



**MENTIRAS #13 - PB**



J

Gathering infos to plan this interview, I realized I only knew two, maybe three solo publications that you did. Is there more? Is there a list?

P

You know, I am not even sure myself. There is definitely a bigger number of small limited editions out there that I would have printed when I was in art school. I didn't really care too much about advertising them, or making them fit into any kind of series though, and most of these books would have been under ten copies.

J

Why making so few and why not advertising them? If you were interested in the printing process, as an experiment, and not by the circulation of the printed object, why printing more than one?

Did you sell some copies to shops or were they thoughts as presents, or as material to trade with? What was the life of these objects?

P

You're hitting where it hurts, Jonas. The only answer is that I am pretty lazy and have a hard time committing to something. But if we have to get to the bottom of it, I think transforming drawing into printing has an alchemical quality that I get very excited with. The process is what I enjoy, and it doesn't really matter if there is people to witness it. It is just satisfying. So in that regard, the number of copies is irrelevant. This is not about distribution.

I have never brought zines to a shop. Wait, actually I did, to Un Regard Moderne, and Jacques was like "what the fuck is this shit". He thought the A4 format would get damaged in his shop. Jacques was always quite mean to me, God rest his soul.

I remember gifting a single copy zine to Stéphane (Kerozen). Not sure what he thought, but the act of giving felt much more meaningful than whatever I had made.

I guess that if I had been smart and business minded, I could have advertised those zines. But I just didn't feel the urge to. I was going through a process of figuring what I wanted to do, and printing was

just a part of that. The thought “I should print fifty copies and have people buy them” never really crossed my mind. Call that self defeating thought, laziness, it doesn’t matter.

One cute story I can tell: when I was about nineteen, I brought copies of my first zine to Bimbo Tower, and told them to just give them away. I was very immature then. But who knows, maybe Joseph Ghosn got one and will talk about it in Vanity Fair or whatever.

All the printing was done at my school (ENSAPC). My favourite teacher, Jeff Ryan, was crazy about it. He thought my practice was interrogating the notion of value, which I now think is quite pertinent. But I got past that before I had a chance to really develop that idea.

Anyway, if I have to put a final thought to that rambling: I think the book format was always a powerful way to frame pictures. That is why I eventually moved to painting. Not for texture, depth or whatever. Just the idea of having a powerful frame containing your picture in a way that makes it work as a single piece.

**J**

Kaugummi did publish two of these small books and I think I might have a larger one that you put out later by yourself, one with more crude and direct drawings. How did you go from a small editor to a more autonomous and handmade approach?

