

# TEMPLON



ROBIN KID

*METAL MAGAZINE*, 11 octobre 2021



Robin Kid a.k.a. *The Kid* is a Luddite, and maybe rightly so. He sees the modern world of social media, infotainment, and polarised politics through a lens of utter contempt. And who can blame him? His show *It's All Your Fault*, on display at Templon Gallery Paris until 23rd October, combines imagery from religion, advertising, his childhood, and more, to create a variety of spectacular, and often ludicrous, paintings and sculptures. His works provide a scathing commentary on the state of humanity in the 21st century.

We caught up with the artist to discuss Jackson Pollock, Big Bird, the sins of our forefathers, and more.



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**Could you briefly introduce yourself to our readers?**

I'm an autodidact multidisciplinary neo-Pop artist. My works hijack a variety of social, political and traditional imagery of the past and present, with rebellious, religious, fantastical and in some ways offensive undertones. I pull intuitively from the world of advertising, the internet, the entertainment industry and my childhood memories, to create enigmatic and thought-provoking narratives, which question our polarised world of the 21st century.

**At what point did you know that you wanted to become an artist?**

As far as I can remember, even as a child. I've always felt compelled to draw, paint and sculpt things to create my own world to escape in and already, at that time, I had a very clear vision of what I wanted to do. I hated school; I did not fit the mold, which caused me a lot of struggle. But, in the end, not fitting in was a blessing - and it still is! A lot of my techniques come in a very instinctive and natural way to me. I've had the chance to be very hands-on: drawing, painting and creating things since I was little. I've always been able to see the finished work in my head before I start anything. For me each one of my works is like a very large puzzle. I know what it needs to become, so I start laying down the pieces and of course I encounter difficulties, but I just keep on working until every piece falls into place. And though I cannot stand any form of authority, especially the one that comes with school, I love discovering and researching things by myself, up until the point that it becomes an obsession. So, if I get stuck, I can spend entire nights searching the internet and YouTube to find a solution.

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**Whilst your alias The Kid is clearly a reference to your surname, is there any deeper meaning behind it? Would you say that there is anything intentionally infantile about the way you approach the artistic process?**

When I started as an artist, I made the decision to work under my nickname The Kid that was given to me when I was little, rather than my real name, in rebellion against any form of conservatism that comes too often with adulthood. In a way I also thought I could hide myself behind the work and make the work about its subject only, not about me. But as Jackson Pollock said, “painting is self-discovery and every artist paints what he is”. And he was right; as much as I tried to hide myself, every work is inevitably rooted into my own experience and expresses my fears and hopes, some shared with my young generation. So, for my new current show at Templon Paris I decided to go by my full name Robin Kin (a.k.a. The Kid).

**You’ve referred to your work as a form of escapism from the terrors of everyday life, comparing it to the dream world of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers that people escaped to during the Great Depression. However, you’ve also claimed that you create the work by “taking the zeitgeist of today.” How can the work simultaneously distract us from the real world whilst also acting as a commentary on the real world? Do you believe that these two things are mutually exclusive?**

Not at all, on the contrary, this is exactly what the everyday life of my generation is made of, simultaneously overwhelmed, and drowning itself in today’s restlessly gloomier prospects and desperately trying to escape from it by all means at our disposal from the most natural to the least legal...

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**You're half Brazilian. Do you visit the country very often?  
And has the rise of far-right President Bolsonaro affected  
your work?**

Not recently, but not because of Bolsonaro per se. In reality, he is more or less just a south-American clone of the type of populist autocratic Muppets which are unfortunately popping up all around the world.

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**The global exportation of American culture appears to be something you're very critical of, be it infotainment, aggressive advertising, or nationalistic ideas. At the same time, it is clearly a nation that has had an incredibly strong impact on the aesthetics of your work. Do you think you can separate these aesthetics from the ideas that they represent?**

As much as a true drug addict can't separate his climax highs or his descent from the drugs he is on! That's why I use the Stars and Stripes flag as a recurring element in several of my works. For me, it's such a powerful symbol of this very duality between the ideal and reality, innocence and corruption. This is what makes it the perfect contemporary symbol of the social chiaroscuro we are in, and of the blurred sentiment of right and wrong, especially within my generation.

**One of my favorite motifs throughout your exhibition was the replacement of the eagle, as a traditional symbol of America, with that of a vulture. This appears to be some kind of bleak subversion of the values of hope and freedom. Could you delve a little deeper into the meaning behind this imagery?**

There are multiple ways to interpret the animals in my works; it all depends on which preconceptions the viewer looks at the work with, and this is exactly what I'm interested in. Some may see them as spirit or totem animals, like in the native American Indian tribes, other may see them as direct references to the Ancient – Roman, Greek, or even Egyptian – mythology. In some cultures, the vulture is seen as a saviour, he picks away the flesh to liberate the soul and set it free. In others, on the contrary, the dirty scavenging vulture is also often perceived as the exact opposite of the proud and majestic eagle, the ultimate symbol of freedom and power. Particularly in the US, it is the imagery which symbolises the infamous American dream, something that is currently falling apart.

