

## KAT BODRIE INTERVIEWS COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Chris Harford

INTERVIEWER: Kat Bodrie

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[Email interview with Chris Harford, artist for Joymongers' bottle labels]

KB: Tell me about how you formed a connection with Joymongers. Did you already know someone?

CH: Mike Rollinson, whom I've known for some twenty years, I met through playing music.

KB: I noticed a couple of these paintings aren't on your website. Did you create these designs especially for Joymongers? Who has the originals?

CH: So far the images used for the labels are paintings which already existed. I know my cousin in Pittsburgh has the kissing birds used for the Valentines day brew. And one of the paintings was lost in a house fire, the one of a figure hailing a taxi for the Feoderbier Tropisch so that has special meaning. The Serpent on the Baltic Porter my high school sweet heart bought as a gift for her husband.

KB: What were you aiming for in creating these images? What message(s) are you trying to send? / How are you trying to affect consumers?

CH: These are excellent questions and I'll do my best to answer them to the best of my ability but many of them were done so long ago that the answer will have to be a general one if that's okay. As for the first two questions: My paintings come from the subconscious so I'm thinking the aim must've been to create an image that sets a certain mood or feeling, not unlike what I attempt with my songwriting, As for the last question, I don't set out to affect the consumers other then to hope they see what they will in each particular piece. I wonder do you mean the consumers of the beer or the paintings?

KB: Tell me about your creative process. What inspired you? What media did you use, and what media do you prefer to work in?

CH: When I begin a painting there isn't a whole lot of thought put into it, in fact, I try and not think at all/ My mother is an excellent painter, she inspired me, both through her work and exposing me to the great artists at wonderful museums, so I was very fortunate in that way.

- CH: My childhood friend Jacques Hoffmann's house was filled with paintings from Haiti which always enthralled by their use of color and simple technique. Naive folk art and Outsider art speaks to me. Using postage stamps as a form of decoupage came early in the process, to represent feathers of a bird, bricks in a building, scales of a fish or leaves of a tree. That's become a signature of sorts, as I've continued using stamps now for over twenty years. I mostly work in acrylic, though sometimes use oil, and generally paint on found objects such as wood or paintings retrieved from someone's garbage.
- KB: How has your process changed over time?
- CH: I'm not sure it has, for better or worse, hopefully it's evolved as I've learned the craft a little bit better.
- KB: Who are your artistic/creative influences?
- CH: I mentioned my Mom, she's huge as is the rest of my family. My Dad shared his love of music and was a pretty good illustrator in his own right, and my siblings are all very creative. Growing up I was exposed to the masters like Chagall and Munch.
- KB: Do you see any particular challenges in creating bottle label art?
- CH: All the credit goes to Anna Dancy, the graphic designer whom Mike Rollinson hired to create the labels. She took my paintings, cropped them, chose the font, etc. You might want to interview her as well!
- KB: Why do you want to support Joymongers with your art?
- CH: More precisely, why does Joymongers want to support Chris Harford? I was utterly flabbergasted and flattered when Mike asked to use the paintings for his labels, I never in a million years imagined my paintings would adorn beer bottles, so if he wants to support my art then I want to support his, for his beer making is like an art, it's really, really good beer and terribly unique as it's made in small batches.
- KB: How would you compare/contrast your fine art with that commissioned for publication/commercial use?
- CH: These questions are hard! Thankfully I think this one you can find the answer to above.
- KB: You're a musician and photographer as well as a painter. How do different media inform one another? Do you have a favorite way to express yourself?
- CH: The music is a collaborative thing-working with others-its noisy and can be a tad chaotic, which I thrive on. Painting is a meditative process. I don't generally put on music when I paint. Its quiet and reflective-a solitary process. The photography is about staying in the moment. These different mediums inform each other as they are attempts at

creating something beautiful, or capturing a mood or a feeling, and through these feelings tell a story, I appreciate them all equally.

KB: What's your favorite design you've done for Joymongers?

CH: My favorite is the first bottle, the Baltic Porter, with the Serpent whose scales are made of postage stamps. Something about how that label turned out seems to match the beer perfectly. Thank you Anna Dancy, she chooses the images she feels is most appropriate from the hundreds to choose from on my website and elsewhere, then runs it by Mike and then goes for it, you gotta interview her for this piece!

KB: What are you currently working on (for Joymongers and otherwise)?

CH: I can't wait to see what Anna and Mike come up with next.

KB: Do you have any future collaborations planned with Joymongers?

CH: I believe there are more beers and labels coming but you'd have to confirm that with Mike.

KB: Where do you want to go as an artist and as a freelancer?

CH: Wouldn't it be cool to have your images on Swatches like Keith Herring? Or sell a painting for a gazillion dollars like Basquiat? :)

KB: Do you drink beer? If so, what are your favorite styles and/or brands? Do you have a favorite Joymongers beer?

CH: I do drink beer, don't particularly have a favorite style though, and my go to brand is Guinness. With this trend of craft beer becoming more and more popular I've been wickedly impressed with Joymongers beer making skills, it's exceptional, one can taste the love and it's a special kind of high. I'll be forever indebted to Joymongers, I wear their shirts proudly and hoist their brew as often as possible (until supplies run out) in celebration and joy. I wish the beer was distributed nationally. Thank you Kat for these amazing questions.