

PAINTING

INTERVIEW: THE PRINCE OF A HAPPY DARKNESS, JOAN CORNELLÀ

July 20, 2017

You've probably seen [Joan Cornellà's](#) comics. You've probably laughed out loud and then felt bad for doing so. That's his game. There are few lines he won't cross and essentially zero taboo subjects he won't cover. His work is macabre, disturbing and downright offensive but once you get past all that you can see that his message is clear, human existence is bleak, why not laugh?



Cornellà recently unveiled his most recent solo show at [Josée Bienvenu Gallery in NYC](#) along with a new book of his comics SOT, we caught up with the artist to talk artistic influences, punk music and the absurdity of the internet. Take a look below.

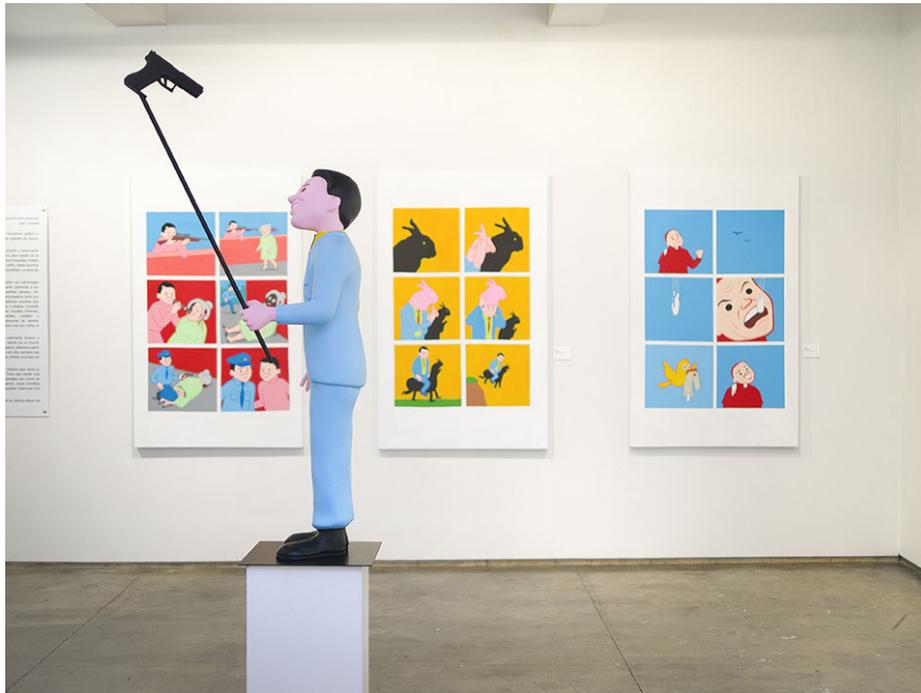
Jessica Ross: You've been quite busy with Factotum Productions these last few months. Which city has been your favorite so far? Where are you excited to travel to next?

Joan Cornellà: I liked Bangkok but the Hong Kong exhibition was very good and the reception that has my work there can't be compared with anywhere else. Soon I have to go to London, LA and Tokyo. I have never been to Los Angeles so I am really curious to know what the place is like.

How has your work has changed over the years? Would you say you're becoming more or less cynical about the world with age?

At the graphic level my work has changed a lot, at first I tried to copy Crumb's work and my drawing was very recharged, in black on white and with a lot of text. Something diametrically opposed to what I do now, but although the packaging is different the issues I basically touch are the same.

I do not know if I'm more cynical, but I think I've always been pretty skeptical.



Obviously it can't be ignored that you have a huge following on social media. What's the weirdest fan moment you've had on or offline?

A former Croatian military man sent messages to me constantly saying that he was going to find me and he was going to kill me. It was a matter of time, he said. I do not know if I can say that I was a fan but the messages were sent to the fan page.

Ever felt a tinge of guilt about a certain subject matter you've covered? I do believe everything is laugh-able but I'm curious, have there ever been moments of doubt?

There is a comic ending with a mother's fellatio to her own dead son. I think it's a funny work but i have to say that sometimes I see it and I am shocked by my own shit.

Which do you prefer creating, single panel paintings or narrative comic strips?

I think my narrative work is more interesting and it is with what I feel more comfortable but sometimes one single image can have much more strength if I can synthesize well an idea. The plot twists can be great when il have to elaborate an absurd idea, the comics can work very well if you want to treat something with humor.

What kind of music do you listen to while you work? (I secretly hope it's a mix of black metal and old-timey carnival tunes)

When I was a kid I used to play in hardcore punk bands so this is my background. I would say that my favorite group is Fugazi, but I love bands like Can, Captain Beefheart or Jesus Lizard.

Do you think the human race is doomed? Is our own stupidity going to be the end of us or is it possible to progress and become a better species?

There is definitely something that is wrong in the human race but I guess we all should try to change that. My work leaves a state of catastrophism but I would like people to think instead of motivating people to jump off a bridge.

Any chance you'll be making more videos soon? If you haven't already, you should check out the YouTube comments, they're highly entertaining.

I used to entertain myself by looking at the comments that people write on Facebook posts but I think it takes me too long. I'm going to take a look at the comments from Youtube, I think I've never done it. I plan to do some more animations for the Youtube page, but I will take them out little by little, slowly.

What's next? Where can people see your next show or pick up a copy of your latest book, Sot?

I have an exhibition in September in London, the opening is on 15 September ([link](#)). Hope to see you there!

Photos and interview by Jessica Ross

Joan Cornellà's solo show will be on view at Josée Bienvenu Gallery NYC through July 30, 2017