

# NINO MIER GALLERY

An abstract painting featuring a large, textured orange shape on the left, a dark purple shape below it, and a light purple area on the right with dark purple scribbled lines. The background is a mix of muted colors like green, grey, and blue.

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

**ANTWAN HORFEE**

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Antwan Horfee first gained recognition as an independent creative artist in Paris. Inspired by Avant-Garde art movements, he projects the action and performative aspect of his work outdoors into his gallery work, still using spray techniques for his abstracted and slightly distorted representations. He skilfully combines figurative and abstract elements, in works that are often critical about the contemporary art world and the art historical canon.

The often surreal characters in his works, which are dominated by abstract gestures, are signs of an age of diversity, noise, abundance, and uncertainty. His intense dynamics and colour palette are symptomatic of a time when the flow of (digital) images is extensive and fast. Antwan Horfee is continuously experimenting with techniques, materials and bearers as potential trademarks of his time and generation. He combines fragile painting and drawing techniques with industrial materials such as plastic, which is created with the intention to stay unchanged for hundreds of years. He allows coincidences to affect his works in order to create an individual, nuanced and contemporary visual language.

*Antwan Horfee (b. 1983 in Paris, FR; lives and works in Paris, FR) studied Beaux-Arts de Paris. Horfee has presented solo exhibitions with Ruttkowski;68 in Paris; PLUS-ONE Gallery, Antwerp; and Palais de Tokyo, Paris. His works have also been included in group exhibitions at the Lyon Biennale of Contemporary Art, Lyon; Galerie Derouillon, Paris; and the Michael Horbach Foundation, Cologne.*

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## **SELECTED WORKS**

# NINO MIER GALLERY

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Antwan Horfee  
*heavy obstacles*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas  
78 3/4 x 78 3/4 in  
200 x 200 cm

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Antwan Horfee  
*outdoor we miss you!*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas  
78 3/4 x 78 3/4 in  
200 x 200 cm

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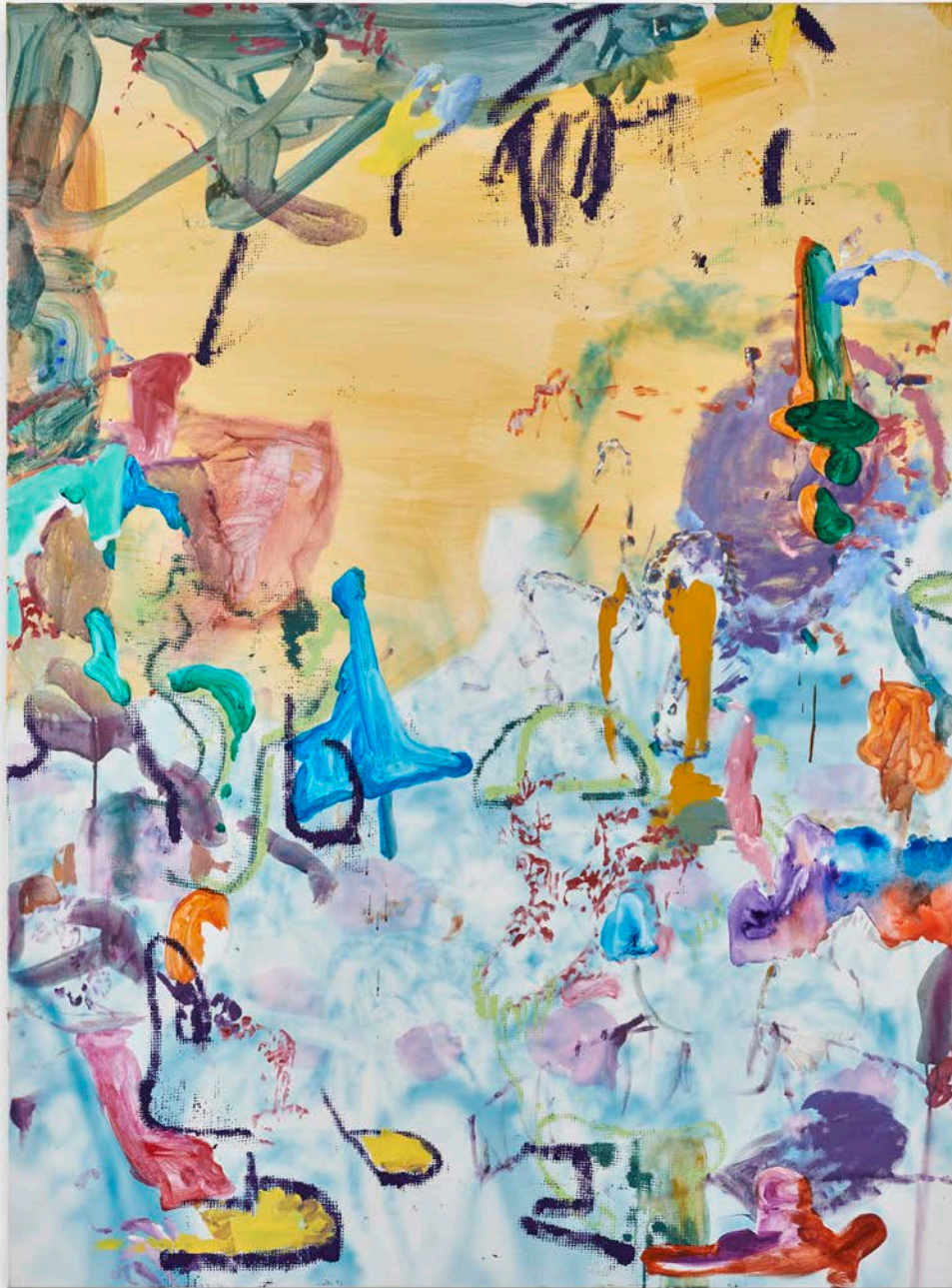
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Antwan Horfee  
*den is a bridge, go find it, 2022*  
Acrylic on canvas  
78 3/4 x 78 3/4 in  
200 x 200 cm

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Antwan Horfee  
*crunch the branches it's hot, 2022*  
Acrylic on canvas  
68 7/8 x 51 1/8 in  
175 x 130 cm

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Antwan Horfee  
*battle-toads battle-maniacs*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas  
68 7/8 x 51 1/8 in  
175 x 130 cm



# NINO MIER GALLERY

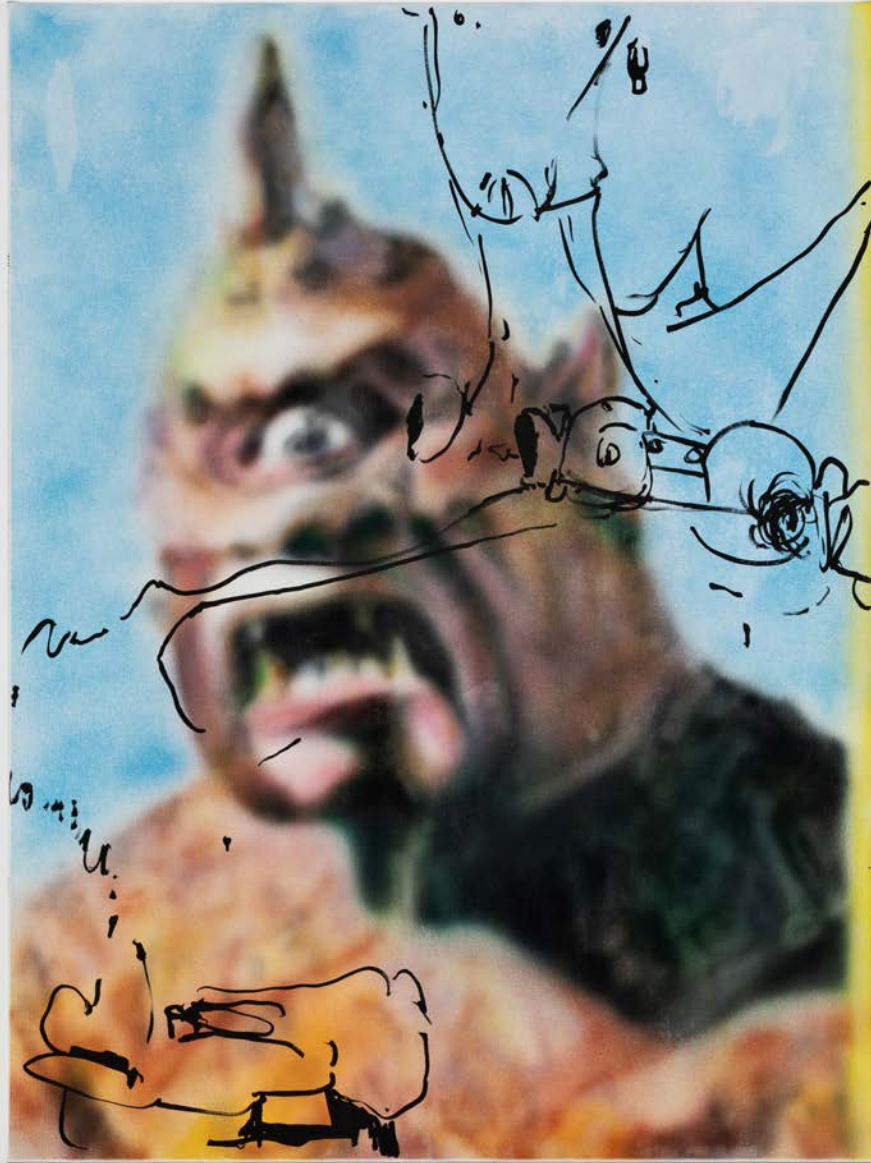
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Antwan Horfee  
*Kawai' Compromized*, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
68 7/8 x 51 1/8 in  
175 x 130 cm

