

NEOILLUSION

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NICK THEOBALD :: With Honey From The Rock

By Mani De Osu



As the flame approached the wick, the steadied hand reaching from under a mahogany robe paused to encounter with somber delight and expectation the transformation about to occur. For what was dark and solid is about to become a bright and moving tribute of life. Once lit, the flame dances upon the wick in praise and remembrance as the beeswax begins to bubble. Held in the entrancement of the moment, the constancy of time and exposure cause the liquefying wax to collect and gather itself over the edge and as it makes its fated journey down the side of the candle, the further away from the flame the slower it becomes, harder and fixed, like its rock form from whence it just came; its honeyed time now encapsulated in its motion of pursuit — its purpose of praise and remembrance. Beside itself, the wax submitted to what it was called to do, and in that submission attains satisfaction. It becomes a monument to the moment, making the poignant process of its purpose a relic to be contemplated by others as the revelation that its life was. The truth that is the expression of every moment is a physical definition of the Reality, and there is no reality but the Reality. Nick Theobald seeks to communicate this notion in his beeswax art that by submitting to what the moment is and what it calls for, one gains true inner peace and ultimate gratification. With the title of his first New York solo exhibition, “With Honey From The Rock” coming from Psalm 81:16, “But you would be satisfied with the finest of wheat; with honey from the rock I would satisfy you,” Theobald unveils his past, present and future. He reveals what touched him as a child, he offers his devotion to the moment as a gift of suppliant reverie, and postulates how one can reconcile two things so different as coming one from the other; soft, sweet, supple from hard, tasteless and unmoving. He reaches for unification of the two seeming opposites in his work by creating movement held in stasis, while the canvases themselves seem to breathe a life of their own and emit a blooming flush of honeyed aroma.



When you stand in front of a Nick Theobald drip painting, a deep-set religiosity reigns in the textured channels of each beeswax drip. Not one of stone buildings and ornate costume, but one of the temple of heart, the hearth of the spirit. They are meditations of the moment, the way each drip is a moment gathered on itself, hurrying to go yet called at once to stay. Theobald is the breath that gives verse to the meaning of the story as the acuity of the heat authors the length of life for the flow of honeyed wax. It dribbles from the top of a wooden panel and while working in silence, Theobald experiences the patience and devotion to his art that a monk has towards his work and praise in the monastery; the artist in his studio making prayers of remembrance to the honey of his soul. The gold that drips with every beat of the heart into the existence of his being is the conveyor of spirit that gives each drip painting a powerful prose of repose, peace and calm. Reminiscent of walking into a grand cathedral or sacred temple, walking into the Richard Taittinger Gallery to gaze at the exhibition With Honey From The Rock is certainly a moving experience. Nick sees art as the new religion in the 21st Century, because it is the training and practice of the spirit to bring about beauty and truth or as the Masters say; Revelation. As there is no reality but the Reality, every moment — every instant — is a revelation of truth, a perfect art, so long as the angle of perception is high enough to see the unity of the composition. This is the calling of the 21st Century artist, to gather symbols and truths about our understanding of Reality and render them as an image, unified as recognizable to the contemporary consciousness.



Bees represent industry, creation and wealth because of the benefit humans find in their honey and their wax. Since the dawn of our modern civilization, humans have cultivated bees to use their product in as many variations as could be imagined, wax particularly always in the function of preservation. The ancient Egyptians and Persians used wax to embalm their dead, Hellenic sculptors used it to carve life size effigies of the ideal beauty, Romans to create their death masks.

Batik tapestries of Southeast Asia hang in temples and shrines while thought and word and deed have been captured on wax tablets throughout the ancient world. Beeswax candles have lit the way through darkened hallways, glowed in windows to welcome home a long absent traveler, softly bellowed light of grace in churches, covenants and sanctuaries. It has been through the pure structure and integrity of its constitution that beeswax has served so meaningful a purpose in human survival. As far as we know, it does not ever decay. It does not tarnish, it is impermeable, it is not a food source for any animal (though it is consumed by humans in so where it is used as a preservation agent). The ability to preserve and to pass on is the function of its purpose, as is the thing that distinguishes the homo sapien sapien from the other species. The implementation of this type of organization is one of our significant trademarks as human beings. Every major culture has used beeswax in some form or another, for some benefit or another, and in using it as his main medium, Nick Theobald links us to our origin while moving us forward by progressing the use of preservative quality and showing it in a way that resonates with the contemporary mind. One can see the lineage between his drip paintings and the Color Field practitioners of the old New York School. Rothko's "Orange and Yellow" comes floating in mind when looking at Theobald's "I End, You Begin."



