

THE COLOMBIAN WAY IN FINLAND

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French artists often feel like they are bumping into a glass ceiling, which does not seem to be the case of their Finnish counterparts. This concept which means that some people, who are considered diversity challenged, are stopped from rising to the upper rungs of in the world of art. It stops the artists, who are born from migrants parents, to evolve like others. Like an invisible obstacle. Finnish artists, such as John Cesar, aka JoandeSilva, don't seem to be confronted to this kind of problem. They seem unaffected by this phenomenon actually. We met John Cesar at his apartment, on a Friday night. He spoke to us honestly and with no taboo, no boundaries. His words are really sharp and totally opposite of the major French young artists words. He is a photographer, an artist with Colombian background. But he says that his background does not matter at all.

"I have a different perception. I never thought of art like something which is really going to help me for living. I am not comfortable to live off of subsidies. Subsidies are different from grants: the state has to like your ideas, you have to be creative to get money from the state. When I get a grant, I spend all the money and then the rest has to come from my own pocket. "

What would it require for you to be able to fully live off of your art?

"You have to be honest, you can't live off of photography in 2014. In 1995, it was possible. People liked to have the books, and read them, and touch them. But not anymore. We are living in a constant technology evolution. You can make it if you live off of grants, of course. But otherwise, I believe that if a photographer wants to publish a book, he will be forced to rent a n extra room to store his unsold books (laugh)."

Do you think that Finnish art is divided between suburban artists and fine/classic artists?

"Nothing is divided. Everything is the same collective. I think it's easy to mix. You just have to be sure you are good enough to work with different kinds of artists. I succeeded in creating connections with other artists because of my work. What matters is how I speak of my work. My network is based on mutual trust. And I try to never betray that trust. That's the way people give good references to another people. The art community is small and tightly-knit! If you make a small mistake, then it is going to be difficult to work together again. You really have to be a perfectionist. "

What do you think of French artists who see themselves as rejected from the small and tightly-knit community you just described?

"They are victimizing themselves. You cannot feel inferior. It is too easy. To be an artist, you have to understand that some people will look at you with respect and others won't. It is your choice to become stronger out of it. Everything is about personality, and the goals you want, your ambitions. I have trouble understanding how one can think through skin color or ethnics, it is difficult for me to understand this. "

So, what do you thing about positive action?

"We don't have very much of that in Finland. I don't know, when I started my arts, nobody asked me about my backgrounds. I am an architect for a living. I am a photographer. My job speaks for itself. If we think logically, it is very difficult to imagine the way some people can reduce your work to your backgrounds. "

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