

Jean Marc Calvet

Painter

Nicaragua

"Never Believe You Have Played Your Last Hand"

Brut no more.....

Art Brut is a term coined by Jean Dubuffet shortly after WWII to describe art that is 'raw' or 'unadulterated' by culture. "Works created from solitude and from pure authentic creative impulses – where the worries of competition, acclaim and social promotion do not interfere." The creators that Dubuffet encompassed in his term were those who didn't consider themselves artists or that they were producing art at all.

In 2000, there was a man in Costa Rica called Jean Marc Calvet who was to fit this category perfectly.

Reduced to the lowest ebb that a man can sustain and still live, Calvet decided that he did not deserve to live. He was ready to kill himself with an overdose of drugs and alcohol in a shuttered house. As he began to hallucinate he encountered demons and monsters. He tried to capture one under the stairs by punching his fist through the wall. Instead of a monster, his fist encountered a large vat of paint left by the contractors. As he withdrew his hand, he saw that it was covered in paint. In a disgusted move to wipe it off, he swept his hand across the wall.

As a smear of paint appeared, Calvet recognized it as the demons that he held within himself. In an instant he realized that if he could only transfer these feelings and thoughts out of himself, then maybe, just maybe, he would find redemption.

For three months he painted continually. On the walls, the ceilings and the floors. He used the remaining paint in the wall cavity, charcoal from wood he burned, foodstuffs such as ketchup and even his own blood. This was not art, he was not an artist. He was just saving his own life.

Months passed and he found himself back in the mainstream of 'normal' life in Nicaragua. However he continued to paint for 12-20 hours a day. It was a necessity to continue to survive, it was the only way to exorcise his demons. It was his salvation.

Calvet's work was Art Brut.

Years passed and he created painting after painting. Galleries around the world began to exhibit his work and a British film director, Dominic Allan made a feature documentary film about his life. He started to gain critical acclaim. The hours Calvet spent with himself and his art meant that he started to ask questions of his work.

About the combination of colors, forms and shapes, the content and imagery, the balance and composition. The internet and social media meant that he was no longer alone. He was bombarded with images and opinions. Calvet is an intelligent man and all this was stored away in his mind, mulled over, dissected and absorbed.

Today Calvet's work is more developed with a conscious understanding of the esthetics of color and form. He appreciates the ebb and flow of empty spaces and

dense characterization. His work is still raw but there is a marked degree of sophistication.

It is still intuitive and a product of a direct flow from his mind and soul to the canvas. He is more graphic and says "it vomits" out of him. Even now, some 16 years on since that first moment when he started to paint in the dark house, he doesn't really know what he will create when he faces a blank canvas. Nowadays he may start off thinking he might paint a human face or a cat, but that's about all he pre-determines. The rest is uninhibited and pure creative spirit.

Calvet's work is now often labeled "Outsider Art".

Gallery openings of his solo exhibitions, biennials, screenings of the documentary has taken Calvet to many countries. His work is well respected and collected around the world. New York art critic, Jerry Saltz saw the work and said "It's good, it's good. What more can I say? It's good!"

It is now just a matter of time before Calvet's work becomes "Insider Art". However the honesty and integrity that defines who he is as a man and the fact that he refuses to forget where he came from, will preserve the authenticity of his work regardless of where the art world takes him.

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