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Antwan Horfee  
*Ray's Cyclops*, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
47 1/4 x 35 3/8 in  
120 x 90 cm

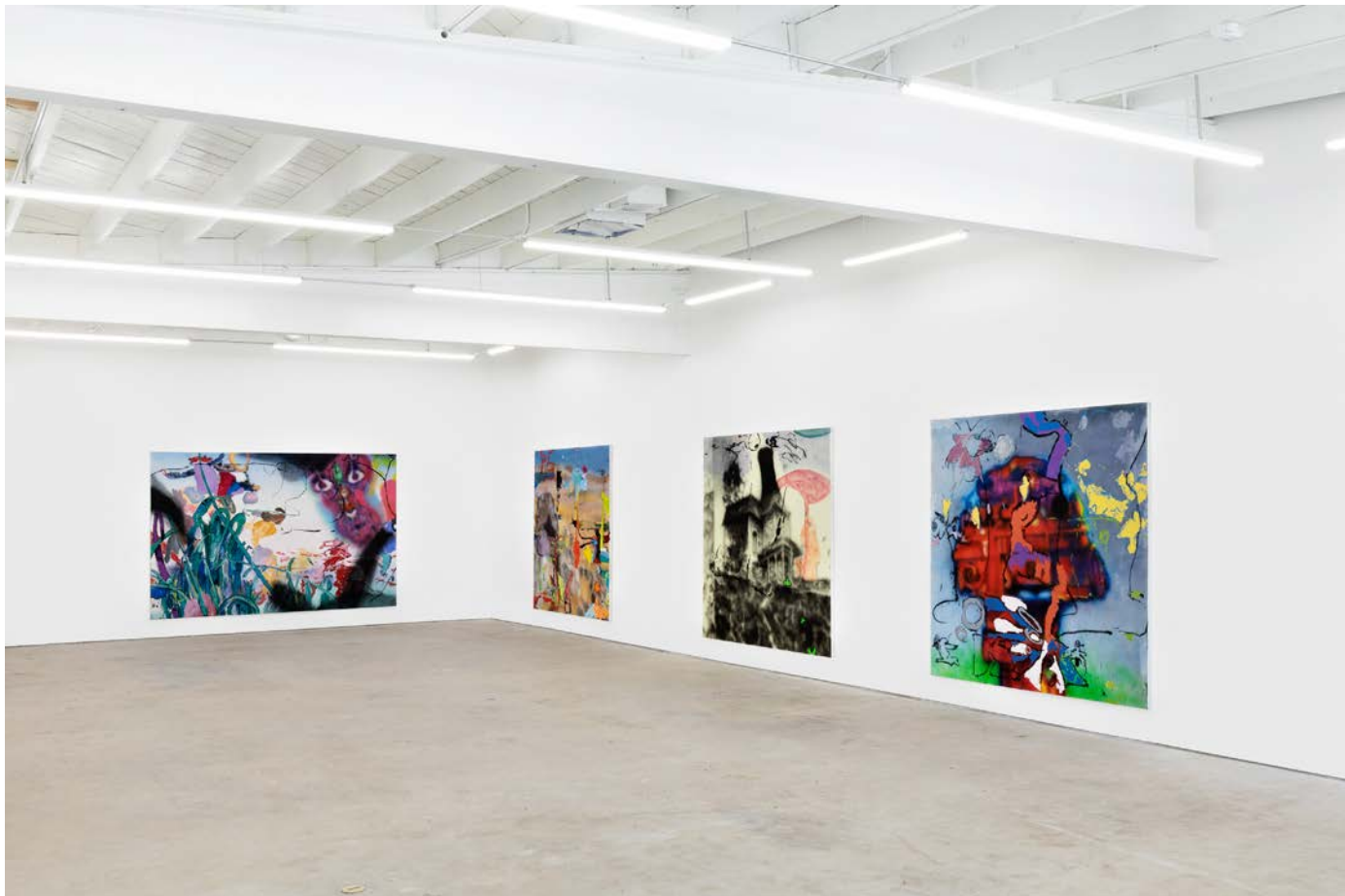
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## **INSTALLATION VIEWS**

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Installation view of Antwan Horfee's  
*SCI-FRIED*  
(March 23 - May 1 2021)  
Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

# NINO MIER GALLERY

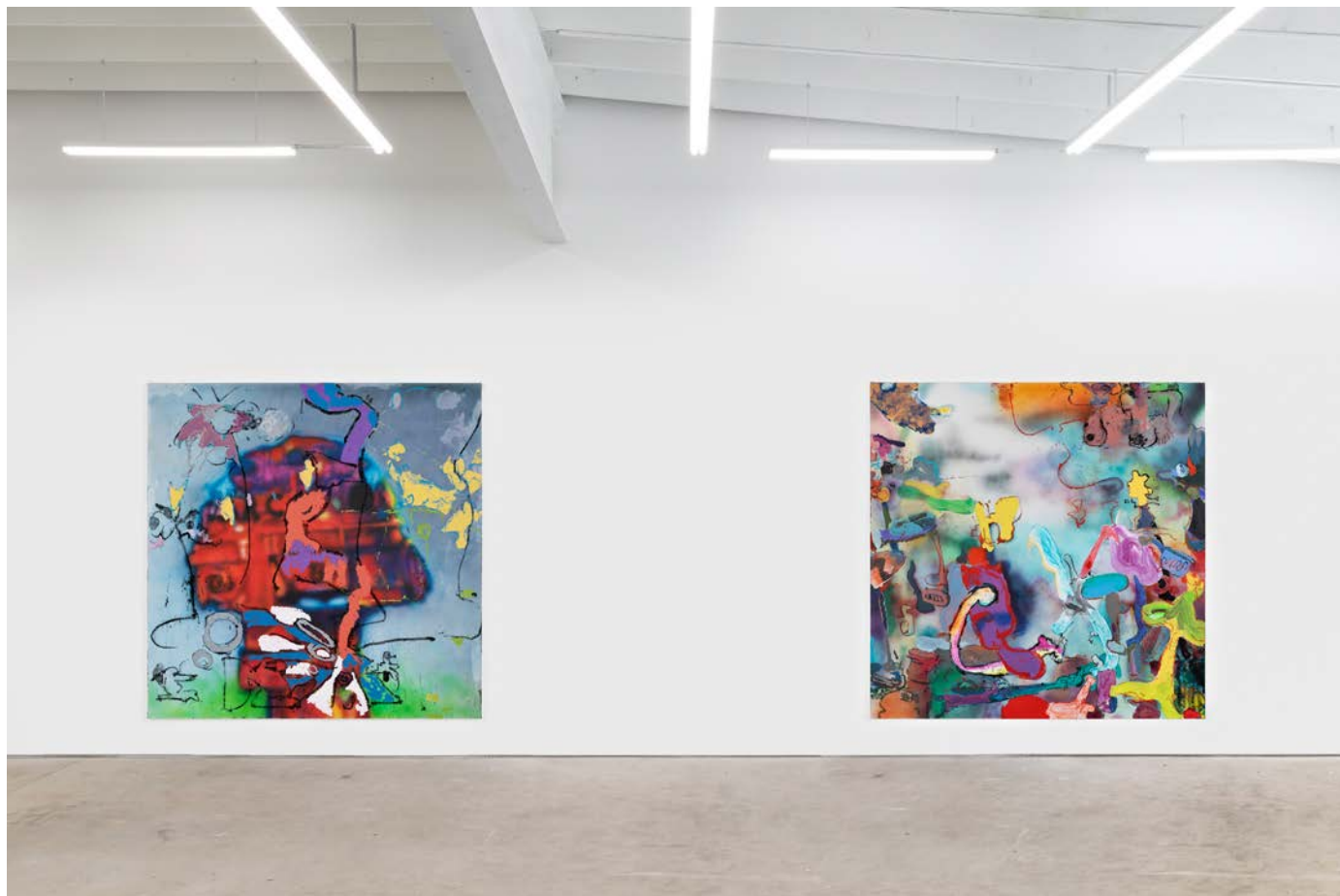
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## **PRESS**

