

Mark Hetherington – Artist/Musician profile, written by **William**, image courtesy of the artist.

Dissecting the creative self into both Visual Artist and a musician seems easy enough to do, or is it? I've always been puzzled by the inner workings of the creative mind sensory 'three way freeway', the relationships between sight, sound and the creativity process. Within the context of creativity, is sight and sound separate or connected? Is there an intersection of understanding? How can one side influence the other? To help try and understand some of these questions I enlisted the help of Sydney musician and painter Mark Hetherington.

Mark's audio-visual landscape at the moment is brimming. The creative flow of late must resemble that more of a torrent. Whilst busily preparing for his first 2007 solo exhibition of new paintings Mark has just completed the debut album 'Mourning the night', with his band The Sins. He has also just completed illustrating a book cover for the prominent criminologist Dr Murray Lee and the remaining hours of any given days are spent arranging and rehearsing material for a set of up and coming tour dates.

The following are some of the more interesting points we discussed about the relationships between music and art at his studio in Camperdown.

We all know the creative pulse of music and painting can cross over at some point and we all have our individual influences, as in the music we listen to when we paint or the things we visualize when we create music. We know there can be a relationship between colour, tone, timbre, stroke, the visual dynamics of it all and tonality, rhythm, melody, harmony and timbre etc but what's the Hetherington take on all this?

The influence of music on painting is something I have always found interesting, particularly as I am into performing and writing it rather than just passively being an artist into music. Sometimes I really hone the choice of music as specifically as possible for particular paintings, stages or even sections of paintings. In some ways it's an extension of the palette. I sometimes know directly what I am looking for as direct sonic influence. I have even made notes in my sketchbook for possible combinations. When working on early drawing stages of a work, especially a large work I will usually select some loud energetic music either hard be-bop or post punk, it's the intensity of rhythm I'm looking for. When I fully connect with the music and painting simultaneously I find great things can happen.

Being a drummer, rhythm to me is particularly powerful. I sometimes just pick up on a ride cymbal driving a tune, whether it syncopated, melodic and multi timbered, it will push me in a certain direction with regard to length and force of brushstrokes and dictate the pace that I apply the paint. When that into it, I can't really help it, it becomes a singular experience, an act of possession if you like. Not just painting *to* music but *with* it, *inside* it. It's almost like the only choice I have in the process is the initial selection of the music.

Do you only use music in such a directly referenced way? Do you ever use it in a more conceptual, emotional or reflective way?

I recently have been working on a painting called 'Self Portrait Ring: Between the age of 17 and 24'. It's part of a series of ten paintings of fantastic rings. The painting as the title suggests is a self-portrait in the form of a ring. It's about whom I am now through where I've come from during those formative years. To capture 7 years of one's life in one image in the form of a ring appealed to me as a pretty interesting challenge.

One of the main processes I used to evoke that period of my life was to of course revisit its soundtrack. At that time of my life I was very much into listening to The Pixies, Sonic Youth, The Cure, The Smiths. So for this particular work I used the music in a psycho-subliminal way. To recall, reconstruct and reinstate many of the feelings and experiences needed for the mission at hand. Initially I thought it would be just a simple enough idea to try but I was amazed at how effective music was in resurfacing so much of my past that was up until that process forgotten.

Another interesting example, however much more complicated and reflective of where I'm situated in this music visual creative tapestry crossroad delicatessen is... don't use that by the way?

I won't.

There's a song on the new album called 'shadow you'. A stalker song, a song of rejection and revenge. It's about love gone wrong and more importantly for me, about bad decisions. When the song sketches were presented and I started working the drum parts and really getting down deep into the song both musically and lyrically, I realised what I was trying to express to accompany this tale was exactly what I was trying express on a painting that I was working on at the same time named "Fear of Crime". The painting reflects the fact that we all have decisions to make and 'unknowns' to unlock but many of these decisions have to be made from complicated perspectives with no assured outcome. It's from this standpoint that crime and love gone wrong come together so poetically.

There are no real directly communicable references between the song, the painting and the creative headspace between but they all had an interdependent, coactive affect on each other. Both the song and the painting portray to me an eerie, lamentable, perversely romantic view of how decisions affect us all. When I listen to the song now and I look at the painting, it's all so referential. I doubt whether it could have happened any other way but I can't tell you why exactly. The best I can do is set you up with the circumstances and end points. Have a look and a listen yourself. I'll put the track up on our myspace and you readers can investigate it for themselves. I can't be any more specific than that but specificity isn't always the stuff of art is it?

See <http://www.myspace.com/thesinsaus>

If you are an artist who deals in both visual and sonic expression then Loop would love to hear from you. Whether you be painter/guitarist, origami artist/tuba player, tattooist/ theramin player, or potter/ hurdy gurdy etc.

Please send proofing images as jpeg (nothing over 1 Meg will be accepted) to info@loopoz.com with the email title - "The Music Of Art" and please include a URL where we can sample your music. If you'd prefer to send hard copies of your music then please send to:

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