

Paintings

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Zander Blom

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Essay by Nicola Trezzi

STEVENSON

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NICOLA TREZZI

Bestial Modernity: The Art of Zander Blom

I

Modern art for dinosaurs

An animated gif of a T-Rex atop a spinning beach ball welcomes you to Zander Blom's self-made website; scroll down and another roars out from between two palm trees.¹ This peculiar character returns on pages torn from second-hand monographs on Piet Mondrian and Mark Rothko, which the artist has *enriched* – at the same time *violated* – with drawings of *Tyrannosaurus rex* rendered in lines of black crayon.² This decision – to link his contemporary take on these heroes of modernism to one of the most brutal animals ever to exist on planet earth – provides a taste of Blom's 'bestial modernity'. The oxymoron, which gives this essay its title, encapsulates his desire to make works that take modernity to its ultimate state, which is, despite its premises, wild,³ animalistic, primal and instinctive. Testifying to this is how,

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- ¹ During one of my studio visits with Blom in Cape Town, I asked him why he included images of dinosaurs in his books and website. His answer was vague, the apparent randomness of his choice mirroring his cryptic attitude towards the written articulation of his position. In other words, the answer is there, you just have to decode it.
- ² The use of the word 'rendered' refers deliberately to the language of Adobe Photoshop software and thus the connection between Blom's paintings and digital graphics, mirrored in the use of the black, almost continuous line in his drawings. Also see note 10.

- ³ The notion of 'Tropical Modernism' was brought to the field of visual art by French artist Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster. It is mostly affiliated to architecture – the term used to refer to modernist design that was responsive to and *affected* by its tropical location – with examples such as Affonso Eduardo Reidy's MAM – Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, and Le Corbusier's Palace of Assembly in Chandigarh, India, both completed in 1955.

when people see his work in reality, they forget all etiquette, wanting literally (and metaphorically) to put their fingers in it.⁴

It is important to identify the artist's perspective on this big thing called 'modernism'. Emphatically distancing himself from the rather unattractive and dated idea of 'postmodernism', Blom's approach has the following twist: modernity remains in our minds and in our souls; at the same time, we must acknowledge that our brains (= mind) and our hearts (= soul) are not primary-coloured square and rectangular shapes but are rather brownish, curved and irregular forms – in other words, yes, we are animals. With this understanding in his mind and soul, in his brain and heart, Blom makes 'modern art for dinosaurs',⁵ taking the pristine monochromatic shapes that epitomised modernism and grafting them with fragmented multicoloured forms. This self-contradictory attitude is exemplified by *Untitled*, 2016 [I.785, PLATE 66],⁶ a 250 × 110cm oil on linen⁷ that is an absolutely 'bipolar' work of art. Its bottom part is filled with a set of monochromatic shapes that are falling, overthrown (only some white shapes remain in the upper side) by a fierce couple – perhaps male and female 'painting animals' – of irregular forms. This kind of fight, or intercourse,⁸ between modern shapes and bestial forms is the matrix, the 'Adam and Eve', of all Blom's paintings. We see this clearly in other works – at times a real battlefield, a real orgy (see *Untitled* [I.752, PLATE 59], *Untitled* [I.754, p299], *Untitled* [I.753, p300] and *Untitled* [I.759, PLATE 60], all 2015); at other times playing with direct references to art historical moments, like Mondrian's *Victory Boogie-Woogie*, 1944⁹ (see the diptych *Untitled*, 2016 [I.760, PLATE 61]).

