



DIRK STASCHKE, 'WYLLI' © 2011, courtesy artist and gallery, 2011



DIRK STASCHKE, 'THE WALL' © 2011, courtesy artist and gallery, 2011



DIRK STASCHKE, 'WYLLI' © 2011, courtesy artist and gallery, 2011



DIRK STASCHKE, 'WYLLI' © 2011, courtesy artist and gallery, 2011

## DIRK STASCHKE

Text by Peter Limonov

Dirk Staschke (b. 1971) touched clay for the first time in the second grade, while attending an art school class in Huntsville, Alabama. The Earth didn't shake, nor did he find his peace. For the young Staschke, clay was nothing special—yet.

93

Since then, things have somewhat changed. Today Staschke lives in Portland, Oregon, where he works as a ceramic artist.

His recent body of work explores notions of glaze and cultural norms. His oil and water paintings, handlike marks that are beautiful but simultaneously engaging.

When he told us about his background, the artist created a series of comic scenes in my head sitting in The Warrens (1976) and Invention (2011).

Staschke's father was a son of German immigrants. He was raised in Chicago and became an aerospace engineer. Staschke's mother was, as Staschke himself puts it, a "housewife" who dropped out of school in every Staschke's father. Later Staschke's father went to work for NASA and they worked in Huntsville, Alabama, where the artist spent his childhood.

"I started like my friends and I was always having to defend myself." In his dream when I ask him it was in given up in Huntsville, he continues with every teaching "people coming after 15— with handlike lines. Staschke was one of the 15. On the night several people ended up in hospital.

"Anything out of the norm was considered threatening to most people in Huntsville back then. In retrospect, it is completely insane that something as simple as a balloon or an orange could have potentially resulted in a death. Enacting this sort of extreme public people together and I'm still close with my old friends. It also explains a comic I might laugh a bit when I see five-year-olds with balloons."

Like his mother, Staschke thought he would become a painter one day. He got a printing scholarship to the University of Missouri to pursue his plan.

As Missouri's clay slipped back into his life and after his first ceramic class, Staschke knew it was what he wanted to do. Ceramic didn't give him only a surface, but also the addition of form. It challenged him to think how the one thing would never.

He also admits he simply has been doing things that are hard to do. Working with clay is very complex—often the chemistry of day and glass, so firing is a bit.

"All of these things can result in countless possible outcomes. The rules of possibilities that ceramic artists have a lifetime."

Staschke has his five ceramic and sculpture professors. Dr. Steve Meyer and Ted Miles on his mentor, Staschke and many influences on his work.

"They are an example on how to do the most with the least. If something new before they taught you how to do it and if he broke again, it was revealed that you might be a painter. They don't want to see that."

He was a hard-working student. One who might question his teachers, but who would also do a great and new working at the studio.

Later he earned his Master of Fine Arts Degree from Alfred University, Alfred, NY. For the last ceramic year, he has maintained an ongoing studio practice and ceramic exhibition record. It is an example of how to do the most with the least.

"My first studio was in a one bedroom apartment in Queens so having a life was not the question. This means that I had to manage to live on my own in the apartment in New York City which had no own logistical problems to solve."

During the year he has also taught at many notable universities, including Emily Carr University, Alfred University and New York University.

"I have worked around a lot. Each place has different landscapes and different people. All these places have also influenced my understanding of art."

"When looking back on his younger years as an artist Staschke, now as his father, says:

"In my recollection an unusual life. It was the only thing that mattered."

94

"I often wonder where the line is between too much and enough."

Here is what he tells about his work today.

You mentioned your first influence was made like Lee Mackers, and the way he was exhibited a positive push often in the early 1970s. He also was one of the artists of the 1970s push movement, against consumer culture and supporting the idea of producing with limited means. Your current body of work explores notions of cultural norms, mostly through food. What are your main inspirations today?

The work from the last eight years, or so, is influenced by Dirk and his life painting.

I started as a way of contemplating desire and consumption. It has now become a way of contemplating art.

You said you are using food as a way of reflecting consumption in your work. Why not?

A table is a quiet place that contains the same but is harmful in almost every other aspect. It meant the perfect metaphor for consumer consumption.

Has your work changed the way you see or think about food?

Yes, I think about where it comes from and what it is more than I did in the past.

Staschke is very present in your sculptures, which you said, refers back to the Dutch still-life paintings, where the theme is often explained. What makes you feel so strong about this theme especially?

Staschke is a just human desire. I often wonder where the line is between too much and enough. There is a common sentiment that only the people who have more than you, have too much. I think about every day for all that I have. This includes friends and family which is the end means the most.

What's your favorite food to eat?

It changes from time to time. I would say The chicken curry but I have a thing for BBQ like in the summer.

What about your favorite food to make or prepare or pull off?

I enjoy making cakes but I like sculpting the most.

If you'd be a food item, based on appearance, which would you choose?

I don't know, the answer would probably change on my great day. An egg.

What makes a sculpture perfect?

When material, concept, and beauty work together to form a piece where the one is greater than the parts.

What's your favorite part of the working process?

Figuring out how to push the limits of a material in a way that surprises people.

As what piece work more into pleasure or pleasure more into work?

This has become a life lesson for me. If you work your passion into a job it becomes less pleasurable than it was. I will find your pleasure making food when I have the time to become completely lost in what I am doing. It should be about being in the moment.

What is your opinion on your biggest limitation as an artist?

I do not manage my career as well as I could. I have my work when I spend as much time producing themselves as creating. It is my hope that my work will speak for me.

How important is beauty to you outside your work? What kind of settings or places you find aesthetically pleasing?

I like cities and nature. Outside of my work I find it mostly in ordinary moments in nature, walking and drinking. My favorite and I spend as much time as I can on the Oregon coast for its certain natural beauty.

What makes you most in your work today?

I am excited about the new work where abstract forms become a direct result of creating representation. The object is being more chaotic and accident into the work. It also touches on the idea of one such in the Art world.

You've been working to many universities as a teacher. What is the most important thing you have learned from your students?

How to exist in the moment. Creating is a heavy task, if done well, it means the realization.

You said something a piece refers from a few works to another. How do you know the sculpture is finished?

It is a certain feeling that I've never said to anybody. I think the work comes close to a notion of how I thought. It's right. When that doesn't work it becomes an exercise in public making. Sometimes, a mistake becomes a gift. In my most recent work I have tried to have a clear more so chance.

Staschke has an upcoming exhibition with Warner Wichter Fine Art in Seattle, Washington. The show runs from March 2nd through April 21st, 2011. You've had a lot of work openings in a very short time. How do you feel about this? Do you have any plans to have a clear more so chance.