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Talking Trademark: Interview with Simon Raab.

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"I love flower gardens, fields of sex organs in fetching colorful lingerie."



Simon Raab, "Royal Skullduggery," 2010. Polymers and stainless steel on wood frame, 140 x 100 cm.

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Talking Trademark: Interview with Simon Raab.

Interviewer: Why do you think you are an artist?

Simon: Ignoring the implication of that question. I think I am an artist because I am full of existential angst seeking to be expressed through thought-filled imagery. I am secretly yearning for critical approval. My official artist's statement says I am confused by the boundaries between reality and abstraction. But then again who isn't. Actually, I like to make pretty, colorful and shiny things with my hands. Then I like to stand back, gaze at them and feel the frissons of artistic ecstasy. I like when people pay real money to hang my shiny colorful things on their walls.

Interviewer: Why did you trademark the term Parleau?

Simon: I heard that today it is all about branding. If your trademark enters the common lexicon through overuse and becomes generic then you can lose your trademark because it has been too successful, think of Kleenex. So I am working on that ... I start with the trademark and then hope I lose it through overuse. Apart from that I dream of the R in a circle beside my name and on my ass. It reminds me of my old days as a country boy when we used to brand cattle.

Interviewer: Why the word Parleau?

Simon: My mother tongue is French.

Interviewer: Do you consider yourself French? What does the word mean? I looked it up and it doesn't exist.

Simon: My mother is from Luxembourg and my father is from Czechoslovakia. I was born in France, raised in Canada, schooled in the US. My grandmother is German, my grandfather is Polish. I want to be a fervent nationalist but I can't decide for which country, so I have become a fervent free-market internationalist. Parleau is made up like Haagen-Dazs. It comes from "par I'eau" or "through water" in French. I played a lot in water as a youngster. I like the way colors and images move around under water. My first girlfriend was ugly but I found she looked better under water. I discovered that when I tried to drown her. Even the purple of her lips was beautiful through the shimmering surface.

Interviewer: Did the fact that you were a scientist inform your work? What else informed your work?

Simon: Why the past tense? I still am a scientist. This is research, I want to know why crudely painted pottery from 2000 years ago is still cherished in museums but yet every iteration of the laptop computer and the MRI machine is just dumped into the trash bin. So I am making some pretty shiny stuff to see it if it ends up cherished forever. I was tired of making endless iterations of improvement of incredibly complex and useful devices that save lives and make life measurably easier and that are often elegant and beautiful in that Italian-industrial-engineered kind-a-way but still get tossed like yesterday's breakfast. It's a scientific experiment, so I am still a scientist. Light is important to me, so is color. I love flower gardens, fields of sex organs in fetching colorful lingerie. I love faces for the same reason. Lasers, and metal surfaces fascinated me. I studied the surface of Platinum as a catalyst and then exotic alloys as replacement for hip and knee joints.

Interviewer: Where would you like to see your brand Parleau go in the future?

Simon: It would be terrific if the art world's historical voyage towards abstraction away from figuration and back again would include my attempt to abstract the basrelief. Heavy impasto is not abstracted bas-relief. Parleau contains references to the 3D form, which is suggested by the reflection of light and the creation of subtle shadows. Parleau should be accepted one day as relief in motion where highlights and shadows are constantly changing.

Interviewer: Is there anything you haven't yet tackled, but will want to do soon?

Simon: I want scale. I want to make a very, very big Parleau mosaic that overwhelms in its dimensions. I want viewers to feel the labor and love required in the size and complexity. I want to force them to look up to me.

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