

Interview with Nelio

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Nelio artist Lyon rue du paradis performance art geometry IMG_1770 copy *Nelio paints at rue du Paradis in Paris' 10th arrondissement*

Does your artistic production look more at the process or at the result?

I have three ways in which I produce, artwork based on a reflection, made as an exercise, and made as an experiment. When my work is based on a reflection, it tends to be the case that I'm aiming at transmitting certain messages in my paintings, whether in relation with observations of the world around me, or by introspective, philosophical or political reflections. But in the manner of a graphic designer when creating a logo, I will condense all the basic ideas, so that they are conveyed just in the form or the colour. It becomes less obvious, more intricate, and gives room for different interpretations. The message can be the starting point to create but is not necessarily the purpose of the work.

Artwork made as an exercise, is where the starting point of my paintings is an exercise. It can be the representation of my current research, a stage in my artistic construction, whether in composition, colour, shape, matter, light, volume. In this way, sometimes my painting speaks exclusively about painting.

Nelio artist mural street art graffiti rue du paradis IMG_1880 Nelio artist graffiti rue de la fontaine au roi IMG_1945 *Spontaneous painting at rue de la Fontaine au Roi in Paris 20th arrondissement*

Artwork made as an experiment, is a third method of creation that is established when I try simply to transcribe feelings and emotions, without narration or hidden messages, when I want to reach pure abstraction. Working in this way, sometimes I surprise myself with my creations, this happens particularly when I do sessions of automatic drawings, that is, to draw as quickly as possible, and make a lot of drawings without stepping back. I imagine that the unconscious takes a larger part in this type of work.

At the end all these creative processes there is a mixture, and an overall common thread in my works is established, which brings out a sense of uncertainty in the viewer, who no longer knows exactly what to think or feel. "What is the message in this painting? Is there a message in it? What does it represent? Is it figurative? Abstract? Is there something written? Is it just decorative painting? An exercise? Is it the result of an elaborated sketch or an improvisation?," and so on. Even if the starting point, the process or the purpose may sometimes be obvious, I try to make each painting allow this kind of questioning.

Nelio architecture rue de la fontaine au roi IMG_1959 *Architecture compliments Nelio's geometric style at Rue de la Fontaine au Roi, 11th arrondissement*

What is your relationship with graphic design? And architecture?

I discovered the graffiti when I was thirteen or fourteen years old. The pleasure of creating letters led me to become interested in graphic design, which I studied formally for a while. What I liked most was to create logos, and experiment with screen-printing. I think my graffiti evolved when I began to incorporate this influence and started to paint symbolic forms with areas of flat colour, as is often the case in screen-printing.

El Lissitzky, A Proun suprematism copyright 1925 A "Proun" work by Russian suprematist artist, El Lissitzky. *Ink and watercolour collage, untitled1 (1925)*

About four years ago, I stopped doing professional graphic design and began to devote all my time to personal creativity. Being self-taught I have serious gaps in the history of art, but I would say that my aesthetic is quite close to Constructivism and Suprematism. For a long time I painted a bit like I was playing with Lego or a building set, trying to create new compositions with limited elements, a square, a circle, a triangle. Now, I'm experimenting more by making work which is freer, more random. This desire stems from my interest in abandoned places, and the architecture of these places. By making art in such a space, adding colour, form, a narrative develops, the space becomes a place. The kinds of spaces I prefer to work in are where you can find straight walls with crumbling parts. I find this kind of situation the most symbolic and an interesting contrast to the geometry of my designs.

I like to experiment with different techniques, because I think it feeds and develops my creations. Sometimes I'll produce a very small drawing on paper with a fineliner, which will be completely different from a painting in an abandoned space, for example. This focus on meticulous detail, will have a more intimate and precious aspect, while the fresco will work at being viewed from a distance because it's inseparable from its surroundings, and will degrade over time. Both are interesting and I like playing with the codes of each. This is what also drives me to paint both on very small formats and large facades, painting and using other media, especially screen-printing, engraving, and woodcarving.

Nelio artist paint wall graffiti rue du paradis 10 arrondissement IMG_1805 *A DIY attitude to production lies at the heart of the graffiti-street art culture*

How do you choose your “canvases”?

I prefer to paint in abandoned places. In the city, I'm not inspired to paint a wall when there's advertising around it. I also don't look for the most visible or the biggest, rather, the most charming. I'm not a fan of blank, sterile walls, I work best when the wall has a history and is starting to fall apart, creating an interesting contrast with my clean geometric shapes. When there are inspiring surroundings, such as, architecture, atmosphere of the place, colours, and so on, this all adds to the narrative. My way of working is the street work is always site-specific.

Nelio architecture performance graffiti rue du paradis ICF habitation IMG_1831 *Nelio's physical style of producing this large-scale site-specific work at Rue du Paradis in the 10th arrondissement doubles as street performance*