

HUNTED PROJECTS

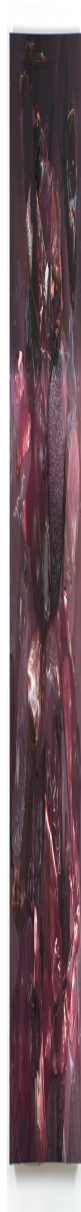
Andre Hemer



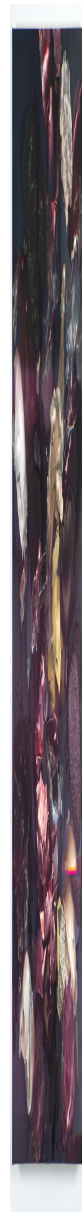
Andre Hemer
2018



Deep Surfacing (Cinema) #1
Acrylic and pigment on canvas,



The Cobra Effect #2
Acrylic and pigment on



The Cobra Effect #4
Acrylic and pigment on



Sky painting #1
Acrylic and pigment on canvas, 185cm x 130cm, 2018



Deep Surfacing NYC #12
Acrylic and pigment on canvas, 177cm x 127cm, 2017



Deep Surfacing NYC #6
Acrylic and pigment on canvas, 177cm x 127cm, 2017



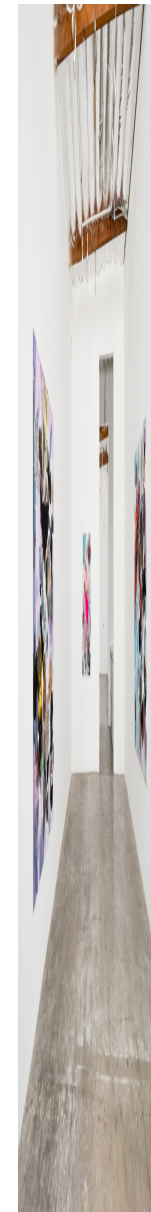
Sky painting #7
Acrylic and pigment on canvas, 100cm x 55cm, 2018



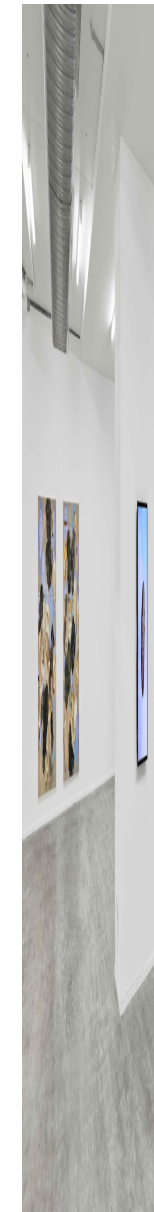
Installation View
The Cobra Effect, Kristin Hjellegjerde, London, 2018



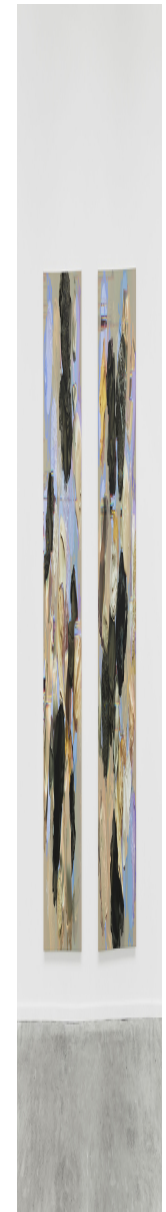
Installation View
The Cobra Effect, Kristin Hjellegjerde, London, 2018



Installation View
Making Image, Luis De Jesus, LA, 2018



Installation View
The Imagist and the Materialist, Coma Gallery, Sydney, 2018



Installation View
The Imagist and the Materialist, Coma Gallery, Sydney, 2018

16/08/2018

160cm x
114cm, 2018

canvas,
160cm x
114cm,
2018

canvas,
120cm x
85cm,
2018

Andre Hemer - hunted projects

Andre Hemer In Dialogue with Steven Cox

Steven Cox: *To begin, can you tell me a little about yourself and your background?*

