

INTERVIEW – Kris Kuksi

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Interviewed by Saša Nužda



One of the most powerful voices in the artistic movement entitled Fantastic Realism is the international, award-winning artist Kris Kuksi. His works bridge the dark caverns between human psychological issues, religious ideology and demonic fantasy – causing one to become disturbingly entranced within the layers upon layers of wickedly defined detail.

Kris Kuksi's art is one consuming amalgam. Hanging on a thread of being classical and solemn, steampunkish and progressive, rococoish and ornate – it's morbid, being at least a bit ominous, but always intricate and meticulous. His sculptures, warping in detail and drowning in multiple meanings, reeking with effluvia of glorified times past, befuddled time present and aghast time future, are not easy pieces to even behold, let alone comprehend.

Constructed from pop-culture leftovers – such as model kits, injection-molded toy soldiers and animals, plastic skulls, knick-knack figurines, and mechanical parts – these assemblages, once a junk, end up being a part of a sculptural plan on a grand scale of things in the shape of grotesque and frieze-like works one might register from a distance as an architectural ornamentation from the World that once was. What a frightening thought!

The surreal landscapes Kuksi envisions are home to a community of characters that morph between mechanical Borg-like drones, human, and animal forms – or humans who just happen to have tank turrets instead of heads. When closely observing sculptures, the sheer chaotic

I see your art just as I wrote it in the intro – ‘... Hanging on a thread of being classical and solemn, steampunkish and progressive, rococoish and ornate...’ – how do you see that connection yourself?

If you took all the aesthetic preferences I have and roll them into one, then that would be a great way to describe it. I like to think of fusing the old and the new, the beautiful and the grotesque, and personal and social psychological issues in these works. So perhaps it ends of appealing to almost anyone. Yet I am always open to expanding and growing with new ideas.

I reckon all that’s influencing you has a very strong subconsciousness – usually dark and disturbing characters, stories, myths. I can imagine all your sculptures being built as big as pyramids, Roman or Greek temples, Christian cathedrals – to reflect that disturbing grandeur humanity seems to suffer from for an eternity. Is humanity doomed? Is that what you try to project?

Exactly, humanity is doomed if they can’t see the result of repeated historical rise and falls. Perhaps it is as simple as we just aren’t smart enough to save ourselves. Imagine that nature designed us not to succeed in worldwide problem solving. Huge population booms occurred as a result of technological inventions such as during the 1800’s with the rise of steam power, and with petroleum based energy and products in the last century. You have more people and more consumption and less and less resources.

My works argue the possibilities and responsibilities with what we have before us. It is everywhere and yet humans deny it. Humanity is somehow hard wired to believe so much in the idea of good and evil that it possibly can’t allow reason and education to grow. Humans have to polarize everything, they have to fight each other. If it isn’t race oriented, it is political, if it isn’t that then it is sexual orientation, and if not that then it just keeps going and going. Why the quest to be ‘right’ in our thoughts and views go so far as to harm those who can’t agree with us? Why must we give up culture, diversity, acceptance, etc., just to be righteous? And maybe it all comes back to that we just can’t escape self-doom. Nothing lasts forever, and to have an ego that thinks that we can rob the earth of resources and harm those of a different faith we are doomed. But the funny thing is, we are quite aware of it, at least the enlightened people. Even you reading this article probably have the awareness of it, but what do we do? Humanity has to collapse somewhat to achieve a balance. There exists that technology to do so but we are great examples of self-defeaters. Alternative forms of energy are many times challenged by huge corporate oil companies, but we all know that the illusion of money and the energy stronghold has everything to do with that. The advantage of using long dead plant and animal matter may well destroy us in the end because we depended on it so much. But hey, look on the bright side, we still have some time to educate each other. The game isn’t over yet.



I read somewhere, where you were asked what kind of 'mixed media' you use, you said something like '...a bunch of prefabricated stuff, and lastly magic.' What kind of 'magic' you had, and/or still do, have in mind? Is it Boschian Last Judgement kind of evil magic being furtherly demonic and regretful, developed by the like of Wayne G. Barlowe or a bit more timid, lighter kind? Would you give this World a chance or is this a battle lost before it is even started?