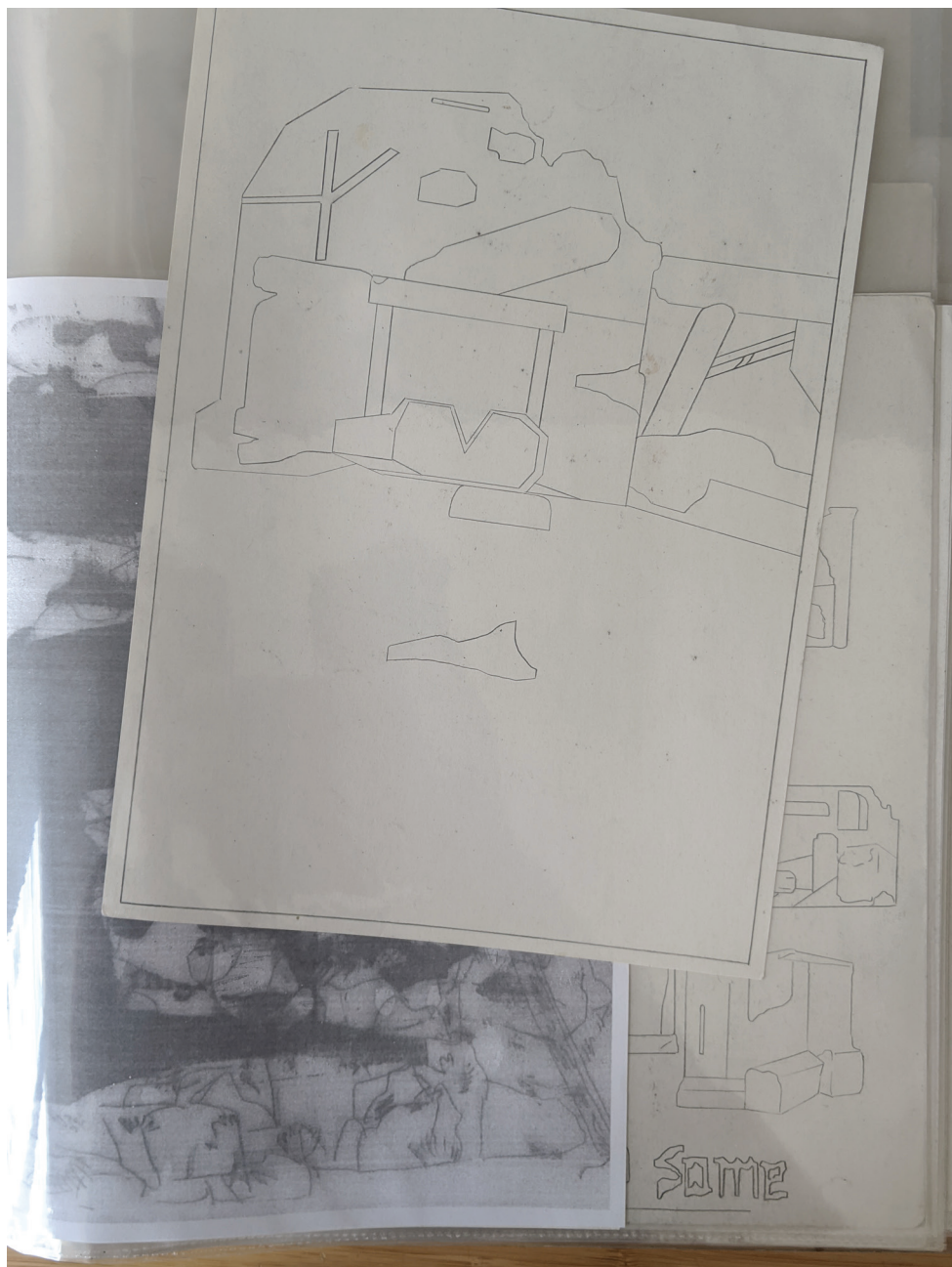
**P**

First of all and to be perfectly honest, I didn’t pursue more collaborations with editors simply because I wasn’t solicited and I wasn’t really interested in reaching out either.

That being said, as I realized I was more interested in the idea of flattening lines via photocopy than in the idea of the multiple, my relationship with drawing changed, so did my rapport with the zine, or any “mass” produced object.

**J**

Can you tell me more about “flattening the line” and why you chose to make zines because of your relationship with drawing?



Some



**P**

This is tricky territory, especially because I don't get it that much myself (I am being very candid here). I have always been drawn to the idea of squeezing things together in 2 dimensional things. There is a part in "The 3 Body Problem" where an unknown extraterrestrial race sends a 2D flattening weapon to the Solar System, and everybody gets 2Dfied on a giant plane.

I think there is a few aspects that need to be explored in regard to using photocopy. First, photocopying is a process of anonymization. You have something that has been done with your body, and then by simply using a piece of consumer electronics, you make it somewhat alien. That is something I am attracted to, just like how slowing down a recording makes it uncanny while making it clear what has happened. It is both transparent and unfamiliar.

**J**

Would you say that your visual system is the one of a painter (ie one who deals with the aspect, texture and composition, more than one who deals with situations, content and ethical positions)? Real life categories are not as stiff, but you get the idea.

**P**

I didn't get into painting out of a desire of expanding the material aspects of my drawings. I simply started painting because a dear friend of mine, Matthieu Palud, brought me to a shop while I was going through depression and gave me an interest in painting. And I discovered that with painting, I could realize things I couldn't do with drawings. There were endless possibilities. And I discovered that I could let paintings paint themselves, so to speak. The process could be removed from my intervention. And it kind of rewired my brain. I try to draw now, and I just can't. I just have a painter's mind now (how pretentious is that?)

**J**

To get back to a broader approach, you already told me once that you don't spend much energy in the archiving of your own work. Why so?

**P**

I don't think I was being fair to myself when I said that. I have kept all of

the drawings I have ever made, albeit certainly not in the best condition. Actually, I recently put all the drawings I did for the last ten years into those big transparent binders and it dawned on me, seeing them arranged in these makeshift grids, that this archival format was very exciting to me, much more suited to my drawings than a white wall or other forms of presentation.

J

Does it mean that the drawings make more sense as files than pictures? Did you plan this whole interconnections between all these drawings (to a certain extent)? Or when you say that the archival format is more suited than a white wall, it is because it creates a sort of layered sum?

P

I think the key idea here is the absence of human intervention. Pure chance. I guess I am mostly interested in inhuman things. And what better way than letting things arrange themselves, by pure chance? I would love to be able to create an ecosystem of forms developing by themselves. This is what arranging pictures means to me.

J

The way you deal with marketing seems to belong to the same removal logic: to get access to your output, one has to make a bit of research, or to be in direct contact. Am I mistaken? Would that be because the audience you have in mind is mostly your friends or your peers? Or is it because you don't think at all about any potential audience?

