

TJ RINOSKI***Charmed***

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21 East 3rd St. NYC
www.fortnight.institute**A conversation between TJ Rinoski and Katelyn Eichwald**

KE: I wanted to start by asking you about the unstretched canvas. As someone who spent many years painting on unstretched canvas, there were things to think about, like, do you leave the strings? Do you try to make it clean cut? This feels central to your work as well. I think the canvas can destabilize the image in an interesting way. How did you come to that? It's pretty unusual.

TJ: I was really interested in trying to make work quickly to get to the bottom of the image itself, and I just didn't really understand or know what pictures I wanted to make. I was still in an experimental phase and the scrap canvases felt like something that was lingering around in the studio. As time went on, they felt like a really free way to approach a painting. I enjoy taking away the preciousness of it, at least in the process of making it, because it allows me to leave things kind of undone and let the viewer build upon the picture itself. As I began to pin them on the wall, they became more like relics found in a collector's study, like scraps of a magazine or pictures that you found in your archive or a photograph that you took a long time ago.

KE: Like a butterfly pinned to the wall.

TJ: Exactly. Now they are more cherished, loose, raw, and I enjoy leaving them as weird as possible. They don't have to be perfectly cut. They have their own shape, and they inform the compositions of the paintings. It's been a much freer way to work. I think if I hadn't had the space to make all of those paintings on raw canvas, I wouldn't have the confidence in the pictures that I'm painting today. They allowed me to be myself, much more than trying to make some large grandiose painting early on.

KE: Think of the painting *Fly Ball* and the baseball player about to catch or miss a ball in the air. That's a good example of an image that represents a moment of silence where everyone's sort of holding their breath. And with some of your interior scenes it's like when everyone stopped talking for a moment and you just look at the scene; or in a movie when everyone leaves a room and then the room is just there at the end for several seconds. How do you collect these images? How do you work from them? What draws you to them?

TJ: My process starts with a list of notes that makes sense just to me. They can reference a moment in time, a memory from a long time ago, a photograph taken from a film still, it can all be from a variety of sources. I enjoy making these notes without looking at anything and having an interest in what sticks to me. I like to look at the words and try to associate an image with it. Then I go back and hunt for whatever photograph I was thinking of that I may have taken. Or if it's an idea like the fish tank, then I'm sketching fish tanks and then maybe looking up some references for that. It's all over the place, but it starts with the list of notes.

I'm happy you mentioned *Fly Ball*, I think that's a great example for multiple reasons. What you just articulated is a motif in my paintings, having a stillness and tranquility about them, right before or after some big or small action. In *Fly Ball* there's a silent kind of calming moment filled with a lot of anticipation. It has a connection to me, personally, because I grew up playing competitive baseball and played baseball in college. As I've painted this body of work, I notice the images carry a similar arc where the viewer has an opportunity to build a narrative or attach some type of story to it without much information. I enjoy paintings that give me a sense of insight or give me the room to have my own insights and narratives.

Another example of that would be a painting in the show called *Angel*. A small figure in the middle of an eerie burgundy landscape with snow. He looks lost or like something is wrong; or perhaps he's looking for a friend or for some help. There's an angel there that's either coming to the rescue or taking them to the next life. It is open ended.

KE: In some of the work I've seen previewed from this show, there is something a little bit religious, like in *Revival* and *Angel*. I have an attraction to that kind of imagery too. I feel like I have come to it as a non-religious person trying to bring something meditative, ritualistic, or contemplative to the work, or an acknowledgement of death and other worlds. Tell me about how you relate to it.

TJ: I was raised Catholic and had an anti-establishment rebellious teenage attitude towards religion. I never thought later in life, I would be yearning for some type of spirituality. As I get older, I find myself yearning more and more for some type of spiritual practice, or, in general, just a sense of letting go and having time to detach from the direction of my life, or expectations of any sort. I think the imagery associated with Christianity or Catholicism is so strong and powerful on its own, especially, growing up in a household that had that imagery everywhere. We went to church every Sunday and to Catholic school. I don't feel necessarily drawn to Christianity or Catholicism or any religious sect, but I am interested in working towards a more spiritual practice. That has come later in life, and I find it very interesting and surprising that I am yearning for this now. I enjoy painting it for that history, in relation to myself.

KE: What do you like to read? Or watch? What do you like to spend your time thinking about? What kind of imagery do you look at? You look at paintings a lot. Do you look at them in real life? Do you look at them on your phone? How do you engage with other people's work? Do you listen to things while you work? Does that come into the work at all?

TJ: I am a big movie person, I love weird films. Growing up, I moved around a lot, my dad was in the military. I was introverted and felt like I had to always make friends with my skills more than with my personality. I was always trying to be good at something to connect with people, and I'm still kind of doing that now with my paintings. Going back to movies growing up, my comfort was film and watching them, or even just a way to relax and turn my brain off. I think film and its compositions, colors and hues informed how I frame my paintings today. I think that the more films I watch that seem like something I could have made, the more clear my path of painting can be.

TJ Rinoski (b.1994) lives and works in Richmond, Virginia. Solo exhibitions include *TJ Rinoski*, 68 Home Gallery, Richmond, Virginia, US (2021) and *TJ Rinoski*, Gallery 5, Richmond, Virginia, US (2021). Duo exhibitions include *Cut: Katelyn Eichwald & TJ Rinoski*, Cob Gallery, London, UK (2022); *Summer Save Me*, Cherry Gallery, Richmond, Virginia, US (2019); Group exhibitions include *Charta*, Fortnight Institute New York, US (2022); *Summer Stage: Act Two*, Auxier Kline Gallery, New York, US (2021); *Buzzed*, Black Iris Gallery Richmond, Virginia, US (2019); *Behind The Curtain*, Shopkeepers, Washington D.C, US. This is the artist's first solo exhibition in New York. Fortnight Institute and TJ Rinoski co-published an artist's book of drawings to coincide with the exhibition.