# NINO MIER GALLERY

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## GOODHOOD

WORLDWIDE

DECEMBER 2021

### Antwan Horfee: Buzzard Control

By Goodhood Staff



*GOODHOOD: Can you talk us through what QSL cards are, what does QSL mean?*

ANTWAN HORFEE: QSL is a radio code from the list of a Q codes based on 3 letters mainly. Starting by Q, meaning “can you acknowledge receipt?”. Others like QRA or QSM can be find elsewhere on the info of the cards, meaning the interest of the practitioner. So basically once you have the necessary material, CB transmitter, antenna and lots of cables then you could reach frequencies that others could hear and even answer using certain channels. If you decided to make an amateur radio show back in the days, then you had to design yourself some sort of a business card, but without business. Pure wish to share and make people aware of your existence. Cards are mostly the size of a postcard, referring to the first transmission witness telegram back in 1918. The first received signal needed to be mentioned so they sent a postcard as a proof. I guess they kept that format as history and standard of communication for the network. We can observe how much pleasure people had to declare their ideas, to create avatars and to transmit the wish of listening to them; graphical composition and how information and images are collapsing is super refreshing, intriguing and sometimes incredible.

*GH: What are your favourite things that you collect?*

AH: Right now I look at animation cells and a bit of architecture books. Big subjects hah! My friend put me into cells, and I fell in love. Part of a movie in my hand, just wow. When I say right now I mean since 10 years, but these days I focus a bit on what to do with it. I already showed 40 of my favourite ones recently, it only gave me the wish to have more. Vampire Hunter D, Jojo’s Bizarre Adventure, Future Boy Conan or Devilman. Weird framing in the middle of actions, flat colours and evolved background made to receive heroes and variant subjects over them.

*GH: Favourite books you’ve bought this year, and why?*

AH: This year I bought so many books, damn! But let’s say “The art of Tohl Narita”, “Creeping Death from Neptune” from Basil Wolverton, and “La Memoire Du Futur” from Moebius. Only intense classics. I always search escape ways, image books such as comics or illustrated novels. They can be used easily to block reality, to dive straight into a hole like Alice haha. I use and touch books everyday. I am never tired, it is probably because my generation still had books and 5 TV channels as only source of distraction at home. Re-reading the same one over and over that you had in your hands because your grandad let this one go. Very romantic but very true. I

# NINO MIER GALLERY

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kind of kept that reassuring feeling of peeling one frame, one scene with the size of the lines, the half-toned colours etc etc. Reading one text page until you know exactly what you see when you read it many times, when you're in your living room, you think of that book, then you see automatically this picture in your head. That is the type of object I research. It doesn't mean the rest doesn't interest me haha.

*GH: What are you listening to currently?*

AH: Currently I listen to a lot of movie soundtracks, and trippy sound illustrations. Intergalactic FM, you guys know them? The Best. From masters to unknown, I love how chaptering gives rhythm on a OST album.

*GH: What drew you to QSL cards, how did you initially discover them?*

AH: I discovered the QSL cards on a Tumblr, back in maybe 2008. I was trying to remember all the Tumblr names by heart, I was so bad at computers. I am still bad to be honest. So absolute no chance to save a http. So that one struck me, I saw this strength of drawings I had never seen before, with letter types etc etc. I saved some in a file so I could check them without being online. The more I looked at it the more I realised no one specially made it, no one had a recognisable style, no way to identify anything. So that weird list of images never left that file. I still have it, funny it is. But in the US I found some real ones on tables in flea market. I bought a few there, then a few binders, then a few shoeboxes online hahaha.

*GH: Who are your design heroes?*

AH: The designers I prefer are mostly drawers that made designs, or customised stuff. Cars or buildings. Maybe considered as artist first. Sometimes they are sketches only, sometimes they actually made the object. Peter Cook from Archigram, Tadanori Yokoo or Ed "Big Daddy" Roth. I see an amount of work where it's possible to observe

# NINO MIER GALLERY

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that they created trends, they took the risk, they mixed it all, and nothing was fabricated to reach an audience, things were made to explore and innovate. Now it is just the standard world language, that's it!

*GH: You're inspired by the Avant-Garde art movement, do any other art movements inspire you?*

AH: Well I love movies science fiction novels, worlds created to shake our lives. Movies use visual effects, all sort of bluffing techniques, matte paintings and animatronics. All these specials components well organised to create a serious piece of memory sometimes. It is not really a movement, but this is my favourite thing after I leave the studio. If we consider the term movement, then for my concern we look into all sort of little niche passions. They are called culture for some, they don't even exist for others. Furniture design, Hawaiian shirt fabrics or Aquarium organisation, I love it all.

*GH: Favourite cities or areas to paint?*

AH: I don't paint cities I don't know what you mean. But right now I want to go to the desert of Tunisia, it's amazing going to the desert.

*GH: What does your creative process look like, how do you find your inspiration?*

AH: I combine all sort of things or authors I like. Building compilations of many emotions or sensations in one format. It's quite thrilling to adjust space, dynamism, shapes and masses following your own rules. Sometimes I am seriously into a series, to profile techniques better, and then I turn and change and add the next language I learned recently. Colour mixes, layers and density are sciences like plants, water and soil. I paint a few paintings simultaneously, sometimes I block myself on a series of drawings. I also produce books with friends. All kinds of formats can fit the pleasure of putting art together. The more I do, the better I feel. These days I mostly do panoramic paintings in a huge collective garage called "La Volonté 93" in the suburbs of north Paris. 15 people together sharing experiences and trying to build projects. It has an exhibition space, it's exciting! Inspiration comes from what I have on my plate everyday of course, I dig history and lots of objects from the flea market too. I always combine a few printed images, atmosphere and the wish of breaking my habits from one painting to another. Honest aspect of the expression of someone is what makes me stop on a form of art. Singularity is very hard to find and as an example QSL cards are full of it. It's fascinating how we creatives are trying to reach singular identity when each person in certain conditions can express simply his own.

*GH: Can you tell us about any projects in the works?*

AH: I am aiming to make more movies, animation, etc. Art movies rare and fragile. It is such a diverse world, I really want to explore more. I will do another book soon about purple drawings. Then there are a few shows I'm participating in in Belgium and in Germany. So no time to waste!

