

PRESSBOOK

Jens FÄNGE
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THE ENDLESS REALITY: INTERVIEW WITH JENS FÄNGE

BY SYLVIA TSAI



Portrait of Jens Fänge. Photo by Ringo Cheung. Courtesy Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong.

Swedish artist Jens Fänge creates perspective-twisting environments that tease one's perceptions. His bold-colored assemblages not only skew the interior spaces and figures he depicts, but also lure in viewers as they try to dissect the artist's visual play, which fluidly combines materials, techniques and even paintings within paintings. It's a playful and dynamically engaging experience. In one picture plane, he deftly blends dream-like surrealism and geometric abstraction. Jens Fänge was recently in Hong Kong for the opening of his solo exhibition at Galerie Perrotin, where he featured 17 new panel paintings. *ArtAsiaPacific* had the chance to interview the 52-year-old, Stockholm-based artist and discuss the starting point for a new series, his assemblage process, and how he sees exhibition design as similar to creating a music album.

You have a unique process, which adds another component to your practice. What do you consider as inspiration for a new series, and how do you build upon that?

Just like in most of my work, the starting point for this exhibition has to deal with emotions rather than an urge to tell a specific story. I usually begin where I last finished. In this case, that would be the exhibition "The Hours Before" [at Galerie Perrotin, Paris, in 2016], hence the title of this show is "Sister Feelings." It emphasizes the kinship between my paintings and my exhibitions. They may differ from each other but they are siblings—sisters. I always work on several paintings at the same time, and try to keep the paintings "open" as long as possible. They lay scattered all over my studio floor while I am working on all of them at the same time. In that way, the paintings get acquainted and they leak meaning and appearances onto each other. When I am working, I try not to think too hard about what is going on and avoid focusing on the themes and narratives. The process is driven by my own curiosity and not knowing what the painting will look like when it will be finished. If a painting turns out to look exactly the way I expected to, it will be a failure. It has to remain somehow unsolved and mysterious even for me.



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Since your paintings each fit within a larger series, is it important that they are initially seen together? Is there a narrative that can be traced within a series?

It is critical that the paintings work together as a whole. When installing them in the gallery, I keep in mind the idea of a narrative, but I want the story to remain very open. The structure of my narrative is similar to a dream.

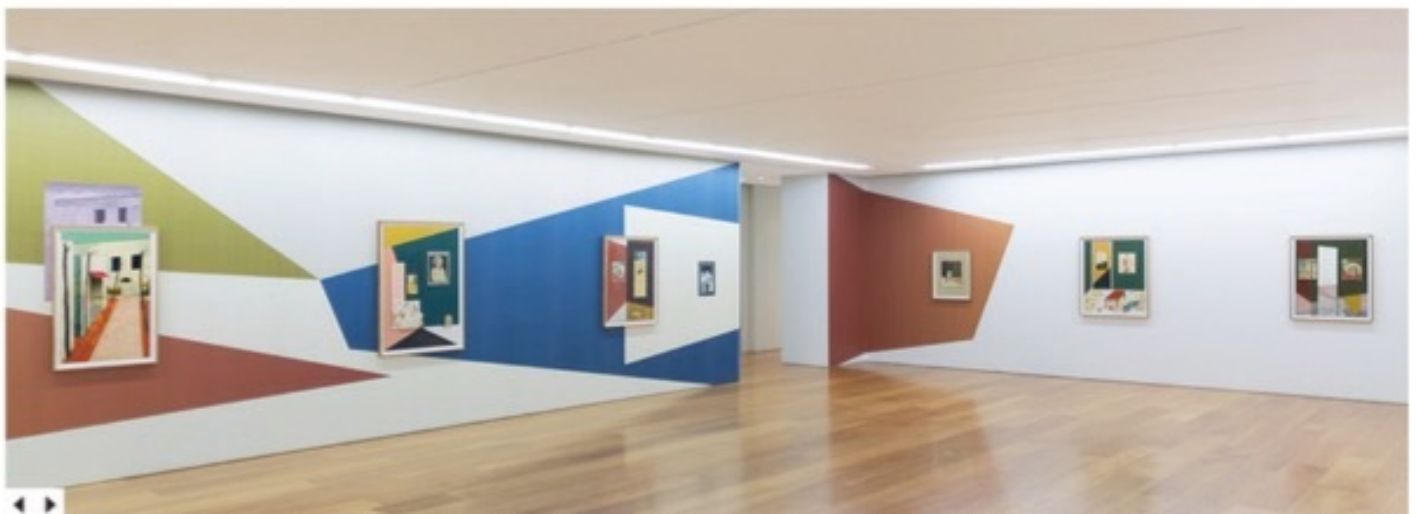
It's equally important that each work is complete and stands for itself. I'm not a musician but I like to think that making an exhibition is like putting a music album together. An LP is one piece of art: the album cover, the order in which the songs appear, how the melodies contrast and underscore each other and how you as a listener get involved. It's the same thing with paintings in an exhibition. That being said I listen to a lot of music in my studio.

How does your play on perspective change when you go from creating smaller works to creating wallpaper or large-scale pieces?

I try to look at the installation, the mural, the wallpaper as one big painting. The paintings hanging within a mural may mimic what's going on inside the framed painting in one of my smaller compositions. It's an attempt to put the viewer in the same position as my painted characters. The recursion that happens when a painting appears within itself is like a chain of thoughts that serves both as an image of the openness of the mind, and the idea of being trapped inside another reality.



JENS FÄNGE, *Sister Feelings*, 2016, oil, vinyl, cardboard and wood on panel, 110 × 91 cm. Courtesy Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong.



Installation view of JENS FÄNGE's solo exhibition "Sister Feelings" at Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong, 2017. Photo by Ringo Cheung. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong.



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What prompted your transition from painted canvas to assemblage pieces in 2013?

I guess it was a development of the way I was making my paintings on canvas. I realized there was a lot of collaging going on in the process. I wanted to make cut-out drawings or even small paintings, which could be moved around and taped onto the surfaces of paintings to figure out how to make the final compositions. At some point, it felt natural to make that process of fooling around and playing with the cut-outs a visible part of the piece. I was also intrigued by the low tech 3D effect that occurred when a cutout character was attached with a certain distance from the painting. It became a diorama of sorts.

Considering your methodology in mounting exhibitions, creating an immersive environment within the gallery appears to be an important component of your display. For instance, in Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong, you extend the colorful geometric planes present in your works onto the gallery walls. It adds yet another layer of depth to your work by folding in the viewer. What are the intentions behind your exhibition designs?

The first time I used a wallpaper as a backdrop for my paintings, it was out of necessity. I was invited to take part in a museum show and was offered a long wall. I had very few paintings available at the time, but I realized I could make a powerful impact with small means. Since then, I have often worked with installations in that way. Again, one important part of that process is keeping myself open to the unexpected. No matter how carefully I plan the installation with sketches and models, it's impossible to fully anticipate the result. I like that uncertainty. Usually, it's very rewarding.



JENS FÄNGE, Clogs, 2016, oil, vinyl and fabric on panel, 102 × 83 cm. Courtesy Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong.

Jens Fänge's "Sister Feelings" is currently on view at [Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong](#), until March 11, 2017.

Sylvia Tsai is associate editor at [ArtAsiaPacific](#).

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