



Art + Design

10 GQ-Approved Artists You Should Know at Art Basel Miami: Van Hanos

In this group of ten, Van Hanos is the old school painter. All oil on linen, his paintings vary from the photo-realistic to his most recent piece for Basel, which taps into *Dungeons and Dragons*-inspired fantasy. His tools of choice might be traditional, but his ideas are anything but

BY CHARLOTTE ANDERSON AND DAVID BAZNER | PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACE LUMLEY
December 2014



Name: Van Hanos

Age: 35

Hometown: Perth Amboy NJ

Gallery: Tanya Leighton Gallery

What He's Taking to Basel:

"Paintings"

Tool(s) of Choice: "Oil on linen"

Influencers: "Keith Haring, Brock Enright"

Could you tell me about your process?

I settled on painting instead of another medium because it seemed the best way for me to express my ideas. I have this really disparate way of working. Some might say that's bad—that there should be some sort of brand, or style that's all me. But all I'm thinking about is my ideas, how to stay engaged, and how to keep things really fresh.

My tendency is to make everything neat and organized, but that's something I'm trying to fight against because to do something interesting is so much better. And for that you have to allow for some failure...a misstep or two.

But all of these ideas are really constitutive, did that help on the road to Basel?

I'm always working for the endeavor, I've never done a fair before, so I keep thinking about how to put something that I typically do into a thing that will be viewed in a really haphazard, scattered way for three days. The fact that I'm doing this one with people I know [Hanos' girlfriend Jamian Juliano-Villani will be showing in the same booth] and trust so that makes it worth it. It's an experience that I'm trying out.

What does your studio space mean to you?

It's a private space I'm letting you into. I like the building, but it's weird to be in a place where other people at work, I don't really like all of that psychic energy. That's why I designed it to look like a cabin or a beach house, so I can feel like I'm out in the middle of nowhere. I feel it should be a meditative space.

Do you think that you're trying to have a conversation with the viewer about your pieces?

Yes, I think so. I wanted to take a piece with some humor to Basel so there's this fantasy element, a "Dungeons and Dragons" kind of thing in the painting. I always want my pieces to be legible in some way. There has to be an element that lets people in, gives them something to connect to so they don't feel left out.

Could you tell me about your process?

I settled on painting instead of another medium because it seemed the best way for me to express my ideas. I have this really disparate way of working. Some might say that's bad—that there should be some sort of brand, or style that's all me. But all I'm thinking about is my ideas, how to stay engaged, and how to keep things really fresh.

My tendency is to make everything neat and organized, but that's something I'm trying to fight against because to do something interesting is so much better. And for that you have to allow for some failure...a misstep or two.

But all of these ideas are really constitutive, did that help on the road to Basel?

I'm always working for the endeavor, I've never done a fair before, so I keep thinking about how to put something that I typically do into a thing that will be viewed in a really haphazard, scattered way for three days. The fact that I'm doing this one with people I know [Hanos' girlfriend Jamian Juliano-Villani will be showing in the same booth] and trust so that makes it worth it. It's an experience that I'm trying out.

What does your studio space mean to you?

It's a private space I'm letting you into. I like the building, but it's weird to be in a place where other people at work, I don't really like all of that psychic energy. That's why I designed it to look like a cabin or a beach house, so I can feel like I'm out in the middle of nowhere. I feel it should be a meditative space.

Do you think that you're trying to have a conversation with the viewer about your pieces?

Yes, I think so. I wanted to take a piece with some humor to Basel so there's this fantasy element, a "Dungeons and Dragons" kind of thing in the painting. I always want my pieces to be legible in some way. There has to be an element that lets people in, gives them something to connect to so they don't feel left out.

So painting is something you've always wanted to do?

I remember being really young and wanting to be a garbage man during the winter so I could collect things for sculpture, and then in the summer I could be an ice cream man. In between doing those two things is where I thought the art would happen. I grew up in a rough city, things were not easy, so drawing and painting was this space I could hide in and feel safe. I knew they were the things that would get me out.