# NINO MIER GALLERY

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## HYPEBEAST

DECEMBER 2021

### Menko Cards are the Subject of a New Art Book

By Shawn Ghassemitari



Menko is a traditional Japanese card game that dates back over 250 years. Literally translating to “small object with a face,” the objective of the game is to throw your card against another to try and flip it or knock it out of the ring — with victory being granted to the player who knocks the most out by the end of the match.

The real magic of the game lies in the elaborate artwork of the cards, which over the years, has featured ninjas and samurais, fighter jets and tanks, to Western iconography, such as Mickey Mouse to baseball.

Parisian artist Antwan Horfee has compiled his personal collection of Menko cards in a new art book, titled *Menko Boys Book*. Mapped across 320 pages, the publication chronicles the rich pictorial history of Menko, but also showcases how Horfee tapped into Japanese culture through common children’s toys and entertainment.

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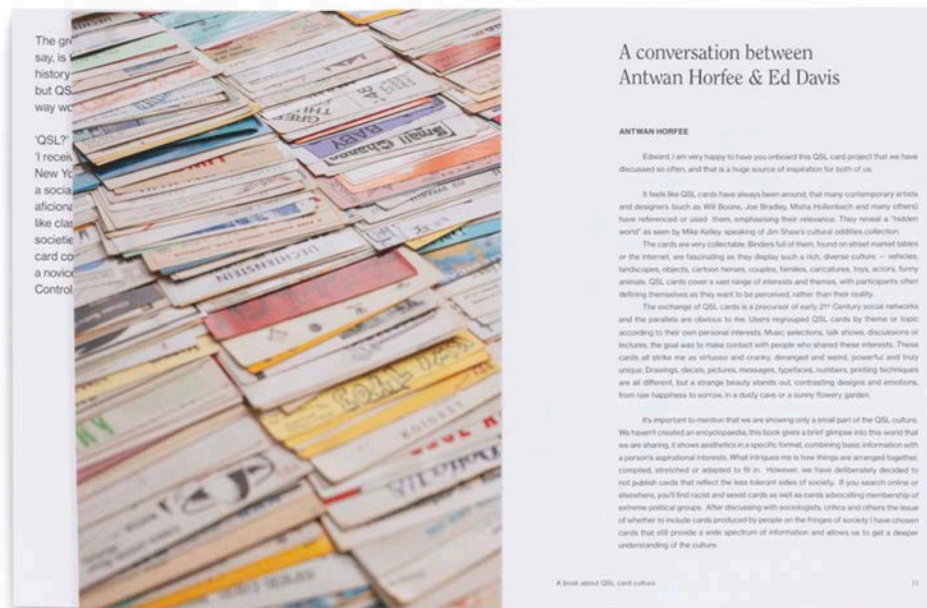
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## HYPEBEAST

DECEMBER 2021

### New Book Celebrates the Art of QSL Cards

By Shawn Ghassemitari



In the early half of the 20th Century, radio stations sent hand-written letters as a way to confirm a two-way radio transmission between fellow broadcasters. Eventually, stations would bypass the letter altogether by sending a pre-formed card, known as a QSL card, that would contain that info, along with a range of graphics.

These graphics take center stage in a new artbook by Parisian artist, Antwan Horfee, titled *Buzzard Control: A book about QSL cards culture*.

'QSL?' is radio lingo for 'Do you receive me?' and 'QSL' means 'I receive you'. The first one was sent from Buffalo, New York back in 1916 and the back of these cards quickly turned into a blank slate where radio enthusiasts could promote various services, clubs and societies.

Horfee has amassed around 3,000 QSL cards since he first discovered the artform at a New York flea market. Many of them are neatly laid out across 272 pages of luxurious Fedrigoni Arena Extra White Rough 120 gsm paper. The book is published by TOPSAFE and is available to purchase for \$46 USD (unsigned) and \$52 USD (signed).

# NINO MIER GALLERY

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## JUXTAPOZ

NOVEMBER 2021

### Buzzard Control: A Conversation with Antwan Horfee

By Evan Pricco



Antwan Horfee is a collector of visuals. As a graffiti artist, he is one of the most influential and genre-bending, turning the streets of Paris into a collision of cartoons and psychedelics. As a fine artist, he is making waves with his otherworldly balance of figuration and abstraction. As a book maker, he continues to show a passion, and his newest book with Topsafe, *Buzzard Control*, and his collection and obsession of QSL cards. As the publisher notes, “QSL?” means ‘Do you receive me?’ and ‘QSL’ means ‘I receive you’. The first Q-card was sent from Buffalo, New York, in 1916. For decades the cards became a social medium for amateur radio enthusiasts. CB aficionados could use the blank sides of QSL cards like classified ads, to promote services, CB clubs and societies. The images in this book are from the QSL card collection of Antoine Horfee, assembled as a novice’s celebration of the QSL card.” We spoke to Horfee about these cards, the book, his inspirations and the collector mentality.

*Evan Pricco: First things first, I’m trying to decipher your connection to the QSL card, and I admit I had to look it up.*

Antwan Horfee: I am interested in things once they are fabricated! It unfortunately offers a very large amount of interests. I spent lots of time looking, just non-stop at scans, objects. Most of the time it becomes torture, but mix it with the spice of a discovery, it becomes a souvenir. It’s about half texture, half imagery, immediately I needed to look at more. I think you need to see at least 10,000 of them to succeed to see what could be representative of this. It’s the early age of avatar! It’s 100% graffiti somehow, try to look honestly at stylish hybrids components.

*Are there places where you can research and find the old designs? Are their collectors of these sorts of things?*



# NINO MIER GALLERY

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*And where do you collect them?*

Well, the Internet is where I discovered them, Tumblr to be exact. Then I realized I could see some parts of these cards extracted here and there on clothing, or in zines. We were having this discussion the other day with my friend Leomi Sadler about how perfect they all look, and how she and I both discovered it on these old Flickr pages. I never stopped thinking about them since .

Also, I've seen them on tables and binders discretely on tables or in flea markets in America or NYC vintage stores had some displayed. But once they're in stores, I have to say they kind of lose their juice. I really wish I had a contact straight into one of these couples from the 1950s. I have a hunger for books made by collectors for collectors. I try to have time in my life to also build them my elf if I can. Having an artist approach on a material making a book with that is different than having a PhD about it. It enlarges the prism of understanding for people that try to discover something.

*So what was the first steps in designing your own QSL? Was it just a good shape and size to start?*

Well I guess the adventure of drawing is like a giant QSL card, designing a printed project really. Designing your stamp, as a handmade label. I am just an enthusiast in the vast world of folkloric vanishing cultures, I guess facing the fact they all got stocked by ancient practitioners. I am on their trails!

I have designed so much stuff for friends— their logos, a character, a custom tattoo, or a menu for their restaurant. So without having a personal radio show, I feel very close to the art of crafting these cards. In a period where it's all digital i still do lots of hand collage, and hand drawings, and Letraset transfers. I feel like I could do some cards everyday for anyone that would like to be part of this community. Designing cards is not really a thing of my generation, I guess in France we had "telephonic cards " in the 1980s, so it was made of plastic, It was impossible to design them as they were processed by industries. Same for imported Japanese animation cards sets. We couldn't reach that level of precisions or colors printed. However, customizing things has always been a pleasure, like buying a blank jacket or sweater and draw on it, add pockets, cut the sleeves. This is powerful! That excitement to be in charge of something, to make things dramatically more expressive; if it's useful or not, it is not the point. Crossing that line feels singular, drawing with a marker on a denim jacket makes your jacket unique, and makes it also visible that you don't belonging to the mass of all the denim jacket owners.

*Your work has evolved so much over the last few decades. You were an innovator in graffiti, as your style was this super interesting mixture of characters and abstraction and really... play? And your canvases are doing the same, this sort of hybrid of comics and cartoons and abstraction and just unique work. Working in this format must be like a halfway point for you? Between graffiti and gallery work?*

I consider traces in the streets from activities of communities very important. It's a proof that the population of a city is alive between the lines, practicing it's own language, and developing some sort of force that can speak to a very large audience. Whatever forms it can take, iPhone trends, dances, or group of photographs or taggers of course.

