

JOHNNY OTTO / OTTOPHOBIA / Conspiracy + Propaganda = Art

[GALLERY 1](#) [GALLERY 2](#) [GALLERY 3](#) [SKETCHBOOKS](#) [CONcepts](#) [PRESS](#) [STORE](#) [VIDEO](#) [ART SQUAT](#) [END HUNGER](#) [CONTACT](#)

ARTISTS STATEMENT

"Are we to paint what's on the face, what's inside the face, or what's behind it?" - Picasso

"Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth." - Oscar Wilde

Indecipherable things come out of you as you create something new and then you search your entire life to find a reason why...an explanation for your art. As far as I can tell, my greatest inspiration came from numerous visits to the Detroit Institute of Arts with my father, as a child, where we would see the distorted faces that Pablo Picasso painted, which were based on African Masks. In particular, 'Les Femmes d'Alger' (O. J. R. Version O), Picasso's masterpiece, was a great influence. Later, as a teen, I became influenced by my older brother Eric's collection of wooden African Masks. His bedroom walls were covered with them. Eric died at the age of 39, quite suddenly and unexpectedly. When I heard the news, I nearly fainted. That's when my art really shifted. Perhaps his spirit is in me somehow. I don't know. We weren't that close, truth be told. But I did find those masks of his to be very compelling. It's as if they had a life of their own. A secret story yet to be discovered. My brother had worn a mask for most of his life. He was gay and feared anybody finding out. One day my sister found magazines in his room of naked men. That's how we found out he was gay. It must have devastated him to have his mask removed so abruptly. But we all have secrets that we hide, don't we? We all have our masks that we present to the world. Our faces. What's behind them?

Johnny Otto is an emerging Artist living in Los Angeles. He is also an award-winning Filmmaker, Social Activist & the Founder of [Ottophobia](#). His paintings and other artwork are greatly influenced by the [Neo-Expressionistic \(The Wild Ones\)](#) artists of the 70's and 80's and by the [Fang Masks](#) created by the Fang People. Johnny Otto is a prolific painter whose work has been compared to [Jean-Michel Basquiat](#), [George Condo](#), [Picasso](#), [Keith Haring](#), and many other influential artists of the last century.

In the early 90's he helped form the [ART SQUAT](#) collective and is actively keeping its spirit alive in the Hollywood area. He is also a member of both the [ACLU](#) and the Los Angeles Art Syndicate. He participated in the The Angel Art benefit, an art and photography auction that was hosted by [Herb Ritts](#), [Richard Meier](#), [Robert Graham](#) and [David Hockney](#). The event, emceed by Lily Tomlin, commemorated artists who have died from AIDS. He has been featured in [MovieMaker Magazine](#) and his films have debuted at The Palm Springs Film Festival and The La Jolla International Fashion Film Festivals. He also started his own festival called SLIMDUNCE, in 2009, to showcase 7 films that he made in a 7 week period.



Johnny Otto has been calling Los Angeles his home since 1990. Born in Bay Village, Ohio in 1966, his father moved the family to Canada in 1971, presumably because of the Vietnam War. He began his art career in his home town of Windsor, Ontario in 1985. He was also a Radio DJ at the influential college station [CJAM-FM](#) from 1987-1990. In 1991 he created his first and only still life, a painting of flowers in a vase, reminiscent of Van Gogh's 'Flowers in a Blue Vase', which he instructed his mother to place in his father's coffin. He spent the next few years participating in group shows and hosting solo exhibits around the Los Angeles area.

Having trouble getting into conventional galleries, Johnny Otto decided to take matters into his own hands and created a series of unconventional solo shows including 'Art In The Alley', which allowed motorists to drive down an alley in Hollywood that was filled with his art. Later that year he and his friends created [Art Squat](#) as they commandeered an abandoned building across from Fairfax High School and turned it into an art space that lasted for two years before being discovered and shut down.

