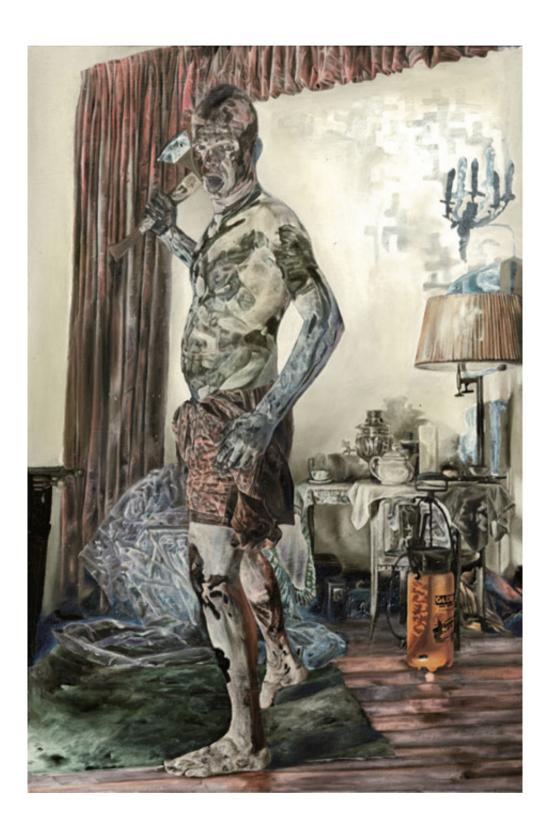
Artists Anonymous: Divide and Conquer



"We are the actors not the artists." -Artist's Anonymous

Whenever I write a catalogue essay, I'll usually interview the artists, grasp the body of work so well – I can see it naked – and find a narrative of the show (and if not, make something up).

But this time around, I got to interview War.

Indeed, War the person.

← ArtStars*

If you met War on the street, what would you ask him?

- He's not a member of the Taliban or the former president of the United States.
- I interviewed War, the man posing in the six paintings here over Skype, from England to Germany.
- Just as Neptune was sculpted by Bernini, or Venus was painted by Botticelli, the German-British art collective Artists Anonymous painted War the human in a series of three works from 2009, each with their afterimage.
- War is not wearing a bulletproof vest, or a mask. He is not made of stone, but flesh like you and I.
- In a pair of rolled-up jean shorts, a beer belly and mouth agape, he's surrounded by the finer things in life beautiful velvet curtains, antique teapots and glowing candle chandeliers.
- On Skype, War has a loud British accent, grey head shaved; long black lashes and a soft, wistful smile.
- He's into lush cardigans from Marks & Spencer.
- The second he appears on the screen, he is immediately upset. The video camera on my laptop wasn't working. That made him angry.

- "You can see me but I can't see you," said War. "That isn't fair."
- It all started in 2005, in the Berlin neighborhood of Neukölln.
- Artists Anonymous held a three-day private performance in a three-bedroom apartment studio on Stuttgarterstrasse.
- Inside, they each got one room to confront their demons: One dealt with War. It's who you see in the painting before you.
- And an interview with War is a quick lesson in political science.
- When asked why he enjoys killing so many people, he swears he has never killed anyone. People, after all, kill each other.
- "You can't blame Stalin or Hitler," he says. "It's just a social construct."
- "As long as I live in a world which is based entirely on power, then given the choice, I'll be in the most powerful position possible which I am."
- He eats cake for breakfast, and he loves his son, Peace.
- He won't reveal his favorite war, but we can guess.
- "The art world is a part of the entertainment industry, and the entertainment industry is a tool of war," he says.
- "If I give up my position as War, someone else will come along and kill me."

-Nadja Sayej

One Shot opens at the Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice, Oct. 1, 2011.

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