

Artist in the spotlight

THE BOLD AND SPONTANEOUS VISUAL LANGUAGE OF MATTHIJS SCHOLTEN

"My work is not a luxury; it is a necessity, a reminder that creation comes from courage, spontaneity, and the willingness to let something emerge."

This is an exclusive interview with Matthijs Scholten by SmithDavidson Gallery.



Portrait of Matthijs Scholten.

With a background in marketing, Matthijs Scholten learned to read people, sense emotions, and translate ideas into strong visuals. "That experience taught me to think in layers conceptually and visually and to connect with an audience beyond words. It also gave me the confidence to trust my instincts, take risks, and focus on creating something authentic rather than following a formula. This independence and curiosity now form the foundation of my art, where freedom and intuition guide my work," Scholten says.

Known for his vibrant and colorful compositions, artist Matthijs Scholten was born in 1983 in Huizen, The Netherlands. Although Scholten has been painting since he was a child, he had never planned to become an artist professionally.

His career started by accident, years ago, when someone saw some of his paintings, made for himself, and offered to exhibit his works in Russia.

"I didn't fully believe it until I found myself on a plane to Irkutsk a month later. From there it led to Moscow, Paris, New York, Montenegro, Miami, London... It's been a whirlwind," the artist reflects on his career.

Since then, Scholten's work have been exhibited nationally and internationally, such as at prominent art fairs like PAN Amsterdam, EXPO Chicago, and The Treasure House Fair in London. His paintings were also on display several years during the Anna Singer Art Week, at the esteemed Museum Singer Laren, The Netherlands.



Matthijs Scholten, *Angels & Demons* (2024).

“I’ve learned that the art world can be unpredictable, but that suits me so is my process. I don’t try to fit into the system. I make the work I need to make, and like-minded people connect with it.”

Raw, Intuitive, and Layered Art

The work of Matthijs Scholten, is immediately recognizable yet difficult to classify in any particular style or school. He brings many, partly contrasting components together to create his own atypical visual language. The urge to translate the chaotic world around him and establish order is present and dominant in all his artworks. Transforming his visions and reality in a completely visual event, Scholten’s work expresses the turbulent emotions of human existence.

The artist describes his style as raw, intuitive, and layered. “My work does not emerge from a plan but from an inner explosion. Early on, representation dominated, but over time abstraction has become equally important, allowing me to blend both dynamically. Bold contrasts, spontaneous gestures, and symbolic elements define my canvases. Faces and eyes create a dialogue with the viewer, and every piece reflects the tension between chaos and order. My style continues to evolve as I push my own boundaries while remaining true to my essence,” he explains.



Matthijs Scholten with his artworks at PAN Amsterdam with SmithDavidson Gallery (2023).



Matthijs Scholten, *Groove on the Move* (2023).

Scholten’s inspiration originates from the public streets, graffiti art, and weathered elements of buildings, all of which serve as the basis for his imaginative faces. With a new piece, he usually starts with photographs of overlooked, ‘meaningless’ details, fragments that inspire the textures, forms, and vibrant colors in his compositions. “While not literal, they carry the energy of the environment into the canvas, anchoring abstraction and symbolism in lived reality. These urban traces become catalysts for narrative and emotion, allowing spontaneous forms to emerge organically,” Scholten adds.

“I explore freedom and constraint, chaos and order, hope and fear. I also draw deeply from my travels, where encounters with different cultures from raw street culture to the echoes of old, forgotten civilizations keep expanding my visual vocabulary. My paintings fuse childlike freedom, contemporary chaos, and ancient symbolism into a personal visual language that resists categorization.”



Installation shot of Mattheijs Scholten's *Face of Love Triptych* at KunstRAI Amsterdam with SmithDavidson Gallery (2024).

In Scholten's compositions, faces and striking eyes return repeatedly, mask-like and penetrating, as mirrors and anchors, reminding the artist and the viewer of who we are, or could be. "They symbolize awareness, introspection, and the human experience itself," he says. "Often mask-like, with piercing gazes, they return as anchors within the compositions, reminding us of vulnerability, identity, and connection. Their recurring presence creates a dialogue, reflecting both personal introspection and universal humanity."

Reconnect and Reflect

"I want viewers to stop, look, and feel," Mattheijs Scholten declares.

The emotion that the total image evokes, is more important to Scholten than recognition. "My paintings invite people to embrace imperfection, rediscover the value of chance, and experience freedom without control. They are a call to reconnect with oneself in a world dominated by algorithms, expectations, and perfection. My work is not a luxury; it is a necessity a reminder that creation comes from courage, spontaneity, and the willingness to let something emerge."

This past year brought unexpected events that impacted Mattheijs Scholten's work, making it harder to paint and open himself creatively. "This experience taught me patience and self-awareness," he mentions, "but now the challenge is to regain a sense of freedom to start creating again without inhibition or expectation. I want to reconnect with my original essence while letting my work become even more personal. My goal is to develop my visual language further, deepening symbolic elements, keeping bold contrasts, and evolving my unique style. My paintings will continue reflecting both my inner world and universal human experiences, becoming more layered, intimate, and expressive than ever before."



Mattheijs Scholten with gallery owners David Smith and Gabrielle Davidson at PAN Amsterdam (2024).