Andre Hemer: Sure! I'm originally from New Zealand although my family moved between New Zealand and Australia a lot while I was growing up. I did my BFA and MFA in New Zealand but spent the last part of the MFA in 2006 at the Royal College of Art in London as part of a postgrad exchange we had at the time. From that point onward, I've been relatively nomadic in terms of moving around - at various points I've lived in Sydney, Berlin, Seoul, Paris, New York and Vienna among some shorter stops along the way. I have German citizenship from my father so Europe was kind of the natural choice to set up more of a base - and I've now been in Vienna for the past 2 and a half years. I think that coming from New Zealand instills a certain transitory nature - it's literally at the end of the world so you quickly realise that it's up to you to get out and explore, especially as an artist.

SC: *I am curious if you have a specific daily working routine? Do you have any morning rituals or habits that contribute towards a productive day in the studio?*

AH: When I moved into my current apartment I immediately ordered two things - a bed and a coffee machine. So the single most important prerequisite for a productive day is a strong coffee. After that it depends at what point of the process I'm at - if I'm near a deadline I'll head straight to the studio and work well into the night or early morning. Otherwise I'll sit down and do the less enjoyable task of admin before heading to the studio. If I'm at the planning or drawing stage of a show I can be a little bit more nomadic - as I'm travelling a lot I'll often work on the digital aspects of my process on the road (or in-flight) or do scanning site-specifically in different places.

SC: *Your work explores the intersection between digital media and traditional painting, with a focus on investigating the slippage in meaning between real objects and the digital representation of an object. Can you tell me more about your investigation into this subject, and what about it that continues to surface new lines of enquiry?*

AH: Yes, that's correct - although increasingly the way in which I think about this idea is without such division. For example, the idea of the 'digital' can often tend to be fool's gold - in the sense that it brings up a set of cliché's and technological associations that don't really add value or meaning to the art that's being created. A better way in which to think about that idea is to perhaps group all representation and versions of form together - and to simply say that we are working in a time in which those versions of form are interconnected - and wherein they are constantly being transacted between materialised and de-materialised states. For every object there are multiple versions of that form existing in the world, many of them existing as digital images through online platforms - and it is often these versions that we first encounter as the primary form of a work. This affects the way in which we see and experience work. Our sensory reading of material becomes neglected and the illusionary aspect of the digital representation becomes more apparent. Painting becomes an ideal vehicle to play with these ideas.

SC: *Can you tell me about the effect digital technologies has had on your work over the years in relation to the constant development of new software and technologies?*

AH: Following on from my previous answer, it's rarely the underlying development of technology that drives the creation of new work. Rather the various technologies that I've employed over the years have at best been 'recent' and more often than not 'legacy' in nature - especially in the case of the various scanner models. I'm interested in technologies that can capture and transact physical and visual information into a de-materialised form - most often as digital image data but at various other points; metadata or three-dimensional object data.

That being said I think that there are recent technologies that provide new scope in the 'transactional' realm - last year in New York I worked with a high-end 3D scanning company to create an object 'library' of my painted materials, and I've begun to use these in both digital video and painting works. I've also been relatively involved with different blockchain technologies going back to my PhD thesis, and that's been interesting to me in terms of thinking about how it might be applied to the de-centralisation of image and object. In terms of its application to practice I think it remains a curatorial red-herring (most of the work that I see being made is in the fairly predictable realm of coin or token creation) - but I'm certainly an advocate for its practical usage in editioning and proof of ownership.

SC: *In comparison to your work, there are many artists creating digitally inspired works through the vernacular of very dated digital technology. For example, painting in a manner to emulate the tools of MS Paint. What are your thoughts on this? Do you feel that digitally influenced artists should keep pace with the advancement of new technology and software in order to be relevant*