P

I don't think I am being purposefully hard to reach, though I will admit a lot of the obsession I have felt for some artists, visual, musical or otherwise, derived from that kind of aloofness.

Now that CIA Debutante has had a record on Siltbreeze and music posted on most streaming platforms, or that some of my paintings can be seen through whatever Contemporary Art Daily-like publication, I can't say I am feeling one way or another regarding that mediation. It is nice that people can find my stuff, and in a way leaving it to those platforms is one less problem to deal with, which is a depressing thing to say I suppose...



But thinking about the audience and the way the work is presented to them, I think that is really something I would like to dig into in the future. I am feeling less inhibited from putting out new things in a rather offhandish way, and format as performance has been on my mind lately... So in a way I am trying to reconcile making my work accessible while getting rid of any formal setting.

J

I recently saw some of your paintings on your Instagram. I think you stopped painting for a couple of months before starting again. Are you tied to your inspiration's visits or is this all a more rational setting: you define a working frame, a mood, a theme, before starting to work?

P

I wish I could plan things out but that is unfortunately not the way my mind works. Sometimes I feel I need to be tricked into getting my ass to work. I am a kind of idle guy. But you know, I guess that when I start working I can get caught in the rush and that is when things start getting interesting. When I am satisfied with a painting, it is always because I have been surprised by it. But at the start, it is always a slog, which I am learning to appreciate. I remember reading an old interview with you and Hendrik and one of you compared drawing to digging the dirt until something appears. I guess I can relate to that.

J

That sounds like Hendrik. How do you trick yourself into working? With a sort of personal ritual? By getting rid of anything standing in the way, so you can't escape? Does it have to do with other people's expectations?

P

Man, I wish I knew. I have tried meditating, various drugs. With music, my bandmate has been a huge help. He just drags me into whatever situation and I suddenly become alive, you know?

I am not concerned with people's expectations, because I have never trusted them. I may be a lazy layabout, but I trust myself. But I have a strong belief that if you go really hard into something, people will make sense of it. My favorite band is The Shadow Ring. How could you get a better example of this idea? You just do it and hopefully people will come.

I am developing a better discipline with painting. That is when having a studio helps. You are alone with your work, so what the fuck are you gonna do if not work?

I may be rationalizing, but I think sometimes that just doing a minimal amount of work everyday is the best way to work. That removes you from your own actions, and maybe something interesting will emerge.

J

About this articulation between planning and action, I somehow understood that you don't have any studio practice. Did I get this right?

P

Oh no, I do have a studio practice, it is essential, but was not always possible for financial reasons. I need the physicality and the space where things can get messy... I really can't work in a neat way, and the studio is where I can stumble onto things.

J

So what is the situation right now? Are you able to afford a studio rent? Is it a shared space? Obviously, as we are doing this interview during the 2020 lockdown, you might not be able to leave your flat.

P

It depends from day to day. I got this very nice studio, with other painters. After the Covid thing, I haven't been able to pay the rent, because my income dried up. The landlord is somewhat understanding, but they will want their money in the end. I am trying to gaslight them into letting me not pay.

Balancing your budget as an artist is always a pain, right? I am resourceful enough that I can get money. I do translations, we are starting an agency for translating Mandarin, English and French with my wife (if you are reading this, please get in touch).

But yeah, a studio space is both a luxury and a necessity. And as you might have gathered, I am pretty poor, so I do the best I can to continue my work while trying to survive. We will probably all end up being Uber drivers or some shit in the coming years - that is what the ruling class expects of us.



I am not gonna get into a conversation about how art can be a vector for revolutionary change, because that is bourgeois idealism. But sometimes I feel I should shift from painting to planting bombs.

J

Is your musical output part of your general artistic activity? Or are these two separate things?

P

A few years ago I would have said they were clearly separated but I start feeling less and less this way. First of all, my personal practice of music and painting feel extremely similar, in the way that I work by arranging things. So both activities boundaries have started blurring a while ago. As to how this interconnection could manifest, I am not really sure yet.

J

This is something I can really get, working by arranging things. I remember a set of disclosures, in art school, talking with older students and with teachers, and realizing that making art is not always about building a system from scratch, but sometimes just by displacing one item, one symbol, changing the current organization of things. Does that mean that making art is more of an intuitive activity for you? Getting porous to what feels wrong in a situation, a track, a composition, and changing it so it feels correct, or funny, or it becomes surprising? Or is there something systemic in your approach, with a goal (I don't know, blurring an image, making things unrecognizable, or the opposite, colonizing a landscape with a specific set of symbols)?

P

You are absolutely nailing it, and I am excited we can have the same analysis - that is how I work.

I think I try to leave most of the things to chance. Porosity is an important idea; I am merely trying to let things blend into each other. On the canvas, that may simply be a question of shapes. But the cosmology (excuse the pretentious terminology) of what I am trying to put in painting is the end in itself. Again, we are back to the idea of the inhuman. Can your hand create something that can look like lifeforms having intercourse on their own?

