

ALEX FISCHER

Portfolio and Interview



I admire your approach, from your style to your decision to include pixel dimensions before the inch. Let me begin by asking about your work, however: are your portraits that of people or of society?

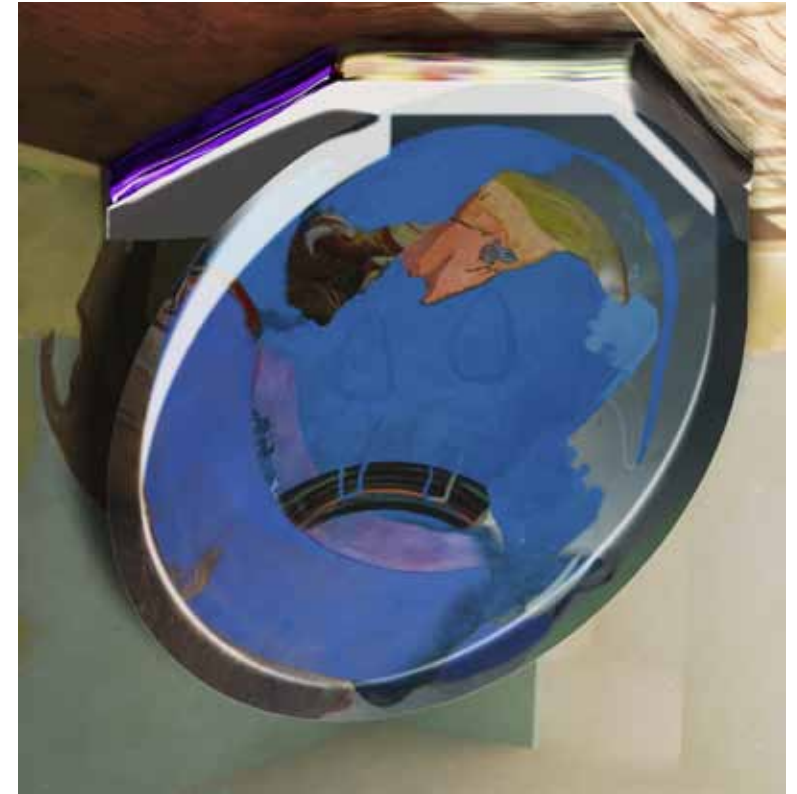
I've always preferred pixel dimensions. But, I did recently wonder if I should switch to metric standard instead of imperial. The art world is still accustomed to inches though, and 5' x 7' does look sharper than 1.52m x 2.14m.

I'm going to skirt a straight-forward answer and say that when I do a portrait I keep in mind that people of contemporary society don't exist in a vacuum. We're all connected and influencing each other: society informs us and we inform society. And, the rate at which we're communicating is increasing thanks to the internet. It is the largest society to have ever existed and embracing it, as many people are, means adjusting the way we think. We're another step removed from reality, maybe in a state of pure simulation according to Baudrillard, but its effects on how we live and how we represent ourselves are no less real in our experience. Amongst other things in my portraits, I want to show internet-culturing as a sort of aura or manifestation on a person.

Would you then say that social medias increase or reduce our humanness?

Well, first to clarify what I think humanness is. It's a flexible word because what it's describing has changed over time. If someone in the 15th Century could have looked at any modern person with modern beliefs they would have immediately labeled them as a witch, as inhuman. Additionally, social behaviour has evolved in a variety of species so even sophisticated social interactions are not a great argument for what makes our humanness.

I think an empirical characteristic of humanness has been our ability to increase the rate of our adaptation en masse. Today that ability to adapt is being facilitated by social media; which disseminates ideas faster and more thoroughly than even email or forums did 10 years ago. Any organizational effort or anything of interest can be assimilated into culture at speed. In





