

You Kurt me Mongrel  
by Victor Boulet  
Merz Barn  
Ambleside

8 canvases  
Oil on Jute.  
size 160cm X 130cm.

This show was cancelled in November 2019, but I decided to continue the work on the 10 canvases, I only managed 8 before the process stopped in March 2020.

I had been toying with the idea of hanging 10 paintings in and around the Kurt Schwitters Merzbarn, Ambleside, North West of England. There is a shabby exhibition space located in the grounds just before Kurt's dilapidated shed where his mural was removed in 1965 to the Hatton Gallery in Newcastle.

The content of the work: Kurt Schwitters exile and commitment to going back and forth from Ambleside where he lived to the barn where he made his mural. Mix that with my own walk to and from my studio, 4 times a day in Liverpool, then add the myth of the wounded man / painter. I know nothing about his walk, but my walk has become an unfriendly challenge with no gain or joy other than the sound of my feet hitting the ground.

20.8.2019 I arrived at the barn wanting to ask for a show. I met a woman, told her what I wanted, she looked up and said: You'd better speak with Ian.

Ian Hunter was obviously the boss. A quick introduction and he started cracking unfunny jokes. I told him why I was there, a snap reply: YES you can have a show, but first I have a job for you! The woman looked at me with a tired smile, she seemed trapped.

He pointed: If you paint these 7 chipboards (120X240cm) you'll have your show. I looked at the chipboards thinking: what an embarrassment !

Ian Hunter insisted that we have a cup of tea first. After some time he arrived with tea, biscuits and scones. He quickly fingered the better morsels. After more than half an hour of hearing him talk, mostly about himself and a rather capitalistic plan for the barn, I looked over at my partner making an unhappy face. During his monologue he made snide remarks like: you could be a professor and endlessly name-dropped celebrity artists and architects who have donated money. It was all so discouraging.

I said: Hey, let's get this job done.

But then he started slagging off the Norwegian curator Karin Hellansjø who initiated the move of another entire shed of Kurt Schwitters in Norway. Jealousy is ugly, and he seems not to understand that when the content was removed from the barn he is left simply guarding a nostalgic cavity covered with a tarpaulin with a picture of the mural?

Again I uttered: Hey, let's get these boards painted.

I'm not going into detail about Ian Hunter's practical ability, but there I was, the court jester, painting the chipboard so I could get my show.

I mentioned my admiration of Kurt Schwitters enormous walk from Ambleside to the barn, Ian didn't listen, he was not interested, he just talked about how grand this place was going to become with his Kurt Museum.

My thoughts are; Kurt Schwitters would not want a shop or a cafe or Ian Hunter for that matter, in and around that barn.

We agreed that my show would take place winter 2020.

Back in Liverpool I emailed him twice and received vague, sarcastic replies.

I continued my work, but in November 2019 I needed some practical answers in regards to the show. This time Ian Hunter replied with a short, rude email saying: There will be no show and he offers me £40 for the work that I did. Who does he think he is, this Ian Hunter?

I decided to call him. That same quiet woman picked up the phone and passed it on to him. I said hello, and asked if he could explain, he didn't really manage to explain himself other than that I probably should not visit again ? He hung up, and at this point he became my project, the fool.

Kurt Schwitters' commitment, his way of surviving in exile by using his craft as a painter and the paintings from the period in Ambleside is really what matters to me.

The Kurt Schwitters barn is a sentimental ruin and a disappointment and that is Kurt's possible vengeance against those who try to profit from artist's legacies. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

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