Now, is that all planned? I am not sure. I am thinking a lot about what I want to do, of course. But when I get to working, I think these fancy ideas become secondary. You know, as some people, I am repelled by the idea of the artist as a “vessel”. But I am definitely trying to remove myself as much as possible from the painting process. It is like when I make music : I would rather slightly turn a button to change the pitch than actually play the tune.

## J

One thing I am curious about, if we discuss further this methodology, is related to the figurative nature of both your music and your paintings. The drawings displayed in your zines were quite straight as landscapes, or as sketches of buildings and objects. Even if you were interested in their transformation by the means of the photocopy machine, you chose to represent these specific things. Your music work uses concrete sounds (I think?), which I guess isn't figurative per say, but can also be linked to a theme. It seems to me that any sort of composition or poetry or lyrics writing also falls in the logic of creating a narrative. Finally, I see figures in the paintings (but I could be wrong): geological details, silhouettes. How does one balance things between a narrative approach, with a clearer intent, and a process, or adjusting approach, which is more about “being in the world” than about telling something? And a last thing, about being repelled by the idea being a “vessel”: I think it is actually an interesting idea, as it can be twisted, like Jack Spicer did in his *Vancouver lectures* (“aliens transmissions”).

## P

Thanks for introducing me to Spicer's work, I was not familiar with it. While I can't comment on the specific nature of his work in regard to this idea of “mediating transcendental forms” (to make it a bit obvious), I would suppose that the twisting is what is interesting in that situation. So whichever your building blocks are fucking with the structure is what I am trying to get at. You could picture those narrative devices -as you said, geological details, silhouettes- as idea-blocks to play with. I am in love with the supposition of a narration that those devices propose, and leaving it at that -a supposition- is where the magic is at. You know, like you really never get to get a good look at the Alien.

So photocopy provides another layer of othering, whether you really distort the original picture or not. It is just been somewhere -who knows



where- and you end up with the image of an image.

Painting has been a nice way of bypassing this tedious methodology in order to bring about this otherness. Although of course, it brings its own set of problems.

**J**

Finally, are you able to make a living from one your creative output or are you getting your income from another source?

**P**

I always juggle between different things, and I suppose concert fees and painting sales do add up, but I am definitely always relying on one or two jobs. I am an artist assistant at the moment, which is quite fun. I am starting to accept the fact that I may not be able to make a living from my art, and let go of that manufactured dream of being picked up by the right gallery you know, and in an art world slowly being eaten away by blue chip galleries, that is pretty liberating. So that bounces back to your previous question, which was concerned with my relationship to the audience. And relying on a job to have the freedom to experiment with other ways of reaching a public is pretty much all that is on my mind these days.

**J**

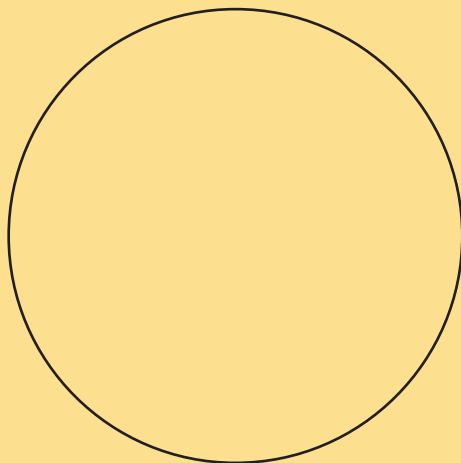
How do you sell paintings? Do you work with one or several art galleries, or do you only do direct sales?

**P**

It has been a lucky year for me because people (friends or not) have approached me to buy some of my paintings. So I am not going through a gallery. Having a gallery would certainly make the act of purchasing easier, while removing myself from that transaction. If you view the idea of working as an artist as a sort of labor that needs to be compensated, you would love to have people purchase your work, letting you have enough money to afford enough time to keep on working. Obviously, gallery or not, this doesn't sound like much of a sustainable model. So I have adopted this ethos that I will be happy to have people buy my stuff, through a gallery or not, and keep my head at the surface level, just thinking "this will buy me x-months at the studio". I am not really looking at it really deeper than that at the moment.

## MENTIRAS (2014-)

#1	HP	2014	#14	AM	2020
#2	HH	2014	#15	AB	2021
#5	RS	2017			
#6	JW	2018			
#7	OV	2017			
#8	P*S	2017			
#9	AB	2017		cancelled	
#10	LS	2018	#4	IT	
#11	JH	2019	#?	JC	
#13	PB	2020	#12	CF	



*Der Vierte Pförtner Verlag  
2, cours d'Herbouville  
69004 Lyon  
France*

