

In Marbella, Spain, Johan Wahlstrom resides amidst mountains overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. An accomplished artist and contributor to the contemporary art scene, Johan uses his unique hand to express strength and emotion using the surrounding Spanish light, intense colors and his memories of French villages. This, integrated with a natural and honest impulsivity, makes his work both a challenge and a comfort to his audience.

Mediums chosen by Johan are canvas, wood, cardboard paper and cotton canvas paper. He uses a mixture of acrylic colors, sand, glue, water, varnish and others. He uses a knife to create the patterns within his wood creations and applies acrylic colors and water against his cotton canvas and cardboard paper paintings. Johan also utilizes sun and rain exposure to create his unique effects such as is present in "Imagine."

Johan's artwork leans into the realm of expressionism and abstract expressionism. Many of his influences are German expressionists such as Gabrielle Munther, Karl Schmidt-Rotluff, Christian Rohlf plus 19th century Russian painter and musician Wassily Kandinsky. His village scenes morph natural perspectives and blend mostly blues, oranges and reds. Some of his other more abstract compositions are thoughtful yet carefree using unpredictable color combinations and brush stroke patterns. His wood carvings tend to use solitary and anonymous figures with clearly identifiable colors.

Johan received an informal education in the art of observation, apprenticeship, and experience. He began as a musician and his ambition led him to drop out of high school. While on tour, he spent much of his time drawing while also forming friendships with artists in Stockholm. Johan said he "used to hang out in their studios for several years getting hints and ideas." He was also raised observing the artistic talents of his mother, Ellen Tode, his grandmother, Sigrid Tode, and Waldemar Tode, his grandmother's uncle, who is part of the National Museum of Art in Stockholm, Sweden.

His commitment to the world of visual arts wasn't until his impulsive move to France after growing sick of his time in the music business. The artist, Lennart Nystrom, resided in the same village as Johan and they became friends. Nystrom recognized Johan's talent and offered him guidance and encouragement through those first years as Johan built upon his skills and began showing his art. However, Johan stated there was still "years of practice in my own studio before I approached the market at the end of the 90's and [received] a very good response from art galleries and private art collectors in Europe." Ten years later, Johan is actively producing his art and "very happy to be able to do this and make a good portion of my living out of my art."

Johan spent a total of seven years in the south of France and many of the village scenes are based on his memories of the old villages in Provence. "I love to mix perspectives," says Johan of his village interpretations, installing elements "in the 'wrong place.'" Johan has spent the last few years in Spain where he has a home situated on a mountain near the Mediterranean Sea. "The main influence in Spain is most likely the colors, there is so much orange, blue, light brown in nature here in the south of Spain and the light we have is excellent for being an artist," states Johan.

Unless questioned directly about a piece, Johan prefers his audience to gain their own idea of his work based on the painting and its title. For Johan, the statement and feeling "walk hand in hand." He hopes to "communicate a message/statement where I touch viewers feelings and make their brain spin." Also, "It seems that in many of my paintings the viewer finds a piece of themselves or pieces of thoughts that they carry."

Johan has a unique approach to his work. He "[paints] out of a name," using a working title as a prompt to a piece. The title will remain if the painting stays true to the title impression. He also listens to music he feels corresponds with his current project, accenting it with "funny noises" coming from his mouth. Johan states, "I lose contact with what's going on around me and what time it is and for how long I have been painting."

Johan's musical endeavors include six albums he completed under his own name and with Johnny and the Yobs during the 80's and 90's. He embarked on several tours accompanied by many different musicians. Currently he writes songs for the band, Stockholm Stoner, and also for a publisher in Florida. Comparing his experience as an artist and his experience as a musician, Johan states: "In both cases you aim to meet an audience and your target is to communicate with the audience and to me it's about the same but in two different medias. I really like them both and hopefully one day will be able to combine the two together." Johan goes on to state a difference between the two relates to audience exposure. "As a visual artist you get more rapid responses from the viewer, you get an instant reaction during an exhibition...In music you need to get accepted on the radio but if one person in charge of the music on a station doesn't like your sound then it does not matter if there is 1000 people that do like your sound...they will still not get the chance to hear the music due to this one person."

Johan has a wide and passionate interest in contemporary humanitarian issues including politics, economy, health care, and the environment. He speaks poignantly of issues surrounding the contrast between the classes: "I believe each person in a modern society should have equal possibilities for the best possible medical care...regardless if one can afford insurance or not." He finds the government's handling of the economy and particularly healthcare to be "very disturbing." He asks of today's leaders, "why do they accept this?" Sadly he says, "it comes down to the same, it's all about money."

In relation to the environment, Johan states "we cannot continue to destroy mother earth at the current speed, we need to leave something for generations to come." "We are polluting the planet to death," he says. Johan desires to help people not only through the sales of his artwork but also being able to "paint where my paintings communicate about issues that are so unfair today." Johan desires to be "one of hopefully many that makes a friendly revolution."

Johan currently is promoting two parallel series of paintings. One series features images of villages and houses, faces and people illustrating Johan's application of expressionism. The other series features images leaning toward the abstract. Upcoming exhibitions in

2008 featuring Johan's work are: March, Gallery Raco98 (solo) Mallorca, Soller, Spain; April, Infusion Gallery (solo), Los Angeles, CA, USA; June, Galleria Espacio Tres (solo), Malaga, Spain; TBA, Studio 14, Stockholm, Sweden.