



## RINUS VAN DE VELDE

THE ONLY TIME I FEEL RELAXED IS WHEN I'M IN MY STUDIO

BY: SARAH SCHUG

**B**elgian artist Rinus Van De Velde has made quite a name for himself in the last years with his large-scale charcoal drawings, not only in his home country but also beyond Belgium's borders. The future is looking bright for the young man from Antwerp, whose work has been shown in places like Madrid and Miami and whose face has graced magazine covers from *L'Officiel* to *Elle*. We've met up with Rinus for a chat in the backyard of Berlin's Galerie Zink a few days before the opening of his most recent solo show, a captivating exhibition, drawing you in once more with what he calls his "fake autobiography", a fictional story taking you

on an adventure unfolding from a wooden hut on a lonely island inhabited by a hallucinating artist. For the very first time he not only showed his mesmerizing drawings but also a life-sized sculpture-like installation in the center of the expo room: the lonely cabin on a mountain which the story-line of the show evolved around. "Every time I installed a show it felt too classical, too empty. I had the impression something physical was missing. There was this void that I wanted to fill and experiment with," he explains. Here, the rising star gives us a rare glimpse into the inner workings of his mind, opening up about his fears, obsessions and how he deals with all that buzz around him.



About fear... I don't feel safe or like 'I made it'. I never do. But I think it's maybe a good thing to never feel safe, because it gives you motivation. I could never get lazy because my fear is too big! It's this basic fear of not being able to produce anymore. I work a lot and I'm pretty obsessive. I think it's the only way for an artist. Being an artist is not something you just do from time to time. If I'm not in my studio it feels a bit like losing precious time. There's this artist who said that his basic energy and fear comes from dying, and that he just wants to produce as much as possible before his death. This is how artists create their oeuvre. Most of the time it is generated by these stupid fears. There's also this survival fear. It's a fundamental fear from everybody to end up in the gutter one day. So you work and work to avoid that this ever happens.

About Berlin I've never thought about moving here. I like Antwerp and I've always felt very comfortable in Belgium. I don't understand why so many artists move to Berlin or New York or L.A.. It must be very hard to get noticed because there are tons of artists. It's easier to stand out in Belgium, and if you do, then galleries from other countries will notice you too. I've been to Berlin quite often in the last years, but I don't know it very well, except for the area around the gallery. Most of the time I just do the same: I go to a couple of galleries and museums. I'm not this tourist kind of guy. Of course I've seen Checkpoint Charlie once but I'm not going to go there again. My friends who came with me to Berlin just rented some bikes and really look forward to riding them and discovering the city, but I don't have this urge at all. I rather stay here

in the gallery and talk a bit with the people and look at some books.

About travelling I'm really not much of a traveller; I'm a pretty boring guy in this aspect. I don't like travelling at all. I'd rather just be home and read a book about the Reichstag than standing in front of it. I don't feel anything when I stand there. I only feel something when I can think about the importance of the building, or the things that happened there - which I can all read in a book. And I don't like the fuzz of travelling: finding out which subway I should take, calling a cab... I remember once I was in the Death Valley with my parents and I stayed in the car. They really wanted me to get out but I didn't understand why. You know this feeling, when you are standing in front of the most beautiful landscape and you think you should feel something, but then you don't feel anything? Sometimes it's so beautiful or immense that you cannot grasp it and then I don't know what to do; I'm not a romantic painter like Friedrich who gets overwhelmed by all this beauty.

About being a studio artist I'm pretty happy in Antwerp. Maybe I'm a bit of an exception. I do understand these artists who need a community of other artists to get inspired, who like to be around other artists and go to artists' bars, but personally I really just like to surround myself with my friends, who are not necessarily all artists. I like to have this little group of people around me who I have known for a very long time. I don't feel the need to go anywhere else or to travel. I'm a real studio artist and like the comfort of it, and also the comfort of knowing



where to by my charcoal for example. Of course I could find out where to buy it in Berlin too, but why should I change all this if I feel good in Antwerp? I just come to Berlin to install my show and go back to where it's comfortable. Then I can spend energy on my work and not on finding out where I should eat every night. I recently bought a house and now I even live where I work, because I didn't like the daily car ride to the studio. I wanted my life and my work to be totally the same, to have a full connection between the two. I was always quite frustrated about when I had to close the door and go home. I would look at photos of my work on my iPhone. Now I can have a look at the actual work and maybe work a little bit more on it.

About success I luckily don't feel the buzz, so I'm always doubting everything. I'm constantly working and trying to develop my work further. This is all I think about. And everything is relative. When I graduated I remember thinking 'if I would have one show in my life I would be the happiest guy in the world.' But then you have this one show and you think 'maybe a gallery would be nice'. And then you have a gallery and you think 'maybe if I could sell something that would be nice. Or a museum show.' So you always have a next goal. But I've never really felt a lot of pressure, which is a good thing. I of course hope there will be more opportunities to show my work, but I don't worry about it. When somebody says to me 'we want to do a show with you', it is the best feeling ever. This is what it's all about: producing new works and making the body of work bigger and more interesting.