Eventually Johnny Otto made his way into some of Hollywood's more experimental galleries including 01, Headquarters, The Farhad Novia & Simon Miller Space, Ministry and many others. He is currently working on his new series of 'Savage' paintings, highly influenced by African and Tribal art. In June 2017, he launched his [#FINDART](#) campaign and has promised to hide pieces of his art around the Los Angeles area and then leave clues on his social media platforms so that his fans can find the art and keep it for themselves. Always seeking to be innovating and audacious in everything that he does, Johnny Otto will also be hosting art events in which he will provide blank canvases and paints and invite fans to attempt to paint in his style. To counter the recent sale of Basquiat's 1982 "Untitled" for \$110,000,000 to Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa, Johnny Otto will begin raffling off one of his paintings for \$500,000,011 at a special show called "[Not Basquiat](#)". Johnny Otto's calling card, [MOUSE TRAPS](#) painted red, have become a collector's item in the



SQUATTER'S RITES / LAWEEKLY

"What would you do if the landlord stopped collecting rent and allowed squatters to take over an abandoned Fairfax-district apartment right next to yours? Why, commandeer the empty site, run extension cords from your pad into the space and create an art collective, of course. That's exactly what host/artist - not to mention beautiful - ANDY SCHEER did when he brought together artists HOLLAND, DAVID FRUDIS, MICHAEL MORRISON, JOHNNY OTTO, and just plain old OTTO for ARTSQUAT recently. Judging by the refreshments (beer and a boozy pink punch - what squatter can afford champagne?), this was no fancy-shmancy party. Among the smart art tarts milling and swilling while reviewing the hand-painted photographs, illustrations, and paintings were actor ALEXIS ARQUETTE, superstar CANDYASS, hairchopper FRANKIE PAYNE, PETRA HAYDEN (formerly of THAT DOG), Aussie transplants BELINDA GAVIN and her hot boyfriend MULLY, saucy SELENA, who got into the spirit of the evening by painting "ARTSQUAT" across her breasts (now that's what we call titillating), club king JOSH WELLS, photographer ANDY DEVINE, cocksucker to the stars HAGATHA, the long-lost but not missed SHELVELVA KENNEDY-SINATRA, and brassy babe MISS ANDRA." - LA WEEKLY, J.V. McAuley

Johnny Otto's paintings are creating a stir in the Los Angeles art world because of the bold way in which he deconstructs the human figure, both male and female, into a tangled web of limbs, breasts, lips, eyes and genitals as if their forms were inseparable from each other and their backgrounds. Taking inspiration from the ground-breaking artists who came before him and from the cracked pavement and graffiti riddled streets of Los Angeles, Otto's work is a fine line between "street art" and "fine art". His tools are often just an old butter knife, some acrylic paint and a piece of cardboard or canvas. Johnny Otto names his pieces with a series of eight X's and Y's, which signify the X and Y Chromosomes. He describes his work as being "Modern Cubism without the cubes! Like jazz, dance, sex, punk, Capoeira and rock all mixed together. They are an exploration of the similarities between the sexes; of how the yin and yang of human sexuality are so closely intertwined as to sometimes seem indistinguishable, taking gender bending to the next level!"

Johnny Otto



Dieses Fleisch von uns

44" x 88" acrylic on cardboard

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

- 1966 BORN IN BAYVILLE, OHIO
- 1971 MOVED TO CANADA WITH FAMILY
- 1974-1985 ATTENDED PRIVATE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
- 1986-1999 ATTENDED THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR
- 1989 WON "BEST SCRIPT" AT C.O.S.T. FESTIVAL IN CANADA

- 1990 MOVED TO LOS ANGELES
- 1992 CO-FOUNDER OF ARTSQUAT
- 1993 HIS FATHER DIES AT AGE 63
- 1996 MARRIES ARTIST SHIHO AMANO
- 1999 BEGINS TRIBAL.SEXUAL SERIES
- 2000 DIVORCES ARTIST SHIHO AMANO
- 2001 BROTHER ERIC DIES AT AGE 39
- 2001 OTTOPHOBIA: WROTE, DIRECTED AND PRODUCED DV FEATURE FILM "BRUISED"
- 2003 SOLO EXHIBIT AT HEADQUARTERS FOR TRIBAL.SEXUAL SERIES
- 2007 SLIMDUNCE - 7 FILMS IN 7 WEEKS - DIRECTS/SHOOTS/EDITS 7 SHORT FILMS
- 2007-2011 CONTINUES TO SHOW WORK PRIVATELY
- 2009 HIS MOM DIES FROM CANCER
- 2011 FOCUSES ON FILM PROJECTS
- 2012 BEGINS "FLESH" SERIES
- 2015 FINISHES 'THE SUN KING' SHORT FILM
- 2017 NEW SHORT FILM 'PARFUM DE MES REVES' IS OFFICIAL SELECTION IN LA JOLLA FASHION FILM FESTIVAL
- 2016-2017 BEGINS "SAVAGE" SERIES AND BEGINS DOCUMENTING HIS PROCESS ON FILM



