

Studio visit with Antonio Murado

June 27, 2013



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Photos by Adam Cohen

Antonio Murado works out of Mana Contemporary's fifth floor studio, 569. Upon entering this space, one is greeted by the warm amber aroma of freshly cut wood in combination with the pungency of oil paint, thinners, and turpentine. If interested in meeting the painter, you are best advised not make your visit before noon. Murado is accustomed to running errands and attending to the studio during daylight hours, and work does not commence until the sun has set; "Night is when I have all the ideas, projects. It's a cycle," he tells me, assuming a comfortable seated position in his wooden fold-out chair.

Murado hails from Lugo, in the North Western community of Galicia, Spain. Seventeen years ago, after finishing his studies in Bellas Artes, Fine Arts, at Salamanca University, and living six years in Madrid, he moved to New York with the intention of establishing his career while entertaining a change of scenery and fulfilling a childhood dream to live abroad.

Having always aspired to be an artist, Murado claims to have truly lay claim over his ambitions when he arrived at Salamanca; "That experience entitled me to feel like an artist. In the beginning, it is the biggest struggle for one, as an artist, to find oneself entitled to do things, and to believe in yourself... I knew when I arrived at this school that I really felt at home. I was able to say myself, Yeah, I will have no trouble here; this is exactly where I can do

something.” When I asked, why paint, as opposed to any other form, Murado replied that his choice of medium was inspired by a mix of exposure and intuition.

The process through which he engages with his work requires that he assume a role somewhat like that of a composer; his process involves a comprehensive control of his materials, allowing them to behave under and beyond his control and ultimately, “...knowing when to say, Stop—that’s basically my role.” The content of his work challenges the human tendency to gloss nature; to understand objects with the intention of practicing control over them.



Murado’s paintings look to detach the viewer from their ability to concretely perceive natural physical existence—“You can see flowers or you can see the sky, hills, mountains, rivers and stuff like that. But, they are not made out of a sketch, or a drawing, they would just appear to be that, but they’re not that. It’s a little bit like reading the clouds. Everybody wants to read the clouds, and say, Oh that looks like a puppy, or, That looks like my Uncle John, but they’re not; they’re just clouds. We have this tendency to rip things, to rip everything into things that we understand, and that we can control.”

Artists vary in opinion when questioned about what constitutes not only their desire to be an artist, but also what it is, exactly, that validates their title. Is it a birthright? Divine decree? When asked if he had always desired to be an artist, he conceded ‘yes,’ adding that art was not an unusual pursuit in Spain for his generation, in a time in which there existed sponsoring in abundance.

Being the oldest of three little muses, (his brother, a writer, and his sister, an architect) creative activities were readily accepted. For Murado, the position of ‘artist’ does not simply nor solely rely upon self-recognition and self-proclamation of being such, but heavily upon the external affirmation.

He said; "You may have been born an artist but you still have to work your way to be worthy. Anybody has the potential to be an artist, but not everybody is an artist. You have to make it worth it for others to keep what you do, or, fabricate a worthy justification for the existence of the material that you want to claim your artist identity by. What matters is that the 'other' considers you an artist, and you cannot have that appreciation at the beginning. You may have to work for it and convince them that you are an artist, and once convinced, you will be. If you achieve that, sooner or later, in life or in death, perhaps maybe after you die, but that, that will make you an artist; not just because you say, I'm an artist."