AH: I don't have an issue with the tools that any artist chooses to use, but I do have a lot to say on the broader point! What I would point out is the seemingly forgotten legacy of many artists in the early 2000's ala Monique Prieto, Shirley Kaneda, and Jeff Elrod whom were dealing directly with virtualized modes of drawing. And prior to that Albert Oehlen and Harold Cohen (going way back to the 60's) whom were engaged with similar things. As an undergrad student in the early 2000's I began to use software like CorelDraw to explore my own terrain, but by the end of the 2000's this felt more and more like a dead end as the proliferation of consumer tablets (ie iPad's) began to take hold, thus leading to a very standardised aestheticising of such techniques. I find it curious right now that there's a re-emergence of the 'MS Paint aesthetic' - but through a much more figurative line of enquiry. My guess on why this is happening is two-fold - there is a younger generation working through their own 'digital nostalgia', so hence the use of MS Paint and that associated air-brush look. But also, (maybe) it's a bit of a joke on (and push-back against) the over-saturated digital aesthetics of the present day. Ultimately both of these can be true, and both can also be relevant to a practice.

I do think that this approach has a place now, but I'm not really sure how long the shelf life is. I think that you can break it down to generational movements somewhat—Cohen and his 'belief' in technology to advance and innovate, Elrod to virtualise bad-painting as part of a generation that was more interested in the hack and glitch rather than the technological promise, the 'in-between' generation (of which I'm a part) that moved from this into a Post-Internet practice (and out again) in which these tools and aesthetic drivers were clearly inescapable and the question became how one could amalgamate the digital into the physical, and then finally the young generation coming through now for whom digital histories and interfaces are both their nostalgia and default way of seeing and making, and it's a kind of a backwards learning where they have to figure out how to make those things beyond the screen. So, the answer to your question is that for all of those artists that identify with those generational markers, technology does have some kind of fundamental under-pinning, but it's often a reflection towards the past and present rather than a chasing of future technological relevance that determine where those practices lead.

SC: *I am interested to know how you plan your works. Do you begin with preparatory sketches of some form, or do you prefer to work in an improvised manner?*

AH: My practice is quite systematic - there's a series of steps that are reasonably pre-determined and within that there's some scope for improvisation at each point. The 'drawing' part of the process for me is the digital scanning of physical objects (that are created from paint). I always do these scans en plein air in different locations depending on the city that I'm working or travelling in. These scans then form a library of images categorized by the location that they were shot and also the time of day and changing light conditions. These naturally form identifiable series from which the paintings are eventually materialised.

SC: *You say that you make your scans outdoors, redefining traditional en plein air painting, is this to digitally capture the effect a duality of light sources has upon a scanned object?*

AH: Yeah, sometimes as an artist you don't know the thing that you are searching for until you're in the middle of it. I think that with the scanning process, the aspect that has become apparent as being important is the exploration of light - and how light determines how we see objects and determine the space that they sit in. In a very simple way a lot of painting deals with this. The way in which an object is illuminated by two opposing light sources produces a very particular kind of image. It's both naturalistic but also speaks to something either a little hyper-real or digitally manifested.

SC: *What is the significance of categorizing the location and time of day that you make your scans? Is the specific information then made available to the viewer in the form of an important or relevant text? Or is the documentation purely for your own archival documentation?*

AH: Predominately, that documentation is kept as a kind of archive - and I will use it someday more explicitly in its native (digital) form. I did quite a lot of media-based work a few years ago that dealt with image archives and so I hope to revisit this in a similar way, but as with all digital-based media the question is how it should be materialised. In terms of how that meta-data of date and time is presented in the paintings - it's usually far more ambiguous, however for the remaining shows this year I will be using the scan date/time in a more opaque-manner. Each body of work will be titled as to the day of scan - and the within the installation there will be a sequencing of paintings according to time where the change of light and tone will be visible. I think that with all art there can be aspects which can be important in the making of the work but also remain silent to the viewer's experience - and I think that this is one of those things that can work either way.

SC: *I am curious about the crossover between hyper-reality and hyperrealism. With hyper reality, the viewer is unable to distinguish the difference between reality and a simulation of reality, whilst hyperrealism's aim is to recreate a high-resolution image. I sort of feel that your works straddle the line between both, whilst the scanning of forms and the manipulation of your imagery propels the works into an area of artificial realism...*

AH: This is definitely an interesting point - and yes, I agree that both could apply to what I'm doing. I probably tend towards the idea of the high-resolution image, but I'd rename it (ala Artie Vierkant) as a 'high-resolution image-object' - which speaks to an amalgamation of many forms, materials, and images into one object. It feels as though with Hyper-reality we might be approaching an end-point. As you state, the ability to discern the reality and simulation is crucial, and it's precisely this that's breaking down. One could look at the documentation of a painting on Instagram as a kind of simulation, whereby the reality of the painting object is replaced by its de-materialised form.