Trying your best to sculpt a hyperactive anonymous character out of the walls of the city\, and open a dialogue in a space with the contemporary art world as a structure to receive it, it's a very different project. Being innovative is a must for me if the goal is being visible within a very codified graphical culture such as graffiti, but as much as I like this challenge, I also enjoyed to play the codes of this aesthetically isolated island.

I think like this: How to quote that we are all filters and receptacles to communicate dreams and phantasms of us all? How to transmit the passion in the plastic research that gives birth to physical accessible forms? How to not be snobbish and still open a discussion with anyone that could be touch by any sort of details in the work produced. How to not speak a language that is supposedly called "art" because suddenly it's cultivated, cultured, evolved and lettered that will obviously then speak only to an elite stratum. Instead, creative language can be evolved, sophisticated and singular, but can still gives access to enthusiasts, still group people from any sort of social groups around ancestral community topics.

# NINO MIER GALLERY

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That might be different points between these two paths of my life. Also one of them was only my youth hobby and the other is my work, even though both are a way to exist in society but indeed differently. I wanted to achieve something that needed all my time, I wanted to dive into it 100% and had to quit everything else. I had to put the entire energy on one thing, just like an obsessive center of interest, to make it at a speed that corresponds to me. So in a way what I want when I participate in a book like this Buzzard Control, is going to the essential, quickly reach the essence of what struck me when I collected them.

*I was thinking about this as I flipped through the book, but who are some of your design heroes?*

Well it's easy to observe the ones I like are the drawers who made the bridge between comics and product. Rick Griffin, Robert Williams, Ed "Daddy" Roth or Jim Phillips were my most important crushes at a young age, discovering all sort of posters and record covers. When I look at t-shirt design, set designs for concerts, movies or theater plays, Tadanori Yokoo, Roger Dean or even Hajime Sorayama. They created the context where more contemporary designers are evolving, the pioneers that laid the first stones. I have deep respect for those who dare, for those who assumed their differences, and for those who supported their communities that surrounded them. When typeface reached a high level between efficiency and style when these crafts mixed to create a third global identity that support cultures and in a way becomes also it's flesh? I love it.

*What is your favorite era to look upon for inspiration? Or do you not to such a thing?*

I think it's all interesting really, what comes out now is very inspirational in terms of how it reflects our fast consuming period. Large numbers of great artists and architects or designers are pushing borders and developing amazing worlds of their own. The past obviously makes a rich present, and I love finding sources of personal enlightenment when I discover a new author, hidden or famous in a different country. Old or new are just humans after all, and it's easy for me to dive when I see a signal!

*Besides Buzzard Control coming out, what is next?*

In terms of printed materials I will prepare a multicolor lithograph edition witch I haven't done in a long time as I was only obsessed with black and white! I will do a second screenprinted book. Books, to me, are fully a customized subject for fun and discovery, and I never tire of all kinds of printed techniques. I hope these details are helping you to understand why I enjoyed QSL, and why I think the 2020s need to learn from it!

# NINO MIER GALLERY

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## JUXTAPOZ

MARCH 2021

### Antwan Horfee: SCI-FRIED at Nino Mier Gallery

By Evan Pricco



It would not be hyperbole to say that Horfee was your favorite graffiti artist's favorite graffiti artist at a time. He had a knack for the imaginative and abstract, a blend of characters and century-old cartoon style that felt like a blast of fresh air from the Parisian artist. Rarely does graffiti seem cinematic, and Antwan Horfee was a visionary in that regard.

It seems so incredibly apt then that his newest paintings, Sci-Fried, are now on view at Nino Mier Gallery in Los Angeles and still capture this ode to film and a bit of the cartoon and sci fi/horror film bizarre in them. These works are dense with layers, like a time-travel through underground and prevailing film trends that harken back to a glory days of moviemaking. Or as the gallery points out, "pproaching each painting as a work of fan art, Horfee gives form to the desires of fan culture and the compulsion to emulate venerated media while paying homage to personal filmic inspirations ranging from Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho to George Lucas's THX1138."

What is so intentionally aware in these paintings is this haziness, sort of like rolling through a fog machine of cinematic history. It works so well in the context of Horfee's work in graffiti and painting, this layered application of ideas and styles that marks his work so well. His transformation into such a fine artist from his influential graffiti work is one of our favorites of the past 20 years, and Sci-Fried elevates Horfee's practice once again.

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## monopol

Magazin für Kunst und Leben

OCTOBER 2021

### Antwan Horfee - Warlock Killjoy

By Larissa Kikol



Antwan Horfee's exhibition WARLOCK KILLJOY is multifaceted, yet all the different mediums and genres he deploys, both real and virtual, coalesce into one large and organic conceptual world. "Iconography bulimia, vomiting assemblage and searching to organize what is not yet melted by stomach acids," is Horfee's comment on this universe of his creation. The painted image seems to digest all of it, arrange it, sort it out, abstract it, translate it into a blur, and suffuse it with air and light. If abstraction in American Expressionism was a very serious concern, intended to serve a global political purpose as well as a deep psychological one, in Horfee's work it is a form of relief from what has been witnessed, a reconciliation between childhood dreams, teenage graffiti on the streets, and adult humor in an earnest painting style. At the same time, they seem like a flickering screen, an almost virtual world, if you squint your eyes or, on the contrary, leave them open until the images merge together. A more accurate description of Horfee's painting style might be "psychedelic science-fiction abstraction"—a stylistic term created especially for him. "I don't feel at all like a painter, I feel like I first need to build paintings to organize topics and shapes and vocabulary," reflects Horfee.

# NINO MIER GALLERY

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## JUXTAPOZ

JUNE 2020

### GOONS!: Antwan Horfee

By Sasha Bogojev



“GOONS!” The entrancing, exciting of an emblematic movie trailer voice-over seems to audibly explode as you encounter Antwan Horfee’s new body of work now on view at Ruttkowski;68 in Paris. Titled in bold capital letters like a cartoon word bubble, the show once again reveals the affectionate influence that comics and B-movies play in the Parisian artist’s practice.

Consisting of some 15 paintings in various formats as well as a series of drawings on paper, this presentation intrigues both the eye and the mind both in its contextual and technical level. Scenes and figures depicted as wild suggestions allow Horfee’s imagery to unspool and develop in the viewer’s mind, as the sections and new discoveries are revealed. A combination of wild color palette and composition brandish his unique mark-making and style.

With a focus on creating spaces and transforming the work surface, Horfee boldly conducts his lines and structures to compose crazy dream landscapes without revealing a full narrative. Friendly (or unfriendly?) monsters emerge in Fantasia-type sequences in otherworldly scenarios that spring from the innerworld. Like constructing a movie set, the placement of the surface, objects, lights, and colors transform the paintings and drawings into movie screenshots or comic frames. By minimizing and compressing the objects and figures, as

# NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA



well as mixing techniques, further examination beckons into abstraction. In a significantly different approach for his black gouache and graphite works, the storylines look more literal, but intrigue lingers. Balancing organic forms and robotic, man-made creations, they support the enigmatic intricacy of Horfee's visuals. Again appearing as comic book frames, they range from battle scenes over closeups of mysterious vessels, all the way to more mysterious scenes from newly discovered places, all underscored by the artist's background in grati.

An homage to the fantasy lms and Japanese animation movies he grew up with, these works are built on a tension between the dened elements in the front and blurred sections in the back, as well as his delightfully unexpected use of color. Dened gures appear, disintegrate halfway through, but not before the artist lures the viewer into the world of GOONS!.

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## HYPERALLERGIC

JULY 2016

### Street Art Is a Period. Period. Or the Emergence of Intermural Art

By Rafael Schacter



#### *PART I: What's in a name?*

Let's start off with a clear contention. Street Art, as I see it, is a period. Period. It is today just one of the many sub-groups housed within the larger category of Art, a period — much like Mannerism, Minimalism, Modernism, Maximalism and the like — that defines a practice with distinct members and distinct timeframes, with distinct styles and settings, distinct techniques and ideologies. I say this not to attempt to validate or legitimate Street Art, something that it no longer needs anyone to do. Rather my claim of periodicity aims to make clear the radical divergence between what is widely understood as Street Art today and what was understood as Street Art in its infancy. Ultimately, and perhaps initially paradoxically, it aims to move us past this now misleading term, to lay the body of Street Art to rest and give life (or rather, give name) to the body of another, a practice I call Intermural Art.

