
PILFER

fried contemporary is proud to present an exhibition by Andre Naude'

PILFER

verb: **pilfer**; 3rd person present: **pilfers**; past tense: **pilfered**;
past participle: **pilfered**; gerund or present participle: **pilfering**;

Meaning: steal (typically things of relatively little value).

Synonyms: steal; thief; take; purloin; loot

PILFER by Andre Naude'

In conversation: Andre Naude' and Johan Thom

Johan Thom (JT): I think what is interesting about the title of the show is that on one level it refers to an act of appropriation, or what Picasso called 'theft'. This act of appropriation does not only extend to the work of other artists, whose work you've collected throughout the years, but also specifically to some of your own works. I find it interesting that you are almost re-contextualising the work and creating a contemporary body of work from the influences and inspiration you find from the artworks in your collection. I wonder if you can just maybe comment on the title, 'Pilfer', what it means to you and perhaps on a personal note, what it means to you at this stage to start looking back at your practice as a painter that's been at it for many many years now.

Andre Naude' (AN): I think I've always been looking at other people's work and being influenced and excited and enthused whether it's painting or sculpture or music or whatever it might be. Paging through a vogue magazine, going to a good movie, it sticks in your head somewhere, and when you're working it it surfaces. And I thought

in terms of the title 'Pilfer' that it is something that at one stage was totally taboo to 'steal' from anybody else's work. You just weren't allowed to do it, it had to be 100% original as in the old modernist movement. And I'm very relaxed about it now that I can actually put things together and then the work itself takes on a life of its own. For me, it's all got to do with the formalism of the composition. I'm a bit of a boring traditionalist when it comes to how you compose the painting, the image, how it balances. Obviously what is also important or relevant is, what it says.

JT: To come back to the word 'Pilfer', we mostly think of pilfering as quite a hostile thing in many ways and I think there is a different kind of nuance to the term here, in terms of call it: 'a gentle pilfering'.

AN: Very much so. I often work with a bit of tongue in cheek approach to very serious social commentary, in South Africa, world wide as well. I think the concept of 'Pilfer' is like a small sin, it's like stealing a small salt and pepper set instead of the silver. And the word

itself has got a nice sound to it. If we think in terms of taste, how would you describe pilfer?

JT: You were speaking about formal properties, certainly one of the strong points of your work as an artist, or as a painter specifically. Let's be discipline specific, for me it has always been your capacity as a colourist. I do think your work has a strong sensory equivalent to it. So when we are thinking about 'Pilfer', and combine it with these kind of delicious colours that generally seem to be the hallmark of your practice, there is a slight contradiction in terms there. There is an incredibly pleasing use of colour in your work. I think that the sensory description you mentioned earlier appears to translate into the use of colour as well.

AN: I don't consider my paintings beautiful, or think of them as 'pleasing' to look at. That is contradictory in itself. In one of my works, I use a vile green. There is nothing really pleasing about it, but it is captivating. You want to look at it. Because it is not 'pretty'.

JT: ` I think you are right in terms of having reservations with regards to the notion of making an artwork that is `pleasing`. Or thinking at the very least that `pleasing` in itself circumscribes it. Or an almost stereotypical notion of what pleasing is. There is a kind of sensory experience one gets from looking at your work from a colour perspective, it is still pleasurable despite the kind of rough usage of line, rough depiction of form. It has something to do with the nuances of colour rather than what it represents or depicts in the subject matter.

AN: It is fresh. It's not laboured. That is something I also try. Sometimes when I realise that a work is becoming too laboured you have to intervene again. You have to `relax` it again and put a surprise into it. I always have a thing of overworking a piece and making it too decorative. One has to guard against it, otherwise there is no progression in what you are saying.

JT: I think that people are very wary of any formalist discussion of work and yet, whether we like it or not, those formal principles play a huge role in terms of shaping our perception and helping us gain access to let's say the

content of a work. In that sense, we are a mile away from the formalist credo of `art for art's sake`, or the notion of formalism of being a universal language. But rather I think we are at the point where formalism is slightly being abused in a way to allow for entry into works and I mean it's also been appropriate. I think that is something that is definite in the work itself. I feel like it's not something that is just happening by accident in the work, it's something that is...

AN: ...in the subconscious

JT: I like that work, it's got a small, red block that seems like a window or doorway and a black blotch of paint in the middle.