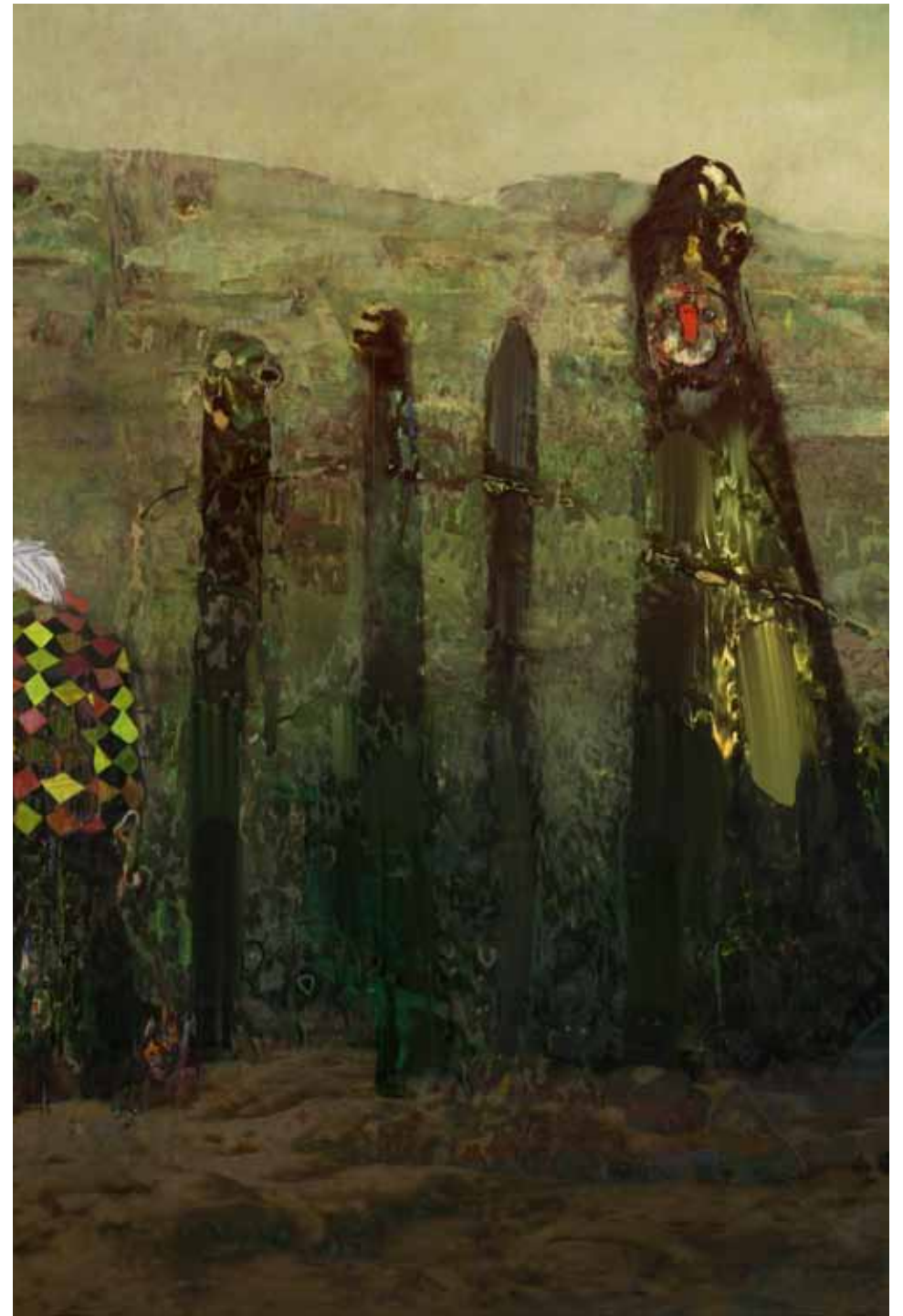
that definition social media is increasing our humanness. My only problem with leaving it at that is we leave many other definitions of humanity behind. The world of 2012 still has only 1/3 of all people connected to the internet. Either it will always be a flexible and inclusionary term, or we'll have to come up with a new word.

Your work refers to this thinking, does it not?

It does. One of my adopted mantra's as an artist is to try and responsibly represent the time in which we live.

Tell me something about how you see the time in which we live.

That's a big question, and not one I'm sure I'll be able to answer fully. I think one of the best ways to understand the Now is to try and understand where we come from and where we're going-- not to predict the future, but just to understand that there are certain historical patterns that we can recognize. We've changed a lot in the last few hundred years and are dangerously still coming to terms with what the 21st Century's definition of humanity is. Unlike our ancestors we're creating new environments, increasing lifespans, and lately engaging in mass communication. These technological breakthroughs are so appealing to people that the entire planet is now a melting pot. It's reasonable to expect that many of the societies and cultures that have been slow to change for thousands of years will have their next generation stirred into the soup that is global culture. Powwows and rallies in town squares used to drive societal change; but modern revolutions are being expedited by social networking and it's an enormously successful way of organizing culture. There are also slower burning, more profound implications: one being that we are now a species unwittingly changing our own nature. 20th Century Modernism established culture as our new nature, but our contemporary situation must accept current culture as a transient affect. Anyone reading this is likely to experience dramatic change during their life. Before the technology existed, there was no way that we could have predicted the multitude of new ways that people would develop their identities. Most young people today find it necessary to be technologically adept, it's almost a symbiotic relationship, a second skin and a second life in some cases.



We're heading into a strange new world where we quickly disseminate information and adapt to it. At this point I'm used to the semiotics of language changing before my eyes and as an artist I have to keep on top of that and react to it.