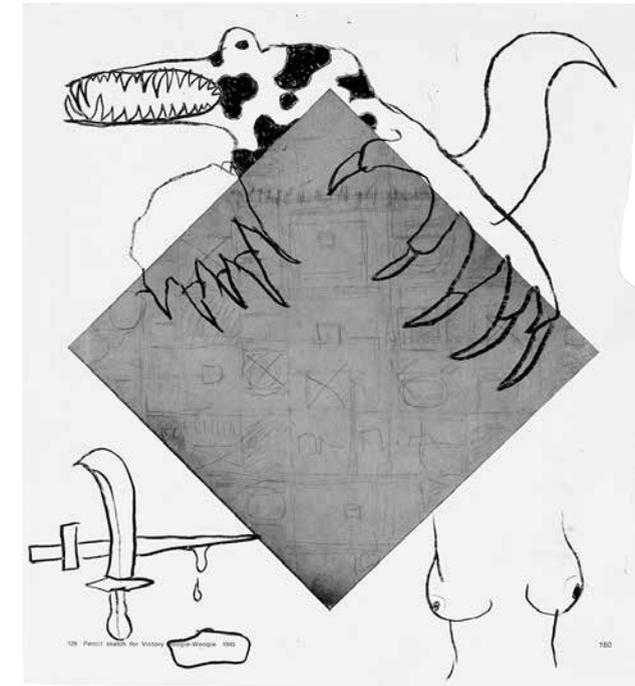


fig. 1 Zander Blom, *Untitled* from *Modern Painting: Piet Mondrian*, 2015, mixed media on paper (drawn on top of Mondrian's Pencil sketch for *Victory Boogie-Woogie*)

4 The strong tactile aspect of Blom's work – the artist recounts that even his gallerist cannot help but touch the paintings when he comes for a studio visit – places his work in relation to others that have been 'physically approached' in different ways and with varying purposes. Such events include Cambodian Rindy Sam's kiss of Cy Twombly's painting *Phaedrus* – she was 'overcome with passion' – and Russian artist Alexander Brener's spray-painting of a green dollar sign on Kazimir Malevich's painting *Suprematism* – an act that generated a large debate around art and vandalism.

5 The phrase 'modern art for dinosaurs' echoes Bruno Latour's seminal book *We Have Never Been Modern*, 1991, a key reference in contemporary art discourse, from dOCUMENTA (13)'s 'non-concept', which was deeply informed by a non-anthropological understanding of reality, to the philosophical trends known as 'speculative realism' and 'object-oriented ontology'. See Andrew Cole, 'Those Obscure Objects of Desire: On the uses and abuses of object-oriented ontology and speculative realism', *Artforum* (Summer 2015): 319-23.

6 I would like to thank Marc Barben for bringing my attention to this specific work.

7 I discuss the oil-on-linen equation in part 3, 'Stains, cracks, drips'.

8 Perhaps the strongest image from popular culture of the destruction of dichotomies in favour of a conception rooted in paradoxes and oxymora is the last scene of the film *Prometheus*, 2012 – directed by Ridley Scott and considered a prequel to his *Alien*, 1979 – in which life and death, creation and destruction, pregnancy and disease come together in the revealing of the true nature of the first 'Xenomorph'.

9 This Mondrian masterpiece, his last work, left unfinished, encapsulates the impossibility of modernism and offers the ultimate cure for the

mistakes of postmodernism. In other words, the fact that *Victory Boogie-Woogie* was left incomplete due to the artist's death introduces the notion of decay to that which is supposedly immortal, generating a new understanding of modernism through the awareness that these perfect perpendicular forms – abstract, perennial – were made by a human being, whose forms were curved, concrete, temporary and mortal.

Digital craft

The continuous tension between opposites, as discussed with regard to ‘bestial modernity’, is as strongly present in Blom’s relationship to the medium of painting. This emerges through the tension between the way Blom’s works are *rendered*¹⁰ and the way they appear to us. In fact many of the *effects*¹¹ that make his paintings so unique have a paradoxical digital aura; in other words, they look as though they were made by a machine rather than by a human being. Here the notion of abstraction becomes directly linked to mathematical algorithms,¹² as if Blom’s signature application of oil paint through the movement of the spatula could be reached by means of a mechanical arm guided by a computer programmed to create that specific result. At the same time it is clear from the very first moment you see them that Blom’s works are handmade, that they are refined pieces of craftsmanship with an almost robotic perfection,¹³ achieved through talent, devotion and daily practice. Therefore we find ourselves in front of a series of objects – the paintings – which bring into question the differences between the natural and the artificial,¹⁴ between the digital and the analog,¹⁵ between painting and technology. ‘Painting After Technology’ is indeed an important subtitle within the discourse generated by Blom’s work. It is interesting to note that artists have always been intrigued by the desire to express technological developments with traditional media, from the Futurists¹⁶ to Laura Owens. By creating paintings