But why is this act of naming so important? What's really in a name? Well from an anthropological perspective, the basic urge to classify, to order and arrange the world is one of the very few human universals. It is mankind's way of forming social and conceptual coherence from the mass of data we encounter on a daily basis, classifying out the universe, as Claude Lévi-Strauss called it, so as to cleave the wood from the trees. Within the mass of material culture we today define as Art (something itself classified in distinction to "craft"), this imperative to classify is accompanied by the concept of the period. Informally termed the "isms," these terms codify the various subdivisions housed within the larger structure, the particular forms, particular methodologies, and particular

# NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

styles that mark out this type from that, that temporally and theoretically bind them as distinct, ordered practices.

Yet the period also defines characteristics which are more than just material. It comes, in fact, to define both the wider moral world in which these works are set as well as the overarching framework from within which they are understood. The period thus not only impacts how the work is received by the viewer — where it is understood to be situated in ethical and relational terms — but determines our very ability to receive and perceive it in itself, enabling and constraining its interpretation within the same moment.

Today, regrettably however, from my perspective as a researcher, writer, and curator within this subgenre of Art, what has become abundantly clear is that the term Street Art, Street Art as period, Street Art as material has become entirely untenable. It is a period in a categorically ambiguous position, defining a now inapposite ethic, providing a now misleading frame of reference. The need for a movement away from this initial term and for the foundation of another has thus become, in my opinion, inescapable.

Perhaps it is best to work backward in order to move forward. As a defined artistic milieu, I would argue that Street Art was operative and, crucially, innovative, between approximately the years of 1998 and 2008 (the time period of our period). Although Street Art practices as such were seen prior to 1998 (anticipatory, proto-Street Art works being quite visible in the poetic messages of John Fekner and the graffiti abstractions of Futura2000 in the 1970s, in the eponymous stencils of Blek le Rat in the 1980s, and in the stickers, posters and roll-ups of REVS & COST in the 1990s for example), the critical mass of practices began occurring at this date.

By 1998 a core group of artists had thus begun to explore new ways of assimilating and integrating themselves within the city. This group of approximately 100–200 artists worldwide, mainly from Europe, North America and Latin America, came, primarily, from a background within the wider graffiti culture. Yet many had also received a more classical art or design-based education alongside their independent, illicit one, possibly the first generation of graffiti practitioners to have received this twofold training en masse. Many artists at this point felt that graffiti had become too authoritarian, too restrictive, or merely felt that they wanted to push their practice into a new direction. They were looking for ways of continuing their work in the street — the critical medium and location for their practice — yet exploring new ways of modeling their message, ways of continuing their public engagement yet changing their communicative reach. Swoon, *Untitled* (2007), New York City (via Flickr/editrix) (click to enlarge)

1998 was thus the year in which Parisian artist STAK (known today as Olivier Kosta-Théfaine) began bringing his logos, pictograms and text-based slogans to the streets of the French capital, the year in which Invader undertook his first ceramic tile “invasion” of the same city. It was the year in which New York collective Faile formed, the year in which Philadelphia’s Steve Powers (then ESPO) began his Exterior Surface Painting Outreach project, in which Swoon began installing her wheat-paste posters on the street. 1998 was the year in which the work of Brazilian twins Os Gemeos became internationally visible (thanks to the all-important 12oz Prophet Magazine), the year in which StudioChu and the DOMA collective started their work on the streets of Buenos Aires. It was the year when Banksy (yes, I must mention him), began to focus solely on stencils and leave his previous freehand approach behind.

While quite clearly different from each other stylistically and or conceptually, these artists can all be argued to have been attempting to work in dialogue with rather than in opposition to surrounding architectural forms (the formal basis of the period), being intentionally attentive rather than purposefully disruptive to the context which they inhabited. These artists were all moving away from typography and the letter-form and intent on creating a more open, more accessible form of visuality (the stylistic basis of the period), stripping their work of the menace that Graffiti had been imbued with by the media and anti-graffiti authorities since the early 1980s. These artists were all moving away from the ubiquity of the spray-can (the technical basis of the period), utilizing media such as stencils or posters, producing forms such as sculptures or installations, methods that transformed the viewership of the practice from an exclusive to a more inclusive public. Yet these same artists all held on to the DIY, self-sufficient spirit of Graffiti culture (the ideological basis of the period), they held on to the autonomy and independence that gave its artists opportunities that institutions would never have allowed: They retained graffiti’s refusal to be professionalized or standardized, they retained the belief that spontaneity and fidelity would always trump



# NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

permissibility and legality.

Street art as it emerged in 1998 thus contained all the key elements of what we would see as a traditional artistic period: a time, a place, a style, a technique, an ethic, an ideology. Yet by the latter date of 2008, these specificities began to unravel. What had been ten years of innovation, evolution and maturation began to transform into repetition, imitation and simulation.

After 2008 the practice became more renowned, more refined, but not necessarily more experimental or pioneering. Much of this may simply be due to the natural cycle of the period (as with all good things) coming to an end, the boundaries having been pushed, the artists having moved on. Yet more alarmingly, it was around this time that the term itself came to mean something very different to that originally intended, that it came to be abused, misused, on a widespread level.

By 2008 then, the very term Street Art had come to be radically reattributed by the market, the media, and municipal authority. In the first case, almost inconceivably, the term was commonly used to denote a type of artwork produced, exhibited, and sold inside. Not only a basic category error and entirely (oxy)moronic — as long as the works looked “street” or urban (with the requisite drippy paint) the appellation “street” could apparently be added — but the key element of Street Art, the street of its very name, became entirely irrelevant. In the second case of the media, however, Street Art came to be used as a term for institutionally authorized, legally sanctioned murals. The Tate Modern’s Street Art exhibition of 2008 (which I should note that I partly co-curated) stands as a key boundary marker here. The massive global prominence of this event, both in terms of international media attention and institutional validation, began, I believe, to steer public perceptions of Street Art in a particular and quite singular direction. Street Art was identified with big, colourful, exterior wall paintings; it became known as an “edgy” form of popular muralism. All the other diverse practices, the installations, the actions, the “minor”, small-scale works, came to be excluded from the term. Moreover, the success of the exhibition (in a quantitative sense at the least) led to the promulgation of what are today the thousands of Street Art Festivals that have spread across the globe. These municipally initiated festivals, our third element, produced at the behest of urban planners and public servants rather than critics and curators, have not only today become the dominant mode whereby Street Art is encountered (in particular through its digital distribution), but have been a key element in both the recuperation of Street Art and its contemporary complicity within processes of gentrification. It has become a (relatively) cheap way of “bringing in culture” to a site, of locating it within the (much critiqued) Creative City model of city planning. It has turned art into a project of branding (of place, of lifestyle), it has turned artistic value into financial rather than cultural or societal gain.

As such, much of what is called Street Art today should, in my opinion, simply be termed neo-Muralism (or even Creative City Art). Neo-Muralism is Street Art turned professional, Street Art on steroids. Entranced by the belief that bigger is always better, this “more is more,” Maximalist attitude has today come to act as the overwhelmingly dominant framing of Street Art. What’s more, alongside this neo-Muralist pursuit, Street Art has also taken a clear turn toward Kitsch. Mickey Mouse snorting cocaine and seductive female depictions. Colourful caricatures and saccharine sentiments. Surface effects and art as advertising. It is as if the utmost parody of what Street Art once was has become the norm.

What is crucial to say, however, is not whether these works are “good” or “bad” per se; rather, it is simply that they no longer function as Street Art, that they contradict its basic periodistic prerequisites. Much of this “Street Art” fails to assimilate with its surroundings, rather coming to directly dominate it. Much of it is institutional, not independent, sacrificing autonomy yet feigning subversion. Much of it is strategic, existing for reasons of gain rather than art. Much of it fails to act consensually and rather embraces the fatuity of sentimentality or “cool.” What is today called Street Art thus provides a quite misleading frame of reference. It no longer reflects the material and ideological categories that it once stood for. It is not simply that Street Art no longer exists, but that it is in a state of radical, utter confusion.

# NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

While the above may seem overly harsh (and there are of course many exceptions to this straw-mannish depiction), the situation for those working in Street Art today is a truly confusing, frustrating one. When much of what is termed Street Art fails to comply with the primary premises of the form, those who are caught within its terminology can quickly become enemies to themselves.

And it is this, I believe, that leads us to the key point of this essay. It is not merely that what exists within the term Street Art fails to live up to the original principles of the form, but equally that the artists at the vanguard are pushing at the very limits of the category, engaging and inhabiting the outside limits of the Street Art terrain while still, for want of a better term, being housed within it. These are artists who are emerging from the Street Art and Graffiti arenas, but who are developing practices that now both exceed and are tarnished by this previous designation. These are artists occupying the vital space between the street and the studio, between the independent and the intuitional, artists who are moving between the outside and the inside in highly conscious ways. These are artists occupying the spaces in between in disruptive, innovative, boundary shifting ways.

As such, the need for a terminological transformation, for a movement away from Street Art and towards something new, has become imperative. It has become imperative so as to be able to successfully explicate what this work now is. It has become imperative to enable people to materially and morally decipher these new aesthetic forms. It had become imperative so as to create a new platform from which these artists can both speak and be heard.

## *PART II: Intermural Art*

The term I am proposing for this new practice is Intermural Art. In literal terms, Intermural Art means Art in between the walls. Not art inside the walls (intramural), nor outside them (extramural), but art between these same walls. The relationship between inside and outside is key to Intermural Art – the way in which the inside can affect the out and the outside the in. The way the internal can critique the external and, in the same manner, the external the in.

Intermural Art emerged directly from both Graffiti and Street Art. Yet it is an art form that — due to its time-frame (emerging as a wider discourse post-2008), to its location (both in the street and the gallery) as well as its basic material qualities (its visual divergence from both these earlier forms) — can no longer productively reside within these previous terminologies. Likewise, Intermural Art is a practice often simply labeled Contemporary Art, yet while it is influenced by the myriad of practices that come under the term, is obscured by its breadth (it meaning so much that it denotes almost naught).

Although commonly a practice occurring within an institutional frame, Intermural Art is not merely a movement transplanting Graffiti or Street Art into the permissible realm of the gallery or museum. It is, rather, a practice utilizing these previous visual styles in one or more of three key ways: First, as a conceptual foundation — artistically investigating, dissecting and exploring the aesthetic and culture of Graffiti and Street Art; second, as a methodological tool — using the techniques and methods of Graffiti and Street Art yet subverting their traditional regulations and codes; and third, as an ethical imperative — using the independent ethic (rather than aesthetic) of Graffiti and Street Art, as a way of understanding the world, appreciating one's environment rather than as a simple visual regime.

There are a number of individuals who, for me, exemplify the conceptual, methodological and ethical approaches of Intermural Art. Within this essay, however, I will discuss just two, the Berlin-based, American-born artist Brad Downey and the Parisian artist Antwan Horfee. Downey, for me, represents one of the central figures within Intermural Art, with an expert understanding of both the theories and practices of Contemporary Art and the theories and practices of Street and Graffiti Art. His recent work "Inside Out, Upside Down" (2014), produced at the gallery nun in Berlin's Neukölln district, is a particularly pertinent example. Working with everyday, commonplace wall plugs in a variety of colors and sizes, Downey created a series of unique, site-specific patterns and designs over the entirety of the gallery space. Including nothing else within the space but these simple plugs, objects normally used

# NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

to install more conventional artworks (and thus remaining invisible while being crucial to the final display), he produced a minimalist, highly decorative installation, a playful intervention on and in the gallery walls.

Physically situated amid and between the walls of the gallery, “Inside Out, Upside Down” moves beyond Intermural Art as metaphor: it acts as intermural art in the most literal of senses. Yet like our description of Intermural Art above, Downey’s work can also be seen to relocate the conceptual, methodological and ethical frameworks he institutes on the street within the site of the gallery itself. Just as his public practice of interventionism, of re-appropriation and re-use, comes to explore and critique the customs and conventions of the street, here Downey brings the same process into the interior realm. As can be seen in public works such as “House of Cards” This is, quite clearly, no longer Street Art. It is both literally and conceptually Intermural. It is infected and inflected by his public practice, a conduit between the city and the street.

For Antwan Horfee, the aim is not specifically to question our surroundings, but rather to continue experimenting with medium and form in the institutional realm as he has in the public. As one of the world’s most esteemed graffiti artists, responsible for a paradigm shift within the movement over the last ten years alongside his Paris collective PAL, Horfee has formed a richly naïve style of graffiti production, a chaotic amalgamation of letter and image, of colour and form, in which purity of line and an improvisational freedom are key. Studying at the National School of Fine Arts in Paris, however, and with a passion for contemporary art to match his obsession with painting in the street, Horfee has never seen the need to restrict himself to one site: he treats all images and spaces as “fields of research,” both his objects and his sites understood as things that are truly “alive”.

For his recent residency and exhibition with Russell Maurice at Somerset House in London, Horfee chose what at first may seem an odd artistic surface, six queen-size inflatable mattresses. Painting these objects with the shapes and forms that have become key to his visual vocabulary — fungi, palm trees, plants, snakes — the final works contain, in themselves, a quite formal beauty, a careful balance of colour and form, sharpness and brutal confidence of line. Yet these works are also implicitly Intermural, following a clear trajectory from graffiti to gallery, from street to studio, and are difficult to fully comprehend without awareness of this journey. As within graffiti, the works use an impoverished, non-art surface on which to produce art, a surface that is uneven and indented, much like the shop shutters these artists so commonly use. As within graffiti, the works are subject to an inevitable process of destruction (through their slow yet inescapable deflation), a process mirroring the latent ephemerality of the graffiti in our streets. As within graffiti, the works embrace a refusal to work within normative boundaries, resisting the tyranny of canvas, resisting the rules of conventional practice. Yet these works take much influence from the history of Contemporary Art, from the “soft” sculptures of Claes Oldenburg for example, his method of making hard into soft, of rejecting the exalted and embracing the everyday. Horfee’s works thus not only create a direct link between these two realms, but they push the boundaries of each of them. They embrace the fine line, the frictions that this border zone presents.

Of course, Graffiti and Street Art have both appeared in galleries and museums before, since their very genesis in fact. But Intermural Art — as seen not only in the works outlined above but in the generative abstractions of Eltono, the sculptural installations of Clemens Behr, and the projects and performances of Filippo Minelli for example — takes the Graffiti and Street Art model, as concept, as method, as ethic, and translates it into a new form of art. An art that may not look like Graffiti or Street Art but smells like it. An art venturing beyond and between the gaps in these previous terminologies, exploring the space in between the walls.

As Intermural Art this work can be identified and interpreted. As Intermural Art its frame of references can be read, its concepts rather than just its locations or mediums deciphered. And, perhaps more importantly, as Intermural Art it can start to encourage a new descriptive and conceptual language for other practices working within the same milieu. It can start to bind, and thus develop, the practices working both inside and outside the institution, the practices that those at the very edge of what was termed Street Art are now exploring.

People often criticise the pigeonholing of (art) practices. They say “it’s just a name”, “it’s just a category.” They say we should spend less time thinking and more time acting. Yet these terms, these words, are hugely

# NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

powerful. Names, genres, periods matter. And Street Art, as a period, is something that we must now move past. Street Art is a period. Period. A period whose radical mantle can be seen continued today within the category of Intermural Art.

# NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

## VULTUREHOUND

APRIL 2016

### Antwan Horfee – Play Towers: A New Collaborative Paris Show

By Natalia Santos



Antwan Horfee and Lo Hishash Saeio are two French artists who play with the dimensions of abstract, spray paint, and sprinkles of playful banter. The expressive pair unite their artistic ambience for an exhibition of play, dedication and passion-filled artwork. An exhibition that glows joy, fun, excitement and genuine companionship. An exhibition that surely motivates other artists- trying to make a place for themselves, in this harsh world we call reality. Subconsciously allowing the audience to understand what goes on behind the scenes of the artists, and understand more about this world of 'breaking free as the artist' and becoming the artist from the underprivileged cards you are dealt with from life. Becoming more and more fascinated about what's in store for these artists. Being able to have a little chat with the Parisian Antwan Horfee on his experiences of the art world, and more about what went behind executing this exhibition. We witness how this duo of friendship intertwine into creating a performance of abstract streaks of colourisation into a modernised world of order and obedience.

*Could I get a full name? And a brief description of what you would describe yourself as? (To people who don't know who you are)*

Hi. My name is Antwan Horfee. I am from Paris. I have been trying to build a body of artwork for the past ten years now. Passing through the stages of painting, drawings to performances. From being inspired by tattoo art and collecting all sorts of folk art. I am constantly inspired.

*What inspired you to do this art?*

Well, lots of different things actually. At a young age, I was into skating and especially exploring the city. I liked the idea of opening secret doors within the city and seeing what was hidden within the places of Paris. I was really into trying to build communities and making things happen independently. At an early age, I decided to quit school and go back to art school. My aim was to enter the best art school in France. École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts it is called. 'ENSBA' for short. With luck, I succeeded. Sadly, I wasn't really in the same mind frame implemented by

# NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

the school. I wasn't just art focused. I had a lot going on. I was working and well.... doing things for myself on the outside world. I was making a living whilst trying to follow one of my passions. And, well to honest. Making a living from art was a taboo in France. I just really couldn't understand how to succeed from living with art. It was difficult – I was literally 'living with the art'. Without truly making money out of it. Why would it change? So, as I got older, I tried looking at things from a different angle. Finishing school. I went into the wild, rented a studio and managed to get out of this scholar point of view; building files to get accepted in the art center. Which in reality – really doesn't do much for the new artists trying to make a place in this harsh industry. Honestly, before I met good people within my work. I thought all this institution was shit. It's this sort of attitude of discretely patting you on the shoulders and saying 'we like your work' and 'we want you to be a part of the bigger project.' When in reality, these same people patting you on the shoulder – know nothing about your work, and hardly know who you are. They have been introduced to you by someone else because of your title. When the decision and hard work was made by the artists and my own events, publications, and so on. Nonetheless, with the help of my friends, as well as, some brands. You finally succeed to make things happen! Because, in retrospect – PARIS NEEDS IT!

*How would you describe this space you share with SAEIO? A place of emotional rebellion? or?*

NO. Not at all. I think what we can both mutually agree on the idea that this project was made to make us closer. When considering the question of 'art inside' and not 'outside' (outdoors) – we do most of it together. We took the challenge to build this exhibition together from A-Z. Just a full project. Not small pieces with no life to put into the space. We pushed beyond our boundaries and capabilities to put different materials together, make shapes, vocabulary that spoke words that moved from a certain surface to another. So, no rebellion. Just expression. A place of describing and displaying art pieces to the public. A pedagogical space open to everyone; How we live our art, what we do outside and how we could use the indoor occasion to put material and interpretations of our own discipline together.

*In the near future where else would you like to present? Any countries in particular/? Or have you found your home in Paris for presenting?*

I think the main goal is spreading the words about the cause. We are creative people. We've hosted in Paris from the start and we like the city itself. Truly, we would like to present the work anywhere that makes sense, and with people that want to help and join the team of continuing the art life project. We, of course, want to have the artistic freedom of being able to work indoors and outdoors –in the meantime, creating the collections of a book and having a studio. There is a goal of multiplying experiences and mixing materials and scales of our work. By pushing our work in the abstract landscape of art. And, well of course.... trying to surprise ourselves always.

*Any future surprises?*

Not really. But always on the way to do new with other artists that I am in touch with. New Yorkers or Australians, some who in particular are close to me. We need to act!!

*Would you say the exhibition has done its job of presenting the artist as the artist?*

Well, yes it did! We tried to go straight to the point with this exhibition. And, we will do it all again. You must remember that artists are touched by their time period and the space in which they are involved in. Presenting my work is a life time project, and an open letter to the exterior world. So I have to keep on working on it. But you have to take into account, the other pressures that surround us. For example; sometimes the artist has to show himself without the pressures of 'authority' telling him what to do, as well as, the pressures that come along from the theme chosen, or, even the space condition within a museum. At the same time taking into account that this is also what our practice is looking out for.

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LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

**CV**

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LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

## ANTWAN HORFEE

Born in 1983 in Paris, FR  
Lives and works in Paris, FR

## EDUCATION

2011 École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, FR

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Nino Mier Gallery, Brussels, BE (*forthcoming*)  
Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris, FR (*forthcoming*)
- 2022 *Oz and Cobalt*, Gallery Weekend Berlin, Ruttkowski;68, Berlin, DE  
*Dallas Art Fair*, Nino Mier Gallery, Dallas, US
- 2021 *SCI-FRIED*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US  
*Warlock Killjoy*, Ruttkowski;68, Cologne, DE
- 2020 *GOONS!*, Ruttkowski;68, Paris, FR
- 2019 *I'm the glue*, PLUS-ONE Gallery, Antwerp, BE  
*Gigamaku*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR  
*Mobile Cropper*, Gallery Naruyama, Tokyo, JP
- 2017 *Piggy Catasrophe*, GSB gallery, Stockholm, SE  
*Sorry Bro*, Ruttkowski;68, Cologne, DE  
*Fantasma1*, Naruyama Gallery, Tokyo, JP  
*Self x Slalom*, PLUS-ONE Gallery, Antwerp, BE
- 2015 *Traditional Occupations*, Ruttkowski;68, Cologne, DE
- 2014 *Chaos Pays*, New Image Art Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
- 2013 *Antwan Horfee's Imaginarium*, TOPSAFE, London, UK

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Nino Mier Gallery, New York, NY, US (*forthcoming*)
- 2022 *Die Brucke*, CFFILL, Stockholm, SW
- 2020 *Blast over*, Ruttkowski;68, Paris, FR  
*Echo Chamber*, PLUS-ONE Gallery, Antwerp, BE



# NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

- 2019 *Sensible*, Palais De Tokyo, Paris, FR  
*Scar/face*, curated by Hugo Vitrani, Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris, FR  
*Biennale de Lyon*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Paris, FR  
*Art on Paper*, PLUS-ONE Gallery, Brussels, BE
- 2018 *L'esprit souterrain*, Experience POMMERY #14, Reims, FR
- 2017 *A quoi sert d'être lion en cage*, Galerie Derouillon, Paris, FR  
*Printer Matter*, Salon MAD, La Maison Rouge, Paris, FR
- 2016 *Vertical I*, Ruttkowski;68, Michael Horbach Foundation, Cologne, DE  
*Bricks and Clicks #2*, Galerie Christophe Gaillard, Paris, FR  
*Jour les Tours, duo with Lo hishash Saeio*, curated by Antwan Horfee, Espace des arts sans Frontières, Paris, FR
- 2014 *Biolensu*, with Ken Sortais, Palais De Tokyo, Paris, FR
- 2013 *Pataganne*, Sunset Residence, Lyon, FR  
*Palingenesis*, Klughaus Gallery, New York, NY, US  
*Old Boot*, Galleries Goldstein, London, UK  
*Future/Memory*, Hellerau Center of Art, Dresden, DE
- 2012 *Stuck On The City*, National City Gallery of Prague, Prague, CZ
- 2011 *Street Smart*, Kulturhuset, Stockholm, SE

## RESIDENCIES AND AWARDS

- 2016 Residency at Somerset House, London, UK
- 2010 Jury Award, Ecole des Beaux Arts de Paris

## PUBLICATIONS

- 2022 *Purple Rain*, published by TOPSAFE, London, UK
- 2021 *Buzzard Control*, published by TOPSAFE, London, UK  
*Menko Boys*, published by TOPSAFE, London, UK
- 2016 *Blur Life Choice*, published by Innen, Printed Matter, Geneva, CH