

Q1: How did the in-place Max's Kansas City come about? And where did the name come from?

A: The way I see it, it came about because there was a need for it. Mickey Ruskin, who had previously run conceptual cafes, bistros and smaller coffee shops – e.g. Les Deux Megots (DK: De Two Cigarettskod) as a reference to the legendary restaurant in Paris Les Deux Magots —had at his various establishments met many artists who were the only people he had respect for. Of course, during their many trips and in the late hours of the night, they had given Mickey good ideas of how they thought a really cool place should be. Mickey's desire was mainly to serve serious steaks and freshly caught lobsters. When they were brainstorming the name of the place, they wanted a reference to Kansas City because they thought it was the only place in America where you could get proper meat. Max's came about because they had to give the place a personal name, and Max was the name of a man they all thought they would like if he owned a restaurant.

Q2: Who was Mickey Ruskin?

A: Mickey was a man who didn't like the system he lived in and dropped out after training as a lawyer. "Tune in, turn on and drop out" was a bit of the Beatnickers' motto coined by Timothy Leary, and Mickey felt that he had more in common with the artists, musicians and 'the freaks' than with the world he came from.

Q3: What tied the artists at Max's together?

A: The common denominator for the artists who were part of Max's was first of all that they were friends with Mickey, but also that they had the right attitude and energy that they could spread in the premises. If Mickey liked an artist for the person she/he was, he gave them an open bill where they could eat and drink for the value he thought they had to him. In addition, they gave him/Max's a work of art or an ongoing performance.

If the right people were in place, the rest would take care of itself.

Q4: You told me earlier that there is also a kind of alchemical common denominator in this exhibition... Can you elaborate on that?

A: Art in its true form begins with alchemy. The various signs and symbols used by e.g. Leonardo da Vinci, William Blake, Jean Cocteau and in this exhibition Andy Warhol, Frosty Myers, Anton Perich and Robert Rauchenberg is a red thread (like a rose) in my way of putting the exhibition together and puts a triangular framework around the concept.

Q5: The human hierarchy and the spatial division at Max's can sound almost sectarian - with Warhol enthroned in the back room as a better high priest surrounded by other superstars, the visual artists in the front room and the rest of the crowd placed in between - including various musicians, actors, politicians, models, writers and wannabees. Was there a bit of loge in it?

A: I would say that the lodge that went into it was that the place was a theater and a forum for performing arts in every form, and the world outside Max's was the lodge where you changed before going on stage.

Q6: What is it about this 10-year period in American cultural history that continues to appeal to us?

A: It is the period within modern history that laid the foundation for popular culture as we know it today and are inspired by it on a daily basis on various creative levels.

It was also a time when you still did something for the sake of it and didn't think exclusively about how you could make money from the things you were involved in. Something we can learn a lot from in today's cultural life.

Q7: What influence have the actions at Max's had on you as an artist?

A: The people who came to Max's and the things that happened there influenced me very concretely. Anton Perich, who was one of the people who came to Max's every night with his camera, is my very good friend and mentor. Billy Name, who was Warhol's lover and great inspiration, has been, and still is, my guru and inspiration as a photographer. While living in New York I was very close to the life many of the artists at Max's lived...for better or for worse.

Q8: As a visual artist, how do you go about curating such an exhibition?

A: As an artist, you cannot ignore the fact that all the art you make is a kind of self-portrait. The art I have chosen to show at this exhibition represents a part of me and my vision. I have chosen to focus on certain people from Max's who represent people and inspiration in my own life. The women, the drugs, the music, the art, my father (who is also a restaurateur), the strong energy - but also the destructive and darker side of history. It is at the same time a tribute and declaration of love to New York and a continuation of my cultural exchange project that began in New York in 1999 with Danish newwave. Back then it was Danish culture in New York, now it is New York culture in Denmark.

Q9: Why is the exhibition coming now?

A: After 9/11, George W. Bush, war, terrorist attacks, destruction and fear in everyday life, you can easily compare our time with that time. They had the fear of atomic bombs, the assassination of JFK, Bobby Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, the Vietnam War, Nixon and the Watergate affair - all seasoned with a decent handful of 'Sex, Drugs and Rock'n Roll'. I myself returned to Denmark after 11 September and had quite a lot 'in my luggage'. In 1998, I had created the event and exhibition behind the publication High on Rebellion - Inside the Underground at Max's Kansas City at Club Limelight. A very dark Gothic church owned by New York's 'Prince of Darkness' - Peter Gatten. When I first entered Nikolaj Kirke, I felt that the exhibition should be shown here, where I could have free rein to pursue my early visions of the ultimate Max's exhibition.

Q10: What will the exhibition offer?

A: Anton Perich's documentation of the people at Max's and paintings made of his invention in the form of a painting machine. Billy Name's personal photographs of Warhol before he was shot and crossed over. Dan Flavin's light sculpture, which set the tone and the blood-red light over "the backroom". Warhol's original silkscreen Banana from the Velvet Underground's record cover as well as his gift to Nixon's opponent during the presidential election so that "Slick Dick" could be kicked out of the White House. Frosty Myer's laser sculpture and drawings from 1968 of the light installation that was later used on the first anniversary of September 11 - as well as the world's largest light pyramid to be erected in connection with the Culture Night on October

8... Where Maya Albana will perform "God Bless Education" inside Nikolaj Church. To name just a few things.