using techniques that incorporate elements of technology, in their process and/or aesthetic, they put an end to the idea of painting as something that is antithetical to technology.¹⁷ Here science fiction, in books and movies, provides an interesting metaphor for the notion of ‘digital craft’. Just like the emotional droids of Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, 1968,¹⁸ Blom’s paintings are rigid and robotic as if generated by mathematical calculations and at the same time vivid and animalistic as if made by primordial creatures.

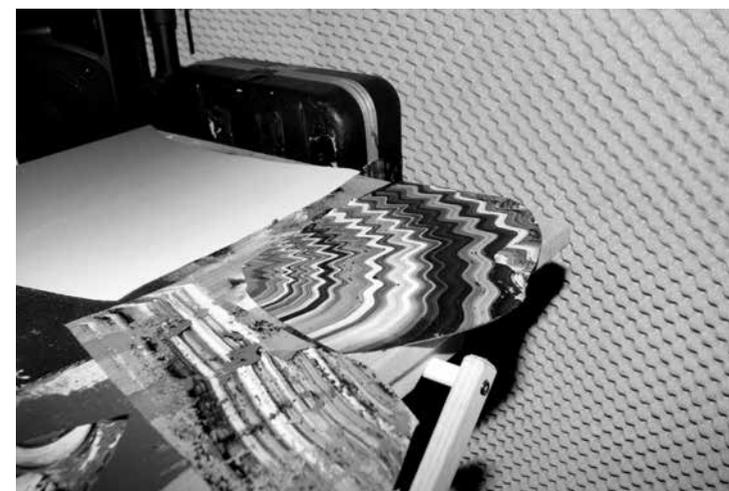


fig. 2 Blom’s studio in Gardens, Cape Town, 2016

10 Although the word ‘rendering’ had its own history and etymology – from the late 14th century ‘repeat, say again’, from Old French *rendre*, which means ‘give back, present, yield’ (10th century), and from Vulgar Latin *rendere*, formed by dissimilation or analogy with its antonym, *prendre*, ‘to take’ – its current use is mostly associated with Adobe Photoshop, a raster graphics editor created in 1988 by Thomas and John Knoll.

11 Like ‘rendering’ (see note 10), the word ‘effects’ has also been affiliated with Adobe Photoshop, and by consequence with digital culture. After Effects, a digital visual effects, motion graphics and compositing application mostly used in

filmmaking and television production, was created in 1993 and became part of Adobe in 1994.

12 Many artists have been seduced by the power of mathematical theories, from Leonardo da Vinci’s collaboration with mathematician Luca Bartolomeo de Pacioli, to Sol Lewitt’s appropriation of mathematical themes and Mario Merz’s obsession with the Fibonacci formula.

13 See Nicola Trezzi, ‘Robots are made of flesh: Notes on Matteo Callegari’s work’, exhibition text for solo show at Carl Kostyal in London: <http://www.kostyal.com/exhibitions/matteo-callegari/text/>

14 See part 3, ‘Stains, cracks, drips’.

15 See Nicola Trezzi, ‘Auf meinen fingerspitzen’, *Monopol* (Berlin: September 2015): 78–80.

16 An art historical link can productively be drawn between Blom’s painting techniques, which are informed by digital technology, to certain positions in the so-called avant-garde: from the *Manifesto della Aeropittura*, written in 1929 by a group of artists affiliated to Futurism, to the notion of ‘chromoluminarism’ coined by Georges Seurat in 1884 and later renamed ‘pointillism’ and ‘divisionism’.

