Q + A with Neil Raitt
December 2015

1. Can you tell us a bit about your current show at the Goss-Michael Foundation? What motifs are you exploring?

The show expands on ideas that are rooted in Bob Ross's cult classic television programme The Joy of Painting. The work appropriates motifs from the programme which includes mountains, cabins and evergreen trees. I chose these in particular because they represent pivotal elements in a landscape that lend themselves well to the language of repetition, and function well as symbols for their natural counterparts.

2. Why did you choose the name Cabinectomy?

The title Cabinectomy refers to a description Bob Ross uses when painting a cabin. The process involves scraping the shape of a cabin out with a palette knife and removing the excess paint already on the canvas before laying down a dark mixture to form the base layer. The word ectomy has scientific connotations and denotes the surgical removal of a specified part of the body. I like how this simple word play anthropomorphises an object that is otherwise arbitrary.

3. You have a signature style that is hypnotic, natural and repetitive, right now it would seem that this style of painting is distinctly Neil Raitt. Was there a moment or something that occurred where you made the conscious effort to continue to develop this style?

During my time at the RCA studying for my masters, I became inspired by the idea of taking the work as close to pattern as possible before changing direction just before it collapses into repetition. I think that this works particularly well with the aspect of my work being so inspired by nature, you can see natural patterns, but there will always be something unique about each one. This is almost what makes the work hypnotic in the sense that your eye can see the pattern, and knows there is an imperfect repetition but can't focus on what makes it so.

4. How did you get connected with the Goss-Michael Foundation?

I exhibited at Dallas Art Fair earlier in the year and was invited to donate a work to MTV:Redefine charity auction and exhibition that is also in Dallas. The director of the foundation, Kenny Goss then got in touch about the possibility of making a show and so it went from there.

5. How do you see your work evolving as your career progresses?

Building further on the language of repetition and also further towards ideas that are rooted in abstraction.

6. What currently inspires you?

I find inspiration in anything and everything. A lot of my process involves a lot of thinking time, reading and listening to music, I like to take from different sources. this is often just a feeling that sometimes grows into an idea. Currently being in Dallas has been a huge inspiration, getting to see a new culture and landscape.

7. You were granted a residency from the Martini Arte Internazionale in Turin, Italy in 2013. Right now you are a resident artist at the Goss-Michael Foundation. How does painting in different places influence your work?

Being able to make work where it's going to end up is always a fantastic privilege and a brilliant opportunity for me. To be able to step out of my usual studio setup and discover new places is of course extremely inspirational and uniquely challenging. I think I take different things from each place I go, but I always enjoy learning about a place's history that usually impacts itself on the work one way or another. The reference for this work is a part of American popular culture so it is very interesting to open a dialogue with an audience that is generally more accustomed to this language of painting than in Europe for example.

8. Can you tell us about any upcoming shows/future projects?

I have a future show planned in April next year with Anat Ebgi Gallery in Los Angeles. I am also looking forward to being back in London and exploring opportunities there, as well as a solo show with Hus Gallery also next year.