draws up a comparison to painter Philip Guston, who started out by creating abstract art and then shifted to a more figurative mode. Chris Succo’s work is currently at a similar crossroads. ‘Skin N’ Bones’ continues his quest into more narrative motifs. “In this new body of work Succo has found the potential for evolution, which was foreclosed in the necessarily circumscribed nature of his earlier series, both abstract and figurative. As such we view this exhibition from the perspective of being at the dawn of something, the ultimate conclusions of which are left open”, Bacon writes.

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What Succo is preparing for Art Cologne at the time of this interview also affirms this bold move in his oeuvre: “The new work is not relying on aesthetic possibilities. It’s more revealing, it’s a new question”, he says, and laughs. “You have to forget everything. The thought of being successful does not exist in the studio. I’m happy as long as I can keep on working”.

Succo is represented by Almine Rech in London, Brussels, New York and Paris, as well as The Journal Gallery in New York. He is currently working on an artist’s book featuring an overview of his work from about 2008 – 2016 as well as photographs from his archive: “It’s going to be more of a book-like zine rather than a catalogue raisonné or anything like that”, he says. “It’s going to give you a good impression of what I’ve been making up to this point”.





IN THE MORNING

Good Morning! Where are you drinking your espresso in the morning? In the studio

For a Sunday brunch or breakfast we will meet you at Brunch: At Ohme Jupp, Ratinger Straße. Breakfast: Zicke

The best coffee in town has... Kaffeeschmiede in Oberkassel

AT NOON

For a tasty, healthy & fresh lunch we meet you at... Akropolis, Dominikaner Straße

IN THE AFTERNOON

Your favorite route for a walk? Walking around the racetrack in Grafenberg. Or along the Rhine on the Oberkassel side.

The places in Düsseldorf you have to show your guests: The breweries and the museums.

Your favorite place for coffee & cake? Oma Erika or Heinemann

IN THE EVENING

Where do you spend a cosy evening with family or friends? Brasserie Hülsmann, Pegasus or Hot La Cucina.

Which restaurants represents for you the most characteristic taste of Düsseldorf? Schumacher and Füchschen.

A restaurant you have never been, but always wanted to go? Ashley's Garden.

Your personal top secret food spot you would like to share with our readers? Bistro Fatal.

Your favorite Altbier? Uerige fresh from the barrel



AT NIGHT

Your favorite bar or bartender? Everyone at Paul's, Sassafra and Tannenbaum

ALWAYS

When and where you feel like a real Düsseldorfer? When double-parking in front of Schumacher brewery to get a crate of cold beer.

What are you missing most when you are not in town? Double-parking in front of Schumacher brewery to get a crate of cold beer.

If you could eat Düsseldorf, it would taste like... Mettbrötchen.

What do you love most about Düsseldorf? The airport. It's a great city to work in.

STYLE

Your top-3 addresses for shopping? Hitsville Records, A&O Medien and Robert Schmitz Berufsbekleidung.

Is there an artist in Düsseldorf you appreciate and why? All of them.

Describe your personal style. Jeans, T-shirt, sneakers.

GENERAL

Your favorite travel destination? Wherever the work takes me.

Which book are you currently reading? 'Die Toten' by Christian Kracht.

Which movie have you recently seen? One more time with feeling, the Nick Cave documentary.

Which record is currently running on your record player / playlist? 'Time fades away' by Neil Young and the new Iggy Pop Album 'Live At the Royal Albert Hall'.

Your all-time-favorite-song? Today it's "Have Love Will Travel" by Tom Petty.