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**Several of the works in *It's All Your Fault* are adorned with the rather sardonic affirmation that “God never fails.” Whilst I certainly get the impression that you have a very nihilistic outlook on life, would you say that there is any particular philosophy or belief system that you subscribe to?**

Widespread conformity, mob mentality, group opinions and the deterioration of critical thinking due to the fear of losing followers. I don't believe in cancel culture; as justified as the valid outrage is, canceling something, erasing it from our daily lives, is a slippery slope in my opinion. How can the next generation recognise the worst if they have never seen it? Isn't it an open invitation to history repeating itself? Since I was a child, I've always felt that art is something that has to be kicking against some holy houses, it has to be provocative, and it has to be witnessing its own time. It shouldn't simply be pretty and generic. For me, that has always been the idea that I had of art, that it had to be provocative, its goal shouldn't be decoration, and its goal shouldn't be amassing as many likes as possible on social media. It should provoke the masses and wake up the sleeping ones! Everything should be fair game. Nothing is holy, no religion, no race, no culture, no age and no nothing.



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**In the past you've frequently used hyperrealist sculptures of humans in your work. Why did you decide not to do so for *It's All Your Fault*?**

The difference is that now, everything is on hyper-speed and in overdrive. We have no more time to digest things, and I think social media is to blame – it's fucking up our society. Social media is supposed to be an extension of democracy but instead it's turning into a perversion of its core principle: the idea of debate, of listening to each other, the concept of agreeing to disagree is becoming a distant memory. Everybody believes they are in possession of the absolute truth, so everybody goes on the attack and accuses "THE OTHERS" saying to them "It's all your fault". We have all been turned into little soldiers fighting in a war we did not realize we were in.

**Upon seeing the totem poles in your exhibition, I thought they acted as poignant physical metaphors for the actual landmass of America. A once sacred thing that belonged to the Native people that has been stolen by the white man and deprived of all its sanctity, thanks to the worship of false idols like money and advertising. Is this an accurate reading of the piece?**

Yes, you're right! Actually, I think this is the most central question in our society today. I'm attracted to the provocation and the duality of these physical metaphors. It also has to do with the idea that religion and society likes to push this idea upon us of having been born guilty, either with the Original Sin, or nowadays with the sins belonging to your heritage, *It's All Your Fault* goes back to that age old question: Whose fault was it? Was it Adam, was it Eve, was it the snake, or was it God? Instead, today it's all about what heritage were you born into, what colour were you born into, what's the history of your family, your community - that sort of social determinism, it's going to dictate what you're allowed to do in your life, good or bad; a lot of the choices you are allowed to make are dictated by the sins of our forefathers; our original sins.

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**Lots of modern artists, whose works reflect themes such as the internet or general online culture, tend to incorporate technology or digital media into their work. On the contrary, you use methods such as painting and sculpture, which you refer to on your website as the “traditional techniques of the old European Masters.” Why do you favour such traditional art forms to critique such modern phenomena? Is it an act of resistance?**

You're right, actually. Even my work itself is full of references to youth resistance movements from the past, which are meant to draw parallels between today and yesterday, to ask the question: is history repeating itself again? For example, in my painting *It's All Your Fault – XII* with Big Bird from Sesame Street and the football helmet that has small skulls painted on it, the wins equal the kills, like on a Vietnam soldier's helmet. I included the football helmet to make an association with the Weather Underground movement, a group of rebellious kids who were completely against the traditional white bread, goody two shoes America that they had grown up with. They were going into the streets wearing football helmets and armed with everyday objects like steel pipes and baseball bats, planting bombs, causing disruption as a response to the Vietnam War. “We are against everything that is ‘good and decent’ in honky America. We will loot and burn and destroy. We are the incubation of your mothers’ nightmares.”, said J.J., a member of the Weather Underground. Even though I'm inspired by these types of movements, it would be obnoxious of me to pretend that my work wakes up the power of youth. It's not my role. I witness not instigate. I speak about what I see, what I live. I try to reflect the zeitgeist.

**Whilst we can only dread what the future holds for humanity as a whole, what does the future look like for The Kid? Are you planning any more upcoming works or exhibitions?**

I want to keep surprising people, stopping them in their tracks and provoking a debate within the audience, as well as challenging myself and keeping things exciting for me too. I wish to create even more immersive experiences that trigger emotion and provoke reflection for the viewer. You'll see...



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Exhibitions by contemporary artist ROBIN KID (a.k.a. THE KID) currently on view:

*The Future Is Old*, solo show, MOCO Museum, Amsterdam, until March 1, 2022.

*It's All Your Fault*, solo show, TEMPLON Paris, France, until October 23, 2021.

*This Is Not Home For Us & The State I Am In*, In The Consciousness Of A Country's Empty Mind, installation, 21ST CENTURY Museum, Chicago, United States of America, permanent since 2019.



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