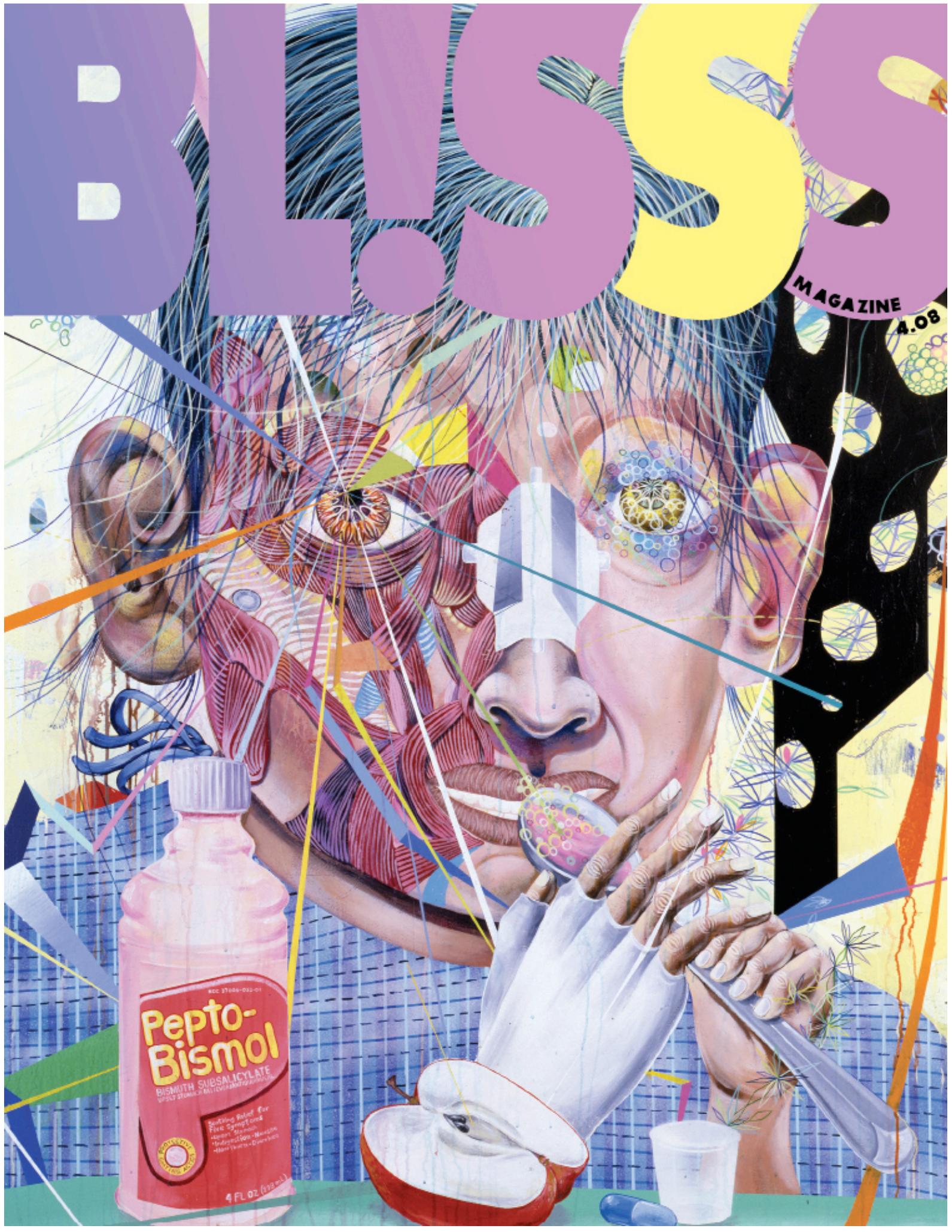


BLISS

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CLAYTON BROTHERS

Interview: MADSTEEZ

I am easily amused, sometimes impressed and I hardly ever lose my shit. The Clayton Brothers artwork made me do just that. I LOST MY SHIT! I first discovered they're art while walking through yet another ordinary cacomb of a stale burnt contemporary art minefield at the famed Art "I'm not a tradeshow" Base. I turned the corner and, BYYYYYAAAAHHHHHH!!! My eyes were blasted by blinding multicolored shrapnel that took the form of gradients, hard lines, hairlines, veins, claws, gauss, chaos, drips, hips and god knows what the hell else. At first glance, some of their paintings seem like complete pandemonium with some of the most leftfield imagery I could never have imagined. After having the chance of getting to meet and interview them in their studio, (I'm not gonna lie, I was damn giddy-up to do so) I was able to swan dive more into how their minds work. I found out that they are inspired by the immediate response to what's going on right then and there. Like how their entire last series was as spontaneous as a motorcycle accident that happened literally outside their studio.