AN: It is an upside down Robert Hodgins.

JT: Art can do a lot of things. I think that we might be limiting art in a very negative sense if all we expect from it is to make social commentary. So I think the idea, coming back again to `Pilfering`, from let's say other artists and looking back and adding that little bit of a bite. The add-on to the work of appropriation has been a selective

`Pilfering` of sorts, of things that have happened. Certainly in your life; these works that are in your possession didn't get here by accident. I do think there is a narrative element to the works that you've collected, and selected to re-appropriate for this exhibition, and your own story, or background, which I don't think is overplayed at the moment.

Maybe it says something about your role as an arts educator? You were a lecturer at the University of Pretoria, I think for perhaps 12 years. And during that time you were in contact with many of the young artists whose work now reappear within this body of work. I'm thinking of Anton Carstel, Theresa- Anne Macintosh, Minette Vari.

AN: It's a kind of adoration but in a primitive way where you pay homage to someone or something you have respect and admiration for. Your admiration or desire for a particular piece, can be at such a level that you want to steal it and copy it!

JT: It's also like something you covet, the difference between parody and pastiche, where pastiche just steals but parody always retains a soft spot for the original. Not endearment I don't think we are talking about parody in the work, but about a form of `Pilfering` that acknowledges the

original and has a soft spot for it. But it is veiled, it is not simply about 'stealing to sell', it's like stealing a spoon, a silver spoon because you like it and you take it back and you incorporate into your tea set and it becomes part of your life. And so it's not theft in the sense that you are just stealing and you leave no sympathy for the original. There is a sympathy here for the artwork is that wholly transformed by the add on of colour. When one sees the jump between the elements, I think that is a conversation. Call it the original location of the incident, that continues. I think we should talk about the works that you've chosen specifically, to comment on or to bring back elements from, maybe that is an interesting point. If we can just look at some of the works and discuss them as sites of 'Pilfering'. The Carla Crafford piece over there, could you tell me a little bit more, maybe about the biographic details of the work, how it came into your possession and why it fascinates you.

AN: Le Corbusier was an architect who created the most incredible structures. And this particular church which Carla photographed, I bought from her at an exhibition of her work. It is also the black and white and the simple frame,

It's unpretentious. There is a simplicity about it which appeals to me because it captures an essence of that particular piece of architecture.

JT: It appears that the moment the work is translated from a small scale photograph to paint we are not simply dealing with contrast and line anymore. Now we are dealing with the materiality of paint. And how paint is pushed around on the canvas. So what's interesting about an image like this, is that it is very much humanised in a strange way by your translation. The touch of your hand, the presence of your hand there.

AN: Yes, it's not like I'm 'taking' Crafford's composition. With her camera she photographed this particular part of the building, that was what she wanted to do, contrasting the white with the texture here, the detail etc. I've selected some pieces and covered them up. Subverted them and put them in a hiding place, so that they take on a new identity in the paint.

JT: And what is interesting of course for me about this whole process of translating a modernist structure into painterly form is that the subjective

enters into this discussion again by virtue of the presence of that hand that paints. Suddenly there is an element that now becomes something else, and we were speaking of intense political overtones included in the reworked or painted version of this building. Because today when we look back at modernist architecture, there was a complete absence of the 'human' in it.

AN: Yes

JT: I think the photograph is already hinting at some kind of subjective thing, exactly because we are looking at grain in the image, a material presence, or a material trace of photograph.

AN: The creativity starts here, where I am inspired by something or an artwork. To a great extent, and in a roundabout way the original is reinvented.

JT: So we are going to turn to the Van Esche painting, I love this painting. I think it's fabulous, it's beautiful in the frame. I think it's fantastic. So could we go through the same process, maybe with this little painting and quickly speak about the biographical elements in the painting and then the things that

you like.

AN: Well I bought it in a shop, for next to nothing in the 80s. And of course it's on card board, as we watch it, it is eating away itself. But it's that link back to an era that one only vaguely remembers, you know something about it, but we all have different romantic reactions to it. What is perfect is the signature. I started painting it on the big canvas and I thought well let's get rid of the room, don't put it in the same space, so I used certain diagonal lines to give it a bit of action. Because diagonal always create instability etc. And the drawing is bad, it's very bad. But it has to be bad, because otherwise you're just stuck with a ballerina and a base violin. And the fact that you got this harmony of the decay of the frame and the image, is like giving it a new coat of paint.