17 At the time of writing, Tate Modern’s Room 7 (Level 2 East) – arranged by Curator of International Art Mark Godfrey under the title

‘Painting After Technology’ – includes works by Sigmar Polke, Christopher Wool, Tomma Abts, Laura Owens, Wade Guyton, Albert Oehlen, Amy Sillman, Jacqueline Humphries and Charline von Heyl. It is not a coincidence that more and more painters are looking at, incorporating, appropriating and considering the ‘digital’ as an impetus for their painting practice, which happens to be the most analog among all media within the landscape of contemporary art and yet the simplest to ‘copy’ as a digital image via photography.

18 South Africa and especially the city of Johannesburg – where Blom developed his first body of work and related book, *The Drain of*

3
Stains, cracks, drips

Among many issues related to his oeuvre,¹⁹ the artist's first and now second catalogues raisonnés reflect the essential spirit behind his work. The clearest manifestation of this position is the last section of both books, which includes the list of works, all 'untitled'²⁰ and all 'oil on linen'.²¹ The fact that only sizes (and codes) differentiate one work from the others immediately brings us to the three specific channels through which Blom's work can be perceived. The first one, which is the most apparent and direct, is the artist's desire to acknowledge the history of painting, to declare his devotion to this medium, to 'stick' to his ultimate materials – the canvas, which means (almost exclusively) unprimed raw Belgian linen,²² and the oil. The second points to a specific branch within the history of painting, which can be called 'painting as objects': from Lucio Fontana's cuts to Robert Ryman's white-on-white, from John Henderson's casts to Matteo Callegari's display solutions, and all that is in between. Blom's work refuses the sole authority of the picture plane in order to embrace a sculptural understanding of painting, which consists of seeing no hierarchies between the front and the back, between the shapes created and the material that creates these shapes, between the visual output and the tactile feeling generated.²³ The third and less predictable channel consists of a 'geological' understanding of his artworks as masses of two different elements – the paint and the canvas – that are continuously interacting with each other and changing each other's chemical status.

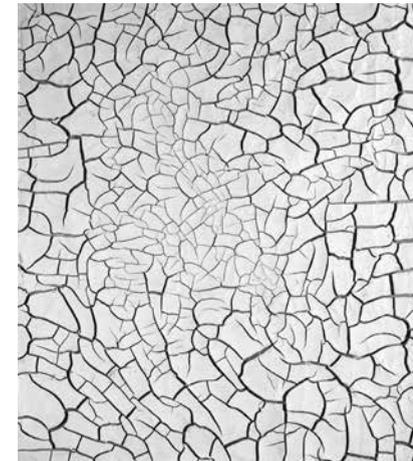


fig. 3 Alberto Burri, *Cretto G1*, 1975, acrylic on board, 171 × 151cm

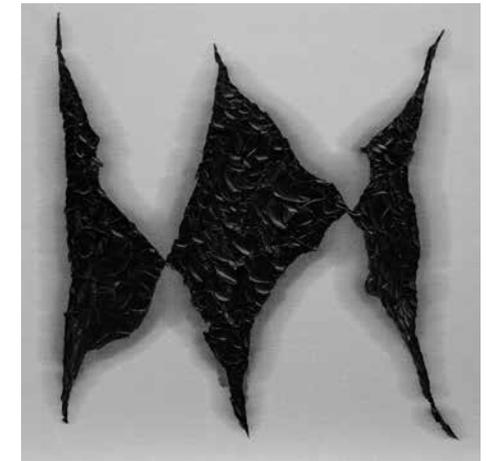


fig. 4 Zander Blom, *Untitled [1.628]*, 2014, oil on linen, 198 × 198cm

Progress – have lent themselves to science fiction scenarios, as in Neill Blomkamp's *District 9*, 2009. Through this filter Blom's work can be interpreted as a political action and a commentary on the reality surrounding him, although a very subtle and acrobatic one.