Both Christian and Rob Clayton are soft spoken and very humble beings that seem to enjoy every minute of their careers. They are patrons to the art community by offering their expertise as faculty members at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. Their studio is located in a modest facility outside of Los Angeles, but goddamn was it inspiring. Old school ketchup bottles filled with different colors of paint, dozens of brushes, spray bottles, and rolls of tape were ready to demolish the 10 or so unfinished paintings that hung on the surrounding walls that were simultaneously being worked on in various stages. I was really impressed by the fact that they have somehow seemed to have avoided the commercial "collaborations" (although they are not opposed to it, if it fits) and have still made a huge name for themselves. I also found it interesting that they are able to create such beautiful works of art as two separate entities and when I asked them how the hell are they able to do so, they're response was, "It's not easy, it's like two guys writing every other word in the same book."

**"IT'S NOT EASY,
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OTHER WORD IN
THE SAME BOOK."**





I recently read that you guys don't even talk about the paintings while you're doing them. So where do you even start or how do you finish? Explain that dynamic to me.

We used to not talk about the paintings so much, but talking about everything is kind of the new thing for us. We are talking about everything. It's not like we have to OK anything, as far as imagery wise or anything like that. But there is much more of a dialogue between us as far as what we are painting about and how we are going to get there, and things like the mood of the painting, or the overall message we are trying to embed in it.

Have you guys ever, like in a graffiti type thing, crossed out someone else's stuff? Not aggressively, but if we do take out something, I always feel like there should be at least a small glimpse of that element still there. We like to leave little things behind.

The history mark is kind of an important thing for us.

Your recent work has a bunch of crazy anatomy type imagery and before that your past show revolved around a laundry mat. What influences whats going to be in your next series?

We had an accident that occurred right out in front here as we started to work on a show. It was a motorcycle accident, and we both ran out there, we were first on the scene. We helped this guy up and he ended up being all right and everything but his bike was totaled and we helped him get to the ambulance and all that. We came back and Rob had a really interesting idea. He said "why don't we approach the paintings like we're EMTs?" That way, being the creators, we'll diagnose each patient or what's going on with the painting, or what the symptoms might be. Which really became interesting as a dialogue so then we could kind of put ourselves in the role of the





patient or the role of the doctor and kind of play back and forth with the diagnoses of something. So that was really fun to kind of play around with that whole way of looking at art by explaining it as a patient or seeing it as a doctor. And the human body is a vessel of information. Even sickness became kind of in a weird way a sort of abstract beauty.

One thing that surprised me was that you guys are teachers.

We were brought up in a family where our dad was a photographer, a graphic designer, a painter, and he brought us up in a really open kind of environment for art and artistic expression. So it was like no holds barred for us as far as the punk rock years and all that stuff, so

we kind of grew up with skateboarding and punk bands and all that stuff. He was always very encouraging, even though we were kind of treading down the wrong track in his point of view, but he was still very supportive. I always looked at teaching as an opportunity to kind of give back because I felt really privileged growing up in that kind of environment with that encouragement. So teaching was always something I gravitated towards.

Do you think you guys will always be teachers?

I don't know. The idea of leaving it... the school is so great. Like Rob said, they've been very good to us. They are very supportive of our careers. If we have to travel, they let us travel. We live close to the school, we get a lot from it, and I can't imagine not teaching.





Are you guys ever inspired by your students?
The dialogue is always inspiring. You get into the weirdest conversations with people, and there's something always interesting going on or being said.

Has there ever been a time when you were pissed off at each other? How does that affect the way the art comes out between you two?
I don't think there's ever been a time when we were so pissed off that we couldn't work. That's why we work so close because we've been so close. We're a close family. He's more than a brother. He's like a best friend. Whatever is happening, good or bad, we're always pretty level headed.

With all that's going on with street art, what do you guys think of artists like Banksy selling paintings for over \$100,000 for stencils that take him like two minutes to produce?
You know, graffiti and street art and all that stuff. I think it is an important part of communicating in this world and it does have its moments. And it is more about a public viewpoint I think. It's just money making it important really right now because if you're a street artist and you hear of a stencil selling for \$100,000 your ears are going to perk up. So I guess the more money thrown at it, the more important, the more hype that gets driven around that fuels it, ya know? Which maybe on the other side of that inspires people to wanna make images and you know, have something to stay. That's the cool thing about graffiti is it's for everybody.

Do you guys have an ultimate goal? What do you want your final outcome to be?
Well we just kind of take it day-by-day and month-by-month and year-by-year. We take it seriously so I guess in that manner, we'd love to be in museums. We get to do a survey of our art in 2009 for the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. That's going to be fun putting that together. It's our first venture with a museum.

For more info about the Clayton Brothers upcoming show at the Apama Mackey Gallery in Houston, TX, check out www.claytonbrothers.com

BLISS: CLAYTON BROTHERS INTERVIEW

By MADSTEEZ

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