

“What is truth?” Said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer. *

As an artist and educator, Nick inhabits a landscape of differing truths. A skilled technician of both water colour and oils he knows that the journey of an artist is not simply defined by technical skill. And that a student's journey through Modern Art and Contemporary Art is, by its very nature, full of contradictory principles, whether they are the principles of the aesthetic or the rejection of these principles in themselves.

Brought up in the East of London, the son of a graphic artist, Nick trained at Kent Institute of Art and Design and Kingston University. As a keen skateboarder Nick's affinity to the street and street art was more important than the bustling Hoxton galleries (where his first works were shown). The fact that little remains of his early body works reflect that many of his creations were on discarded cardboard and urban detritus.

Moving to Brazil in 2001 Nick worked with street children to produce his first public shown installations. By encouraging street children to participate in these projects he was able to bring a real sense of renewed identity to some of the most deprived under class, teaching them how to draw and paint and revealing that they had a right to express themselves. There is joy, youthful optimism and the strained anxiety of

transformation set in his shanty style urban sculptures.

Later in Brazil, Nick created a 'Put it Back' Project organising the selling of small prints of his drawings, at traffic lights to car drivers impatiently held up at the red lights of busy interchanges. The selling of sundry small items at junctions is a technique that many favela children use to carve a humble living, selling sweets or chewing gum by hanging them over the wing mirrors of the waiting cars. More than a morbid acknowledgement of the plight of this subclass of society, it's a tongue in cheek pun on the value of his artwork, turning a road junction into a viewing platform for the art.

(*On Truth. Francis Bacon)

Following two minor shows and the "Put It Back" project in Brazil, Nick moved to Thailand continuing to focus his attention on urban living but focusing on portrait work and urban landscapes.

Since moving to Shanghai Nick has worked with, and been represented by, Island 6 gallery creating works for many of the gallery's themed shows. Skateboarding and youth expression re-emerge as themes for

his earlier Shanghai work. Since 2008 his work has become more eclectic reflecting his own wide interdisciplinary approach as a painter, draftsman, sculptor and printer all at once. Much of these works reflect a subtle ribbing of the “commercialisation” of the Chinese artist. Mocking the troop of new art buyers looking to buy the next Chinese Andy Warhol, Nick uses his understanding of advertising and communication to expose weak iconic styles with quip and the pun. Nothing is sacred, but not because of some anarchic challenge to establishment, but more as the provocation of a court jester, for whom revealing of truth to the unsuspecting is the key.

Nick likes to play with, and to customise ideas and concepts- juxtaposition, comparison and reinterpretation are commonly employed to dissect, analyse and regurgitate any given theme. Often the focus lies not in the icons, concepts or imagery being explored and presented, but in the resulting sensation that the collision of these things creates. The hybrid contains more than the sum of its parts. This is not to say that messages are hidden, convoluted or obscure.

Paper Postcards

Since late 2009 Nick has been working on a series of artworks that focused on the face of Mao on the renmimbi. Building on earlier themes Nick pokes a snook at the Chinese art scene, the relentless re-working of the same iconic imagery and its commercial motives. Using the highest quality paper and the best lithographic techniques available

in Shanghai he creates multi layered pastiches incorporating other commonplace imagery.

What do we take away from this work? Is it this money or is it the cultural heritage of Mao that is the unstoppable force behind the new China? Or is art and money the same where ever we go?

In every taxi, shop and restaurant we have a constant reminder. The currency changing hands at the wet markets and street corners of the city is the real manifestation of the very abstract concept of economic success. The flow of this paper and his image among the populace once multiplied by the number of people in China represents the future buying power that is greatly changing the world. Does this image still represent Mao's values or has it taken on new meaning “To be rich is glorious” .

Paper Postcards tattooed with images of Chairman Mao is an unexpected insight into one of the ways to look at China.

David Owen, May 2010