19 A continuation of Blom's position in which oppositional stances cohabit (first of all the bestial and the modern) is the artist's attitude toward the distribution of his *oeuvres*. This word is deliberately chosen, in place of the more colloquial 'artworks', in order to emphasise the paradox whereby a young artist produces a lavish catalogue raisonné every few years, including all

the works made in this short interval of time. This action, perpetuated with the artist's partner in crime – his gallery and publisher, Stevenson – becomes more complex when one recognises the irony that lies beneath such a proper and classical object (this book and its predecessor); this text itself walks a thin line between 'official hermeneutics' and 'low-brow action'.

20 During a studio visit I discussed with the artist his use of *Untitled* for all his paintings; his motivation, here paraphrased, comes from a desire to avoid any poetical tone and consequent misunderstanding about his work. In other words, and here his bestial modernity rises again, Blom

doesn't want alphabetic language to determine how the work should be read, but for it to remain open to all kinds of audiences – human, animal, ancient Egyptian or even extraterrestrial.

21 The artist has used acrylic and glue but so rarely (acrylic) and only functionally (glue) that this detail should not influence the conceptual and historical implications behind the limited and specific choice of materials in his work.

22 In the newest body of work included in this book, Blom has created his *sfumato* on separate pieces of canvas that he subsequently applies to the larger canvas of the work. During my studio visits I asked him about this choice and his answer

was illuminating (again here paraphrased): why become a slave to a laborious technique when you can find a way that is less pedantic and still organic to the painting ecosystem?

23 For more on 'painting as object', see Nicola Trezzi, 'USA: Amerikai Egyesült Absztraktok', *Flash Art Hungary* (July 2012): 52-57.

This never-ending interaction is evident in *Untitled*, 2014 [1.628, PLATE 30, *fig. 4*], a 198 × 198cm oil on linen in which three volumes of black paint occupy the unprimed canvas. This painting communicates the primal and natural status of all Blom's paintings by means of its composition: three black continents emerging from a sea of linen. When analysed closely this 'geological painting' reveals its *true nature*: the impasto²⁴ is so thick it not only bleeds oil onto the canvas – this 'emanation' is common in Blom's paintings – but the canvas itself has been dripping resin onto the ground – first at Stevenson's Cape Town gallery and now, two years later, forming a stalactite above the floor of the gallery's storage space. This is the most visible symptom of its ever-changing condition, which includes, beside the *leaks* and the *drips*, also several *cracks*, connecting Blom's painting-as-fault to a generation of painters from Alberto Burri [*fig. 3*] to Ryan Sullivan.²⁵

4 Ostinato

In music, *ostinato* (stubborn) is the act of repeating the same motif with the same musical voice and the same pitch. Its direct descendant is the notion of the sample or riff, which is defined by the appropriation²⁶ of a specific portion of a song, usually its refrain, and its subsequent insertion within a new song, usually belonging to the genre of hip-hop.²⁷ What does this have to do with Blom's art? In fact a lot! From his very first series to his most recent, the artist has been using the

aforementioned techniques within the realm of painting. This habit has developed so much over the years that it is necessary to make a distinction between sampling and riffing in relation to Blom's practice. In this text the term 'sampling' will be used for the appropriation of a particular technical solution that is associated with a specific artist, while the term 'riffing' will be used where Blom has inserted elements from other artists' work more broadly, as a basis for his paintings. In other words, with sampling Blom does what Eminem did with the single *Stan*, 2000, which appropriated verbatim a section of Dido's *Thank You*, 1998; with riffing, he does what Destiny's Child did with *Bootylicious*, 2001, the base of which consists of a guitar riff from Stevie Nicks' *Edge of Seventeen*, 1981.