SC: *I listened to a short talk on-line that featured you discussing, amongst several topics, the influence of Apple's Hypercard & Stacks computer program. Primarily, this tool encouraged non-linear thinking and non-linear organization through hidden layers of information. To what extent did this program influence you in the early days of thinking creatively?*

AH: In retrospect I think that this hugely affected my way of thinking, and that rudimentary program is something I still think about to this day. It was essentially a tool in which you could create a non-static drawing/document that could be linked and embedded with a variety of media - basically in the same way in which the web functions. So as a teenager I was always trying to explore drawing through combining different physical tools with software programs - and try to move those elements between the two somehow. I made produced music for a while and did an undergrad in printmaking (which is all about layering devices), so by the end of my BFA the way in which I approached making work was really rooted to the non-linear arrangement and construction of things.

SC: *Can you please tell me about your studio set up? How long have you worked from your current studio?*

AH: I've had my current studio in Vienna for about two years now. It's around 80sqm in total, split into two spaces. The larger space is where most of the painting happens - I tend to work a lot on the floor so the space is generally pretty full. I also have a large spray booth in one corner of the room to allow for spray and airbrush work. The smaller space contains a vinyl cutter for creating masks, all my packing supplies and general storage of materials. I have a studio assistant who works 1-2 days a week mostly preparing stretchers and surfaces, and dealing with logistics (by far the worst part about being an artist!).

SC: *I am interested in the notion of preciousness and at what stage you would choose to discard a painting in the studio. To you, what determines a successful or failed painting, and do you have a tendency to destroy failed paintings?*

AH: There's a lot of uncertainty in my process, especially before I remove the final masks from a painting. Therefore, I only tend to destroy works right at the end of the process, when I really can't 'save' the work. This doesn't happen that often - probably once every couple of shows. I'm also of a mindset that determining whether a painting is good (or interesting) takes a while, and unless it's one of those pieces that feels great immediately I usually I don't really have a good grasp on the work until 1-2 months later - usually when I've had a chance to see it in the studio for a while or in an exhibition context.

SC: *In relation to your recent exhibition at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, could you discuss the title of this exhibition 'The Cobra Effect' and how this title relates to the body of work that was exhibited?*

AH: I've been asked this a few times - it's one of the few titles that I've used recently that hasn't been so conceptually-tied to the work. It's more of an esoteric title - it's meaning springs from a situation in which the solution to an initial problem ends up creating another bigger problem. This seemed like a nice way in which to think about how a lot of decisions happen in the studio while painting - whereby that act of trying to 'fix' something in a work often backfires. For the 'The Cobra Effect' I wanted to step back from preconceiving what the show was going to be and make decisions on the fly - so the title seemed like a good way of expressing this.

SC: *Do you believe that the title of an artwork has the potential to alter a works interpretation?*

AH: I used to use really long titles with an under-pinning of humour to them, but at a certain point I think that they distracted from the work. At that stage I moved to a more serialised format with shared titles for each series - which were linked to something in the materialisation of the painting. Ultimately, I'm not too concerned with the title having an influence on the work - if it's a good painting then the experience of the object alone will be enough. I know that when I walk around a Museum I tend to only look at the wall labels only after looking at the work - the title can give information about a particular context but it never changes the way in which I had that initial experience. There's also that idea that words change meaning over time - so taking a really long view of things, I tend to think that sometimes the best titles are the simplest.