EXHIBITIONS

- 1988 GROUP SHOW/SUBWAY EXHIBITIONS - ABSTRACT PAINTINGS - UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR, ONTARIO. CANADA
- 1989 SOLO EXHIBIT/RIVERFRONT GALLERY - FIGURATIVE PAINTINGS AND SKETCHES - WINDSOR, ONTARIO. CANADA
- 1990-1991 CURATOR/PARTICIPANT FOR GROUP SHOW "MEGABOYS" - FEATURING 20 EMERGING ARTISTS SPONSORED BY FARHAD NOVIAN AND SIMON MILLER - LOS ANGELES, CA
- 1993 PROJECT ANGEL FOOD ART AUCTION PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER - LOS ANGELES, CA
- 1992-1994 CO-FOUNDER OF ART SQUAT COLLECTIVE - CONCEPTUAL PIECES - LOS ANGELES, CA
- 1994 ART IN THE ALLEY - EXPERIMENTAL DRIVE-THRU ART EXHIBIT- FEATURING ABSTRACT AND FIGURATIVE PAINTINGS - LOS ANGELES, CA
- 1994 PRIVATE SOLO SHOW - ABSTRACT AND FIGURATIVE PAINTINGS - LOS ANGELES, CA
- 1996 SOLO EXHIBIT AT MINISTRY GALLERY - ABSTRACT AND FIGURATIVE PAINTINGS - LOS ANGELES, CA
- 1999 01 GALLERY - GROUP AUCTION - ABSTRACT AND FIGURATIVE PAINTINGS - LOS ANGELES, CA
- 2005 HEADQUARTERS: SOLO EXHIBIT - TRIBAL.SEXUAL TRIBAL, MINIMALISM. SKETCHES AND PAINTINGS - LOS ANGELES, CA
- 2009 - 2014 PRIVATE EXHIBITIONS BY APPOINTMENT ONLY - LOS ANGELES, CA
- 2014 GROUP SHOW AT THE ASHLEY PAIGE GALLERY - HOLLYWOOD, CA
- 2017 #FINDART / Hidden pieces throughout the Hollywood area - HOLLYWOOD, CA
- 2017 STREET ART FAIR - LOS ANGELES, CA
- 2017 SOLO SHOW (TBA) - HOLLYWOOD, CA

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

- JEFF HAMILTON - LOS ANGELES,CA
- DJ CRASH - LOS ANGELES,CA
- SHIRLEY LEVI - LOS ANGELES,CA
- IRIS STRAWFIELD - SAN FRANCISCO,CA
- GRANT REYNOLDS - LOS ANGELES,CA
- LOUIS HAGNEY - LOS ANGELES,CA
- PATTY HEALY - LOS ANGELES,CA
- NATALIE MILLER - LOS ANGELES,CA
- ISABEL DESANTI - LOS ANGELES,CA
- RUBEN FENWICK - LOS ANGELES,CA
- IAN SMITH - TORONTO,CANADA
- MARC JOFFE - WINDSOR,CANADA
- ANTHONY GRAY - WINDSOR,CANADA
- DON SCOTTI - LOS ANGELES,CA
- DAN HELKA - DETROIT,MI
- MARK SIMMONS - LOS ANGELS,CA
- DEBBIE DIAMOND - LOS ANGELES,CA
- GILROY ARIJON - TOKYO,JAPAN
- KIM SU - TOKYO,JAPAN
- STACY CASE - LOS ANGELES,CA
- ELDON DAITWEILER - LOS ANGELES,CA
- KATY GARAS - SANTA MONICA,CA
- DANIEL FRANCO - NEW YORK,NY
- SHIHO AMANO - NEW YORK,NY
- MICHAEL HALE - LOS ANGELES,CA
- GREG OTTO - LOS ANGELES,CA
- MICHELLE LOLLI - LOS ANGELES,CA