Accordingly, we can trace Blom's sampling of Jackson Pollock's drippings in many of his works created between 2013 and 2014, especially *Untitled*, 2013 [1.446, p241], a 92 × 65cm oil on linen later destroyed by the artist. We can see Mondrian's squares in many works such as the aforementioned diptych *Untitled*, 2016 [1.760, PLATE 61]; Gerhard Richter's spatula scraps are reinterpreted and turned into a pattern that is a fixture in many of Blom's works, while *Untitled*, 2014 [1.666, p275], a 152.5 × 107.5cm oil on linen, is the perfect Rothko sample. When it comes to riffing, we can see Blom's approach in the Henri Matisse-inspired silhouettes dancing in *Untitled*, 2014 [1.622, PLATE 27], and in the white field hosting a 'chromatic choreography', à la Ryman, in *Untitled*, 2014 [1.665, p277]. Pablo Picasso's twisted figures are filtered in *Untitled*, 2015 [1.758, p299],

24 The word 'impasto' – which describes the painting technique in which a thick layer of paint is laid on an area of the surface, leaving the brush or painting-knife strokes visible, often mixing different colours directly on the canvas, giving a specific tactile appearance and a sculptural texture – is also used for its historical relevance.

25 On the influence of Alberto Burri – celebrated with a major retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2016 – on contemporary painting, see 'Ryan Sullivan', *Empire State: New York Art Now!* (2013: exhibition catalogue, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome): 184.

26 In the field of contemporary art, 'appropriation' has a very specific connotation since it became the key word used to define the practice of artists associated with the so-called 'Pictures Generation' – from the legendary exhibition *Pictures* organised by Douglas Crimp at the Artists Space in New York in 1977 – including Sherrie Levine (Crimp's point of reference) and Jack Goldstein (who studied with David Salle under John Baldessari at CalArts), as well as Louise Lawler, Sarah Charlesworth, Cindy Sherman and Richard Prince (who didn't actually take part in the show). With all due distinctions, these artists have in common the

use of photographs – from different sources, from the history of photography and art to advertisements and newspapers – which are 'cropped' (physically and conceptually) in order to recontextualise them within the field of art; they are thus transformed from mass-produced images to elitist 'objects of desire' (the title of a photo series by Charlesworth), following a path inaugurated by Marcel Duchamp's readymade and reinforced by Guy Debord's *détournement*. See Douglas Eklund (ed.), *The Pictures Generation, 1974–1984* (2009: exhibition catalogue, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

27 A complete outsider to criticism or analysis related to the field of music, I must acknowledge my 'visual experience' of music through MTV in the late 1990s to early 2000s. It was through this TV channel, which was free in Italy at that time, that I became familiar with terms such as 'sample' and 'riff'.

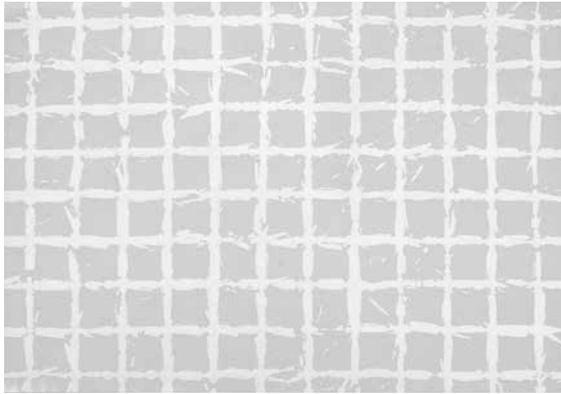


fig. 5 Simon Hantaï, *Tabula jaune*, 1975, lithograph, 62.5 × 85cm

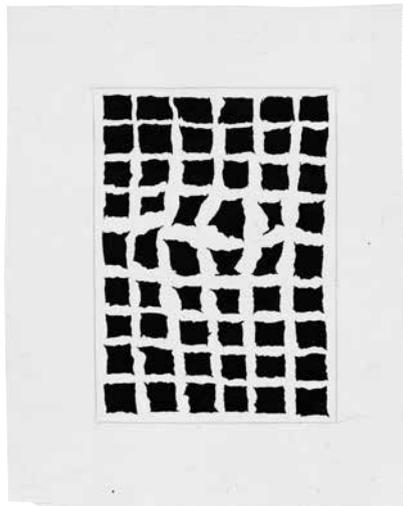


fig. 6 Zander Blom, *Untitled [1.394]*, 2013, oil and graphite on linen, 32 × 24.5cm

