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Ya'akov Boussidan – Biographical Notes

In the sixties the first house I rented was from a policeman in St Johns in South East London. By day I went to Goldsmiths College with minimal English and England at a time of transition. It was a very strange experience for me coming from a self-contained and idealistic culture. What I encountered at Goldsmiths was a bizarre form of behaviour, enjoyable to observe but I was hesitant to take part. I wasn't able to regard my life as an experiment. Being brought up in the Jewish tradition and with an awareness of the events of the Second World War had taught me a solitary lesson – that you don't throw your life away, you examine it closely.

Paul Drury, who I came to know well, was an extremely gifted teacher, one of the great English etchers, who taught me about printing. It was a new language that had to be learned, and to be fluent would take years of understanding. Paul knew not only how to synchronise a human face, but also how to question humanity. He was both cynical and constructive and did not believe in fashionable art. He believed in the search of the mind and nature. He told me it was impossible for him to be another Rembrandt or Picasso but that he had great admiration for real originality and was committed to the idea of the individual. This was a widely travelled man who was on the Board of an art school in Rome as well as an associate in a commercial studio employing artists long before advertising really took off. His outside interests included music and writing and producing art entertainment long before the Laban centre opened in Deptford.

He foresaw developments beyond modernism; of course many of his ideas came to fruition before he taught me. I was fortunate that he was my teacher. He knew many great artists such as Lucien Freud and the colourist Adrian Ryan, men who were highly educated in an artistic tradition that has now passed.

In contrast to this I had a tutor who looked like a business manager with his stylish clothes and hand-made leather shoes, a beautiful wife and a couple of student mistresses on the side. A charming, witty man – he was the art and his own work suffered from a high degree of self-satisfaction. When I knew him he could paint a Cézanne better than Cézanne, then he moved to Francis Bacon, then to Andy Warhol and then he became all the rage of the constructivist-destructivist movement, which I believe contained all the half-baked supper surreal verbal stupidity of the era.

I have lived in the same area for some 40 years. I've seen social changes and witnessed some of the most horrifying things in London, including houses set on fire and the Lawrence family house. I've seen architecture change and have seen art express the times we live in. It's art used as an advertising board and equally dispensable. This is how my mind works, I am visually orientated and what I write is a spontaneous dialogue.

At the moment I have a visual obsession of wanting to paint all the immigrants in Deptford – people from Nigeria, the Ivory Coast, China – and I want to paint everything around me in the streets – the pie mash shop nearby and the shoe shop run by two Jamaican women where the shoes are like wild birds with glittery material and coloured leather. I want to touch and smell these people with oil paint. I want to deal with their daily existence. All these experiences have been condensed inside me and are released when I explode myself on an etching plate or on a canvas.

Both media: painting and printmaking are totally explorative. I can be both spontaneous and contained. I feel extremely fortunate to be an artist and a printmaker. I know, at the age of 64, that I can deal with the drama of the human condition. I am on a path where I can visually seek out how life evolved before me, and what a discovery that is for an artist – a bizarre and wonderful experience. My longstanding friendship with Agathe Sorel, a fine sculptor and a dedicated printmaker, renowned with her experimental work in this media, exposed my interest experimenting with the computer.

The computer is a machine to me - an abstract thing. The images, which I can put on such a machine, raise a curiosity. I play with the images for days, weeks, sometimes months, and I recall images from my mind. In this way I'm creating a new form of nature. The digital images, in black and white, eradicate any complications and both engage and mobilise the mind as colours do.