SC: *As you are based in Vienna, I am curious to hear your views on the rise of populist nationalism occurring under the new right wing coalition government, and the effects this new government has had (to date) on the Vienna (and Austrian) art world. Have you noticed any changes take place, and if so, are these changes altering or affecting your perspective of Vienna as a progressive arts city?*

AH: I should state that although Vienna is a base for me - I'm usually travelling for exhibitions or working on projects elsewhere a good portion of the year, usually at least 4-5 months. Therefore, my experience isn't the same as say a local Austrian artist who is here throughout the year and also reliant on arts funding for example - which is usually the thing initially at stake when you have a right-leaning government. I would say that Vienna itself is a fairly progressive city - it's the regions in Austria outside of Vienna that tend to lean further right.

SC: *Further more, to what extent do you actively engage with the Vienna arts community? Do you think that the right wing coalition government will gradually push international artists out of Austria due to the increasing focus on nationalism?*

AH: As per my previous answer I'm in and out of Vienna a lot so I wouldn't say that my engagement with the arts scene here is that strong. But there's also some intention in that - it's nice to have a sense of separation between life and work in a way in which it's often very hard as an artist. There are of course a lot of good things going on with passionate and talented people involved beyond the rich museum and institutional legacies of the city. There's a proliferation of new dealer galleries opening, and more artist-run spaces than I can count. It's hard to say whether that's sustainable in the longer term - I have a suspicion that there isn't enough of an economic driver here for all of these galleries to last, but for the moment there's certainly a feeling that the landscape here is changing in a positive way.

On the political aspect - I'm unsure whether the situation will have an effect on international artists here. It seems to me that the same kind of political pressures exist in many places right now, so I would say that it can probably be viewed in wider context of wider global problems. When I think I about other potential cities within Europe in which to live, it's very easy to have potential concerns with many of them.

SC: *In relation to social media and more specifically Instagram, what are your thoughts on this as a platform to engage with new audiences? Do you have a love/hate relationship with Instagram or other online social media platforms?*

AH: I'm relatively ambivalent on Instagram - it's a platform that is the reflection of this moment in time and so despite its faults there's no value in completely disparaging it. At the same time, it's important to be aware of its pitfalls and not treat it as some kind of gospel of ambition. Instagram tends to be a lot of smoke and mirrors - for example 'engagement' as a percentage of users tends to decrease relative to the number of followers that an account has - so what that speaks to is that there's a whole lot of 'empty' love going on. Furthermore, there's the usual tropes to gain Instagram notoriety - post frequently, use mirrors, and be attractive (even in art circles).

But to also take the contrarian view - about a decade ago a young artist told me how uncool it was to have a website. Well, that artist now has a website and an Instagram account to boot. And for good reason - it's important for an artist to have a sense of control over your work and online presence, which is primarily the reason that I use it also. I think that like most contemporary platforms, it's a matter of using it in a way that feels right to you - while not falling for the empty hype of much of what's being posted.

SC: *In your opinion, what do you feel are the pros and cons of Instagram, and do you consider Instagram important for artists working today?*

AH: I don't really see it as a platform that has a lot of longer-term consequence to my practice. At the end of the day it's about people being able to see a painting in actuality, and so the way that it moves through the world is ultimately still slow and with intimacy. Social networks will come and go - Instagram increasingly feels saturated with content, and less of it feels meaningful. In a decade I'm sure that we'll be talking about another way of distributing content online with a different set of pitfalls. There will most likely be platforms running on blockchain that will probably be better in controlling the economic and ownership connection to an artist's work - but none of that will replace the act of spending time with a work in a one-to-one fashion.

SC: *What projects/works are currently in progress in your studio? Are you preparing for any specific future shows?*

AH: I just finished a couple of new pieces for the current group show at The Unit in London, as well as a group show curated by Paul Efstathiou at Hollis Taggart Galleries in New York opening in October. Beyond that I'm excited about working on some large-scale works for Art021 in Shanghai in November, and then a solo show with my New Zealand dealer Gow Langsford Gallery later that month.

SC: *Any last points or thoughts you would like to share?*

AH: Make sure to check out paintingdiary.com in early 2019. The site will be relaunched and will transition to become a publisher of painting-focused artist books and limited editions - something which has been in the pipeline for a while now. There's a second volume of '*Painting Regarding the Present*' scheduled and hopefully something special on the editions side later in the year.

[Andre Hemer \(http://www.andrehemer.com/\)](http://www.andrehemer.com/)

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