while Francis Bacon's compositional solutions, his mastery of the background/foreground relationship, has been a true obsession for Blom, as is evident in his earliest paintings such as *Untitled* [1.1], [1.4] and [1.5], all 2010.²⁸ In a series of small oil and graphite works on unstretched linen [fig. 6 & p232], Blom looks at Simon Hantaï [fig. 5], while *Untitled*, 2010 [1.2], is a clear take on Frank Stella's famous black paintings.

All the connections to the aforementioned masters in Blom's work must not be understood as homages to senior figures of painting. Although Blom is aware of the genealogy of the medium of painting – its trajectory, history and protagonists – his actions are never tributes; quite the opposite: the artist is behaving as a voracious beast with an appetite for certain shapes and forms, whose preferences are made clear. Through his work Blom doesn't even steal²⁹ – he *attacks* and *devours* the legacy of painting.

5 Polaris and Ursa Minor

This hyperbolic journey into the modern bestiality of Blom's paintings would not be complete without an investigation of the artist's so-called 'practice at large', which means to understand Blom's paintings as the shining star (Polaris) of a larger constellation to be discovered (Ursa Minor). Having examined his relationship to modernity, his unique mix of craft and the digital, his understanding

²⁸ Another main topic of my conversations with Blom has been the influence of Francis Bacon, a reference that has been brought up several times in connection to his work. I presented to the artist my thesis advocating *against* this connection, despite the many proofs *contra* my position, from both artists' use of the studio – a big cave, a big stomach which continuously 'ruminates' – to the presence of works in which Blom clearly refers to Bacon. The main factor in my thesis is that Bacon's paintings are not only masterpieces of composition, technique, colour balance and knowledge of the history of painting – all features shared by Blom – but also

the embodiment of a tormented soul; they are deeply and intrinsically emotionally charged. This aspect, which cannot be disregarded, makes this association misleading in terms of Blom's real position, which is more attuned to figures from his own generation and far from any kind of pathos. (See also note 20 on the lack of titles in Blom's paintings.)

²⁹ A reference to Picasso's famous quote, 'Good artists copy, great artists steal'. (See also note 26 on appropriation.)



fig. 7 Blom's studio in Brixton, Johannesburg, 2013

30 See Blom's *The Drain of Progress: A Catalogue Raisonné* (2007) and *Paintings Volume I* (2013).

31 Blom's books comprise two very different kinds of objects. While this book, together with *The Drain of Progress: A Catalogue Raisonné* and *Paintings Volume I*, serves as the official channel of distribution, main reference for provenance, and material archive for all his paintings (even those that have been destroyed by the artist himself), there is another category of books, which we can define as 'artist books', which have a completely different life, being the direct materialisation of Blom's creative force. The latter are as powerful as his paintings,

they are energised by his bestial modernity, and they provide the key for many concepts and ideas that stay hidden behind the many layers that constitute the complex language of his paintings. Chief among these books is Blom's *Modern Painting: Piet Mondrian*, 2016, which consists of fragments (pages), including the front and back cover (but not the spine!), of several monographs, books and catalogues on the work of Mondrian, which the artist has 'raped' with his drawings, some featuring dinosaurs, scanned, rearranged and bound together to create a sort of *Frankenstein* – or *The Modern Prometheus* (see note 8) as

of the primal elements of painting, and his appropriation of technical and compositional elements by pivotal figures from the development of abstraction in 20th century art movements, it is time to contextualise his paintings in relation to other bodies of work that he has created simultaneously.