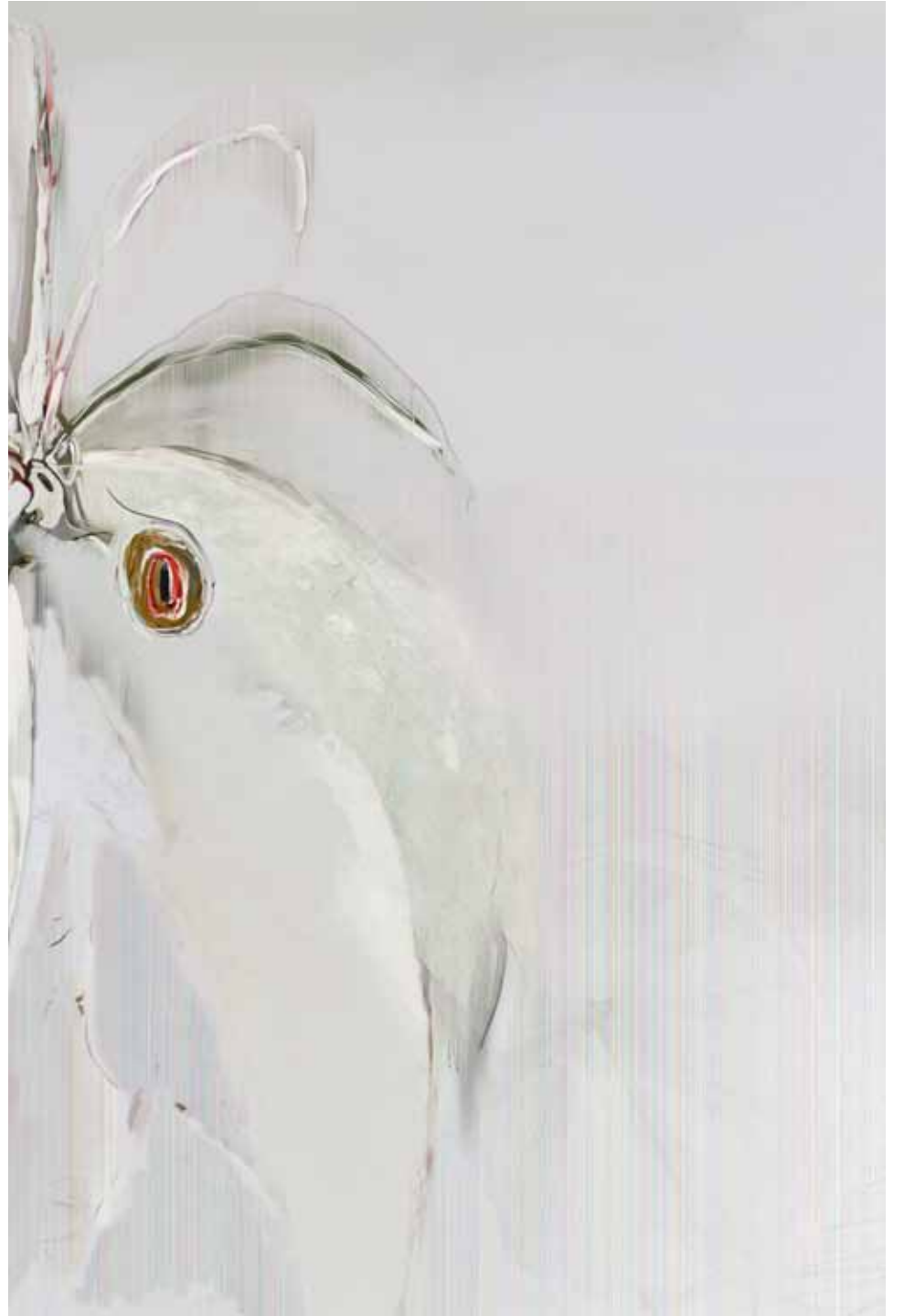
I'd like to get into your work. Could you talk about Bluenose? Is there text on his collar?

Yeah, I meant for it to at least ambiguously resemble some text. I think it's possible to read Bluenose as 'we have to' in the sense of feeling we naturally have some sort of obsession. In this case there's an obsession with looking. And we're the ones looking. The act of looking and analyzing is something people do all the time. With Bluenose you only get a few symbolic gestures to hopefully spark your brain to wondering what that text and the piece might say. Maybe for some of those patient to look long enough Bluenose ends up mirroring the earnest bewilderment that sometimes happens after the act of all that obsessive looking.

What do you look at obsessively, more than others do?

Well, I look at a lot of art and in a culture of data-mining I tend to look for patterns. For me patterns are a bit like reiteration, and recognizing them can be like forming an index to the different preoccupations people have. Looking for those patterns is my current obsession. Physically however what I'm looking at obsessively is the Internet. The screen is where I work, so keeping up with the latest in the arts is a natural accompaniment. There's an enormous breadth of art to interpret and learn from; I'm of the opinion that the more of it I can immerse myself in the better. Lucky for me a lot of today's art is fast art.





First: *Image title*, 2012
Second: *Image title*, 2012
Third: *Image title*, 2012
Fourth: *Image title*, 2012
Fifth: *Image title*, 2012
Sixth: *Image title*, 2012
Seventh: *Image title*, 2012

