

AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER MONAGHAN

Peter Monaghan is a relief artist based in Dublin, Ireland. Here, Peter details his transition from graphic design to full-time art, his creative influences, and his technique to hand-craft vibrant 3D pieces.

CG Your work spans various disciplines such as architecture, painting, and visual design. How do these different fields influence your artistic process and final pieces?

PM I believe that essential to the life of an artist is doing what comes naturally, a feeling of being comfortable with what you make or paint and staying true to yourself and not being influenced by the prevailing fashion. This has been true of my whole career as an artist, whether my interest lay in design, in calligraphy, in painting. As a result, all of these disciplines, although different, have each informed the others.

CG How has your background in graphic and industrial design informed your current artistic practice? Can you share more about your early experiences, specifically your choice to transition to full-time relief art in 2000.

PM During my time as a graphic artist I had spent what limited free time I had painting and drawing. This became increasingly frustrating. Graphic design in the 1990s was becoming more business like and less creative. Therefore I took the decision, supported by my wife and family, to leave design and work as a full time artist. I allowed myself a first, critical year to experiment and discover and this brought me much joy and renewed my sense of creativity. I found my voice as an artist during



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that time and was the basis of the body of work that I have continued to develop since.

CG Evoking a response from the viewer is central to your art. Can you elaborate on how you use elements like light, composition, and the dynamic interplay between 2D and 3D to achieve this engagement?

PM When I left the world of graphic design I remember experimenting with different materials and almost as a result of such 'playing' discovered a means of making art with halved ping pong balls. The sense of fun and enjoyment that I got from that experience is the feeling that I want my viewers to share. I also made the important realisation that I wanted my art to move forward in a three-dimensional way and in direct contact with the viewer, each piece unique in its own way.

CG You have described your work as the result of disciplined research into visual sensation and aesthetic pleasure. Can you elaborate on this in relation to the graphs and colour charts you develop behind the scenes for each piece?

PM With the decision taken to paint full time, I went back to basics and what I had learned in college about colour. Gradually my paintings evolved as exercises in finding



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out what happens when you position primary colours together and introduce secondary colours into the mix. I also experimented with the spectrum of warm and cool colours and how they worked together.

CG All of your works are hand-crafted by you. Could you explain your technique, and the impact that hand-crafting has on your artwork, especially in terms of its imperfections and unique qualities?

PM My work is primarily produced by hand, both in the preparation and finishing phases but technology has a part in the process too. The first phase is always hand drawing, I also paint and cut large sheets of watercolour paper by hand with a scalpel as the scorch marks that lasers can leave are unacceptable to me.

There is an almost imperceptible difference to a hand made piece which may not even be evident to the viewer but does enhance both the process of making for me as an artist and of visual pleasure for the viewer.

CG Having exhibited in Dublin, London, mainland Europe, Asia, and the United States, how do different cultural contexts and audiences influence the reception and interpretation of your work?

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PM It is very gratifying for me as a visual artist to get feedback from people in many different parts of the world who have had similar responses to the work. I believe because my work is grounded in shape, colour and movement, it has a strong universality.

CG It has been noted that music, particularly the works of Francesco Tristano, influences your art. Can you discuss the role of music in your creative process and how it impacts the visual aspects of your work?

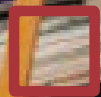
PM Listening to music while I work transports me to another world. Whether it is jazz, classical or world music, it frees my mind to dream and think in abstract images.

CG How has your art evolved from ten years ago to now? Would you like to share any new themes or techniques you are exploring in your current or upcoming projects?

PM My art has evolved immensely over the years though interestingly not in a linear way. I have revisited ideas and developed them in different tangents just as much as I have developed new styles and themes. Currently, I am interested in the presence of mathematics in nature represented through my paintings, as well as getting back into photography which was a passion of mine from college days. Who knows what a combination of these two elements might produce! That's the fun bit of art, I am very open to the surprises which the work might contain and reveal to me.

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16 Crawford Street, London W1H 1BS