First of all it is important to underscore the central role played by the studio, as described on previous occasions [fig. 7].³⁰ Cave-like, every surface completely covered by work-related objects – posters, papers, boxes of colours, rolls of canvas – Blom's studio is the ultimate synthesis between the chaotic, unordered (and bestial) act of creation and the creation itself (the paintings), which is, in opposition, pristine (and ultimately modern). But the studio is also the locus for experimentation, from which Blom's work emerges as a constellation of different outputs. These tentacles include noise music (created in a separate adjacent room), his books,³¹ the yet-to-be-shown 'palette paintings',³² and his drawings. The drawings are particularly relevant because they allow the artist to express issues that will never surface in the paintings,³³ and yet remain part of their DNA. In fact, through analysis of his drawings one can really tune into Blom's rhythm, and become more and more familiar with his modus operandi, his strong connection to writing and to calligraphy, and the notion of painting not only as a pure act but also as something mundane, quotidian – related to sketching or even scribbling. It also shows the artist's engagement with supports other than unprimed linen, whether white cotton paper, the ideal surface

Mary Shelley subtitled her 1818 book – full of 'Jurassic tattoos'.

32 In relation to Blom's palette paintings, which have been shown rarely and remain a 'tentacle' of his practice that still needs to be properly addressed, even before an extensive critical investigation I would recommend the work of American artist Ann Craven, who has created a very complex parable in which her (figurative) paintings, 'stripe paintings' and 'palette paintings' constitute the DNA of her unique practice, alongside editions, books, prints and other 'tentacles'.

33 Figuration is the most obvious of these issues.

34 'We will not be ashamed to confess it, after it has been recognized and expressed by many great men. The *Vedas* and *Puranas* know no better simile for the whole knowledge of the actual world, called by them the web of Māyā, than the dream, and they use none more frequently.' Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation, Volume 1* (1969: trans. from the German by E. F. J. Payne, Dover Publications, Inc., New York): 17. Schopenhauer appropriates Māyā – a figure of Hinduism symbolising illusion among other interpretations – in order to articulate his concepts of 'representation' – how the world

for his meditative black-ink, calligraphy-like drawings, or those pages of old monographs on artists such as Mondrian and Rothko, which Blom ‘assaults’ with his aforementioned dinosaur drawings. In fact the latter body of work, in which printed photographic reproductions of modernist shapes, like the masterpieces of Mondrian, are paired with the wild T-Rexes drawn in black wax crayon, allows one to really understand the complex and contradictory nature of Blom’s art. In the terms of Arthur Schopenhauer’s appropriation of the web of Maya as philosophical trope,³⁴ if Blom’s paintings can be considered his ‘representation’, affirming his position, as a painter, as an artist, to the world, his drawings are his ‘will’, the thing behind the veil, the magmatic truth, the lava beneath our terrestrial crust. Through this dichotomy Blom offers us his ‘bestial modernity’, a remedy to a reality, our reality, a porous one,³⁵ which is rooted in oxymora, in coexisting oppositions and unsolvable contradictions.³⁶

appears to us, veiled by illusions, a projection of our own mind – and ‘will’ – how the world really is, in its true nature, its essence, going beyond time and space.

35 See Nicola Trezzi, ‘סימי העבש’ [Seven Days], *Erev Rav* (2014): <http://www.erev-rav.com/archives/27833>

36 The notion of ‘unsolvable contradictions’ can perhaps be applied to the clashes that continue to dominate South African society after more than 20 years of democracy. Again, far away from any direct political reading of Blom’s work, it might be intriguing to read this aspect of his practice as influenced by the

many paradoxes – concerning security, race, criminality, the presence of wild nature within urban environments, western and African culture – permeating all aspects of daily life in South Africa.