

Frequently Asked Questions (in interview form)

Can you tell us a little about yourself and your background?

Hi, my name is Tymon de Laat, I am a visual artist from Rotterdam the Netherlands. I graduated from the Willem de Kooning academy in Rotterdam in 2001 and I have been a full-time artist since 2005. Most of my work consists of painting murals and canvas works for national and international clients and street related festivals. Besides painting I have a intrinsic passion for travel and exploring cultures world-wide with an emphasis on Latin America where I combine my photography into the sketching process.

How did you first get into art?

From a young age, probably as many of us artists, I have always enjoyed drawing and painting. Not that I ever seriously foresaw a career as an artist at that time. I signed up for an advertising study in the academy from 1997 to 2001. For me the realisation of becoming a painter came after I did a year long trip from Mexico to Argentina on a budget of \$3000 in 2003. When I came back from this trip where I really fell in love with Latin America and its richness in diversity of culture, history, traditions. But not only that, due to my sparse budget of 8 Dollars a day for eating sleeping and travelling to the next place, I was bound to take the route less travelled. Here I met the locals and their way of life, their openness and interest swept me off my feet. In general, I experienced a sense of freedom that year with hardly a penny to my name and tons of time it made me adapt to a different lifestyle than the rushed one that I was used to. Walking the narrow-cobbled street with an evening glow i got an unexplainable sense of freedom and fulfilment. Ever since I got back to Europe this is a feeling, I have been trying to build my life around in search of the optimal quality of life. Being an artist gave me this opportunity and that is when I decided to go for being a full-time painter.

What kind of art do you create and what mediums do you prefer to work with?

My work varies from painting on walls and canvas mostly but sometimes I dabble with customizing objects too. For my studio canvas works I generally use acrylic paint and markers and for the walls that is spray paint for the detailed bits and latex as a background filler.

How would you describe your unique artistic style?

If I must describe my art, I try to document a sense of adventure and cultural exploration into a visual imagery that tells stories about humanity and the exponentially changing times we live in.

People can recognize my work by a realistic style of portraiture combined with line work and colours usually in the face. In general, I would say my work has a positive feel to it in the first instance and sometimes hint of historic storytelling.

Can you share a piece of your work that you're particularly proud of and tell us the story behind it?

I would pick a work that I made for the STRAAT Museum in Amsterdam in 2022 called "las ultimas hojas". This is a big canvas piece of 3,5 m x 4,85 m made with spray paint. From a technical perspective I tried to push my boundaries of how detailed I can work with a spray can but for me the more interesting part of this work is the story behind it. The image is based on a photo of an elderly tobacco farmer that I portrayed in Viñales Cuba 2 years ago. On this documentation trip I chose several subjects that have an uncertain future. For example, we live in a world that is ever changing, most of the time I would say for the better, like we are turning more vegetarian/vegan, we smoke less due to legislation. These are positive changes, but they have a negative effect too. When everybody is looking to the right I like to also look to the left and see what the consequences of our changes are. In the example of "las ultimas hojas", this translates to "the last leaves", I wanted to document the tobacco farmer that is seeing a radical change in the future prospect of his business. This job comes with traditions and a lot of knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation and makes up a part of Cuba's DNA. At one point the tobacco industry will be banned I believe but what will the consequence for the farmers? This is an image that finds its relevance in the present time but imagine 100 years from now when a child will stand in front of the work and ask his dad what a tobacco farmer is. For me these stories of "how will we see the world in the future" fascinate me.

How do you find inspiration for your work?

Inspiration and possible storylines that I want to explore are found in our everyday surroundings, but they become more evident to me when I am in a place that has a strong contrast from my daily reality. Here I notice habits/routines that we in the Netherlands also have but the way how we get to an end result are different. The faces are human but look very distinct. For some reason I find it easier to encounter interesting subjects and beauty when I step away from what I already know back home and submerge into what is in front of me abroad. This contrast triggers my curiosity and inspires me.

What makes your art stand out in the industry?

For me an interesting part of painting walls is not only the one wall in a certain location but how the walls connect to each other. To be more specific, I like to paint people in places where they are least expected. This way a conversation might start when they wonder what this "strange" looking person is doing on the wall here. My murals form a cultural exchange. For example, I painted a Zambian lady on a wall in Uruguay, when I was there, I also took photos of Uruguayan people (in this case gauchos) and I will use those images and paint them in a next place where I will paint. This way my walls are all connected and tell a story about humanity in general. I hope that the total concept of my work makes it stand out in the industry. The colours and lines I use in the faces is probably the most distinctive part that jumps into the eye but underneath there are several layers of a view on humanity. The colours are a way of creating a universal human whilst still celebrating our diversity.

How do you connect with your audience or collectors?

I have recently redesigned my website where I get a decent part of my work discovered. But interviews like this one really help to reach new people. Most of my work is still discovered on social media and gets passed on through word to mouth by satisfied customers and institutions. I would like to do more work through galleries abroad but here I am still searching for the right combination.

What has been your biggest challenge as an artist and how did you overcome it?

Apart from finding the technical ability into my visual expression of my thoughts it was and is finding my story and style that combine to a single concept, this was something that I needed to knead and give shape. It took the first 10 years of my painting career to get there but things have been falling into place in the recent years. I feel the development is still ongoing and hopefully this will stay an ever-evolving process where I can find the best quality of life and art combined.

What are your future plans and goals for your art?

The future is bright, I look forward to exploring more of the world and its abundance of cultural wealth and painting these stories in the most obscure places on the globe. A big dream of mine is to paint a wall in every country in the world so the story that I try to tell is connected worldwide.