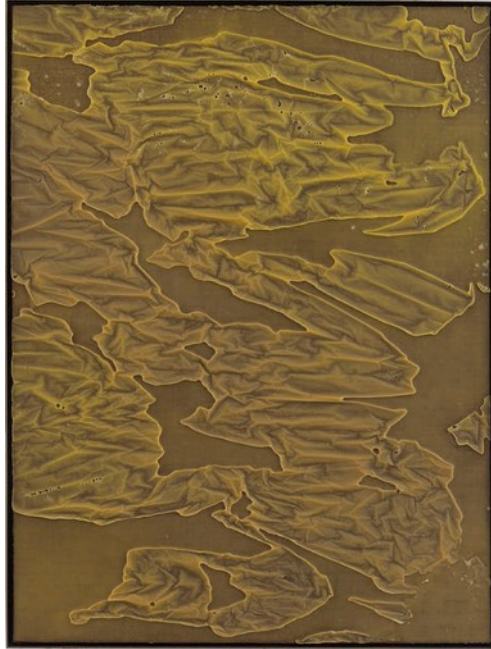
In this 5' x 10' diptych, he extends the awareness of the contemporary consciousness to encompass a new reign of detail into the realm of subconscious creation. With his rust paintings, Theobald hearkens the Geometric Abstractionists with naturally occurring linear patterns caused by steel bars wrapped with canvas and submerged in salt water for varying lengths of time, yet takes a more submissive approach in their creation as he has no say or control over the rusting that occurs.



His wax-dipped sponge is almost certainly a tribute to Yves Klein, whom Theobald cites as an artist he admires. The presence/non-presence required for this type of art is something Klein was most well known for, and his concept of sensorial excavation is where Nick finds his semblance.



Crumpling and releasing the ultra fine silk for his linen paintings share the notion of Jackson Pollack dripping paint on his canvases with only the motion of control being that you are not in control. Nick says he will go through 20 attempts to get one or two acceptable linen paintings, but the end result has the connectivity of the myriad of lines coming together to form a cohesive image of the moment, as do the finished paintings by Pollack.



Theobald's compacted canvas sculptures tied with Jute rope might make one think of a natural version of John Chamberlain's large scale sculptures made from old automobiles, where both are salvaging material that otherwise would go to waste and creating an art object from the what would be garbage.



Wax dipped Yarrow flowers and tied Jute rope ends follow suit in the quest for natural materials and natural process of patience to experience the practice of submitting to the moment. No matter how long it may take, it is the devotion that carries Nick Theobald through.

<http://www.neoillusion.com/#!/NICK-THEOBALD-With-Honey-From-The-Rock/c1u77/564044fa0cf2e1ca278f41d3>



Young, though he may be in years, the 28 year old New York based artist has an old soul and the empirical taste of ancient ways gained from growing up in Japan, Singapore and Taiwan. He was fascinated with the robes of the Buddhist monks in their deep reds, oranges and golds, obsessed with touching the patinas of walls and insistent on collecting any religious talismans he could get his hands on. His spirit was called to these things and they are the things that have quietly driven his creation with beeswax, embracing and uniting all of the sensibilities he loved as a child into a message of becoming. He used his innate interest to divine his purpose and traveling open his road of possibilities found himself making modern day beeswax meditations, represented by the Richard Taittinger Gallery, and if he is to be as malleable and lasting as the wax with which he works, we will be in for a substantive career as an emerging artist takes his place on the stage of the New New York School of artists.

- 1* With Honey From The Rock Exhibition Shot courtesy Richard Taittinger Gallery
- 2* Resonance by Nick Theobald courtesy Richard Taittinger Gallery
- 3* Quadriptych by Nick Theobald courtesy Richard Taittinger Gallery
- 4* I End. You Begin. by Nick Theobald courtesy Richard Taittinger Gallery
- 5* Orange and Yellow by Mark Rothko courtesy of colourchroma.wordpress.com
- 6* Plogoston Flow by Nick Theobald courtesy Richard Taittinger Gallery
- 7* Composition VII (the three graces) by Theo van Doesburg courtesy of Wikipedia.com
- 8* Absorb Form by Nick Theobald courtesy Richard Taittinger Gallery
- 9* 1-6-015 by Nick Theobald courtesy Richard Taittinger Gallery
- 10* Born Bound by Nick Theobald courtesy Richard Taittinger Gallery
- 11* Changes by John Chamberlain courtesy of christies.com
- 12* Y1-1-015 by Nick Theobald courtesy Richard Taittinger Gallery
- 13* WR1-1-015 by Nick Theobald courtesy Richard Taittinger Gallery