Artistic magic. Just knowing the right kind of visual balance to create, arrange and compose. It is just like with any musician or composer, it is the design and the structure that is the magic. Some say that nature beautiful design number is Phi, 1 to 1.618... Artists and creative types (at least the talented ones) have this hardwired in their brain and maybe without even knowing it. So no demonic forces at hand here, just inborn ability.

While we're at 'giving this World a chance', do I also sense a great sense of humor hidden behind strong motivations? Churchtank being a perfect example. Bit dry, but still great sense of humor.

Oh yes, humor must always be present. You can never take yourself too seriously, never.

In earlier works there was more direct presence of death and decay in the forms of skeletons and skulls. These latter stuff seem to just have less obvious death-feel, like the characters are in fear of death to come – but maybe they'll survive. Will they survive? Can they? May they? Where did the decay part go?

Why not have death be the beginning in these series of works. We all think that death is the end of the chapter, so in these works I seem to be moving in an opposite direction, hmmm...never thought of it that way.



Do you consider yourself as a part of this World? You say you belong the the 'Old World'. Is that World on this planet or extraterrestrial?

Well with current political and educational environment, I feel just about as alien as Noam Chomsky. There have always been the outside thinkers and the visionaries and I like to think I am a part of that crowd but I don't want to be in any group really. And a lot of times those folks just get killed or shut out at. I think it is time to give up the age old belief we have to belong to the right tribe and outcast the others. We are all here together, none of us are any better than the other. Why not spend all the time you ridiculed and bashed another group or person and just ask for their forgiveness. You might find that the very thing that you think you are fighting against might disappear. And just like Noam Chomsky states in reference to terrorism, "If you want to stop terrorism, then stop participating in it". Education is the national security, not booms and weaponry.

The enviroment for creating art these days is really inspiring, I guess – televised wars, informatic saturation, art in general colliding with business, but also producing more 'one hit wonders' than ever before. Does that get you going or makes you angry? Do you try to distance yourself from these 'puny humans' and just concentrate on the 'divine art'?

I never want to make it to the mainstream if that is what you are asking. Once you are at the top of the pop culture world, you might have well realized you are just as mediocre as the rest of it. I'd say the best art and the best music out there never gets the proper attention, but perhaps that is what makes it so elite. Andy Warhol may have been as superstar in art, but that was only because one important person said so. Just imagine, people being told what they should like or what good art is! Warhol's art was crap! And I'm not in the least bit reserved to say that. So perhaps all you reading this should think about why is it that you should believe what so called scholars and art critics think is good. You should like what you like, no one should have to tell you!

What do you think is the real nature of this World, and the humans?

Love, hate, indifference, love, hate, indifference, etc. etc. Just a cycle that keeps going on. Perhaps our view of the world is limited by only our human understanding. We make the meanings to everything. Maybe the world itself means nothing, but our tiny human fragility thinks it needs to define what things are just so we don't feel so small and frightened.

Is there anybody, in the contemporary art world, you'd pick out and share that artist with us, and why that artist got to you that much? Would you hang out with that artist – are the artists in general a 'cool bunch of people' to hang out with?

H.R. Giger was the first person to really strike me, and others since then have really been ones from long ago. But all artists I met are very inspiring both in their work and their personalities. I do like to hang with the art crowd but again even there I am a bit of an outsider.

Word has it you're also master guitar shredder – the skill you allegedly perfected solely for seducing women. You think that being sculpture/painter geek is not good enough for them?

Oh my, I am totally put on the spot here. Uh, nothing I am proud of as far as seducing with tiny metal strings but I do think most women do prefer musicians over artists. But I guess I wound up being a bit of both, and if I couldn't get the girl with just the art then I had to panic and grab the guitar as a last resort – whew!

What sentence would describe you as being you?

Hmmm...creative and funny, mildly social phobic, passion-driven, loves to sleep in, and thinks constantly about world domination.

Any last thoughts?

To all reading this: be open minded, challenge and improve yourself. Experience life as much as possible, travel, love, read, make art, and ask for forgiveness from those you have been a prick to. Thank you!