JT: I like the idea of a new coat of paint. When we look at this little van Esche, the one thing that it is lacking at this stage, would be some kind of overt fresh element. Even though the yellow paint has remained remarkably fresh.

AN: For me painterliness is the unevenness of it. In other words, you

don't apply the same amount of paint on the surface from left to right, or from the top down. This is where you have to interact your brain in the process of applying the paint, otherwise it's like painting a wall. So you have to be on guard. You have to be aware of how much of that paint you are going to apply. Tomorrow you are going to come back or later in the day you'll look at it again and you'll see something else which will then overlay it or eliminate it, or embrace it. When I work with a flat surface and you get these shiny areas with these sort of rough areas, it vaguely reminds me of pattern making. In fact I 'stole' the idea from Frikkie Eksteen, where you gloss certain areas. Then you leave certain areas matt.

JT: Just to bring everything to an end, unless there is anything else you would like to say, there is an interesting thing we spoke about. Pleasure and joy, I think what is interesting about a painterliness is that it betrays a kind of pleasure in terms of the physical application of paint. And that pleasure makes itself felt again in the distinct way in which certain areas play off against one another. In a painting like this ballerina. We are looking at quite a dead area of paint that is deliberately

there and like you say there are areas of gloss or thicker paint where the accumulation of paint itself forces out a different visual response from the viewer. It also generates something like actual physical layers of depth beyond mere perspective. I think we are touching again on the discussion about materiality. And that is why I want to come back to this issue of painterliness and its presence in your work.

AN: I think, it forces the viewer to interact with the painting not like a novel where you read the page and it's all with the same letter size print. It leaves you in midair and then you can connect to it again.

JT: And there we are back to a narrative that operates maybe outside of the boundaries of what we traditionally consider narrative. Which is the narrative that jumps from the actual material handling of paint.

END

ANDRE NAUDE

André Naude has been painting, educating, printmaking, collaborating, judging national art competitions, curating, and spending time abroad for at least three decades.

These ventures have included group shows in America, Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East. This includes New York, Washington, Toronto, Paris, Hamburg, Leverkusen, Ribevac, Barcelona, Budapest, Bangladesh, and Beijing.

Naude has presented solo exhibitions at the Pretoria Art Museum, the University of Pretoria, AVA Gallery Cape Town, NSA Gallery Durban, the University of Johannesburg art gallery, ABSA gallery and Galeria Blau in Palma, Majorca.

His work can be found in the South African National Gallery in Cape Town, Durban Art Museum, Pretoria Art Museum, and corporate collections such as ABSA collection; RMB collection; Anglo Gold Foundation; Amsterdam Rotterdam Bank; Old Mutual head office, London, UK; Nando's UK; University of Pretoria; Telkom South Africa; Tshwane University of Technology; Cite Internationale, Paris; University of Stellenbosch; and several other institutions.

ANDRE NAUDE



Re-vise
Mixed media on canvas
121x90cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Coalition
Mixed media on canvas
121x90cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Last Trophy
Mixed media on canvas
121x90cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Purloin (voluntary)
Acrylic on canvas
121x90cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Last Trophy I
Mixed media on canvas
140x75cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



This is not a van Esche
Mixed media on canvas
91x121cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Detail
Mixed media on board
25x40cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Small theft
Mixed media on board
25x40cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



I.D./Unknown
Mixed media on canvas
46x46cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Obviously

Mixed media on board

25x40cm

2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Subvert
Mixed media on board
25x40cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Filch, knockoff I

Mixed media on board

30x100cm

2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Prototype, small steal.
Mixed media on board
30x100cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Rob from interesting people
Mixed media on canvas
60x84cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Lost
Mixed media on board
40x50cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Appropriated
Mixed media on canvas
15x15cm
2016

ANDRE NAUDE



Dark Day

Mixed media on board

52x76cm

2016

f r i e d
c o n t e m p o r a r y

Fried Contemporary
1146 Justice Mahomed Str (formerly 430 Charles Str)
Brooklyn Pretoria 0181
T: 012 346 0158
e: info@friedcontemporary.com
www.friedcontemporary.com