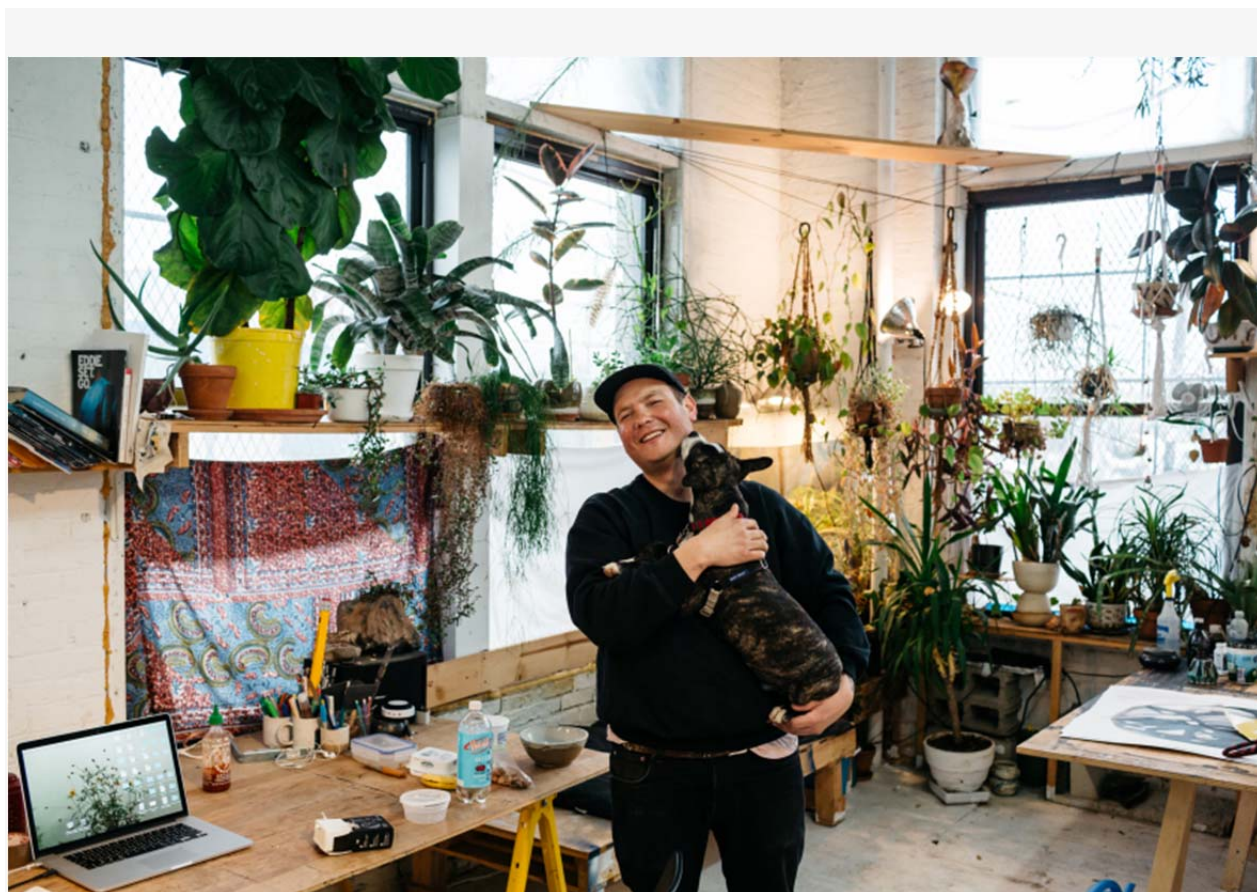




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by Sean Hotchkiss

THE METHOD: PAUL WACKERS



Planter. Painter. Road Trip Taker. Wake up in the colorful, zany world of Brooklyn-based artist Paul Wackers.

“I’m a bed maker, coming home to a twisted blanket is confusing.”

Paul the artist and Buddy the dog live together in a light filled railroad apartment in East Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Paul has lived in this particular apartment since November. Buddy arrived a month later. “This is the first place I’ve lived alone,” Paul says. “With roommates it’s always, ‘Can you live with my stuff?’ or ‘Are you gonna ruin my stuff?’ It’s really nice to have your stuff.” Paul’s stuff is colorful. Much like his paintings there are layers, objects collected over time. And plants. Always plants. Buddy has colorful stuff too. Mostly toys. Like a blue bear he’s ripped the eyes from. Or the red ball that Paul tosses down the hallway for him and he fetches. This happens again and again each morning.



Paul takes a shower and has breakfast. Toast, vanilla yogurt and coffee. His mug is yellow. *The Mystery Spot.*

Santa Cruz, California, it reads. Paul is from Connecticut. His parents are Dutch. “I’m a bed maker,” Paul says as he straightens his sheets. “Coming home to a twisted blanket is confusing.” Buddy is confused why we are in his house. He whimpers from his crate. But he is happy when Paul gets dressed and puts on his shoes because he knows it’s time to go to the studio. “It’s like having a little child,” Paul says. “I have to remember the right toys, snacks for the road.”



On the road—which is only a three-block trek—we pass by Cooper Park where a man shouts at Paul. Then shouts at buddy. Paul waves. “Yeah, I’m a dog person now,” says Paul and smiles. His cheeks are pink from the cold rain. “I’m kind of hanging back, not going whole hog yet on the dog park friendships.” Buddy marches along, leading us

towards the studio. "He has purpose," says Paul. We enter a steel door that says, unsurprisingly, Paul Wackers.



Paul's studio is art imitating life. Or quite possibly the reverse. It's a slightly zanier, more layered world than his apartment. Four and a half years' worth of plants, all shapes and sizes, perhaps hundreds of them. And paint. And dirty brushes that Paul hates to clean. There is a rubbish bin that Paul has affectionately named Trashy.



“The first hour here is always weird,” Paul says as he puts on a paint-splattered sweatshirt. “Usually I decide I’m not quite ready to start yet and go to Dunkin Donuts for another coffee.” Paul is prepping for an exhibition in San Francisco, where he lived for almost a decade. They have asked for lots of works, so Paul is busy. Buddy is busy, too. Chewing on a table leg. He is teething.



Paul pulls down a few works from the new show. They are beautiful. He begins work on a painting, filling in a bulbous leaf with two shades of green. Paul's work in Paul's words...

“They’re all just kind of my world, my space. I start there and just rip on it. I’m very interested in that little slip between what’s really here and what I remember.”

Paul plans to buy a car and drive across the country to the West Coast for the show. Then drive back to New York after the show is complete. Back-and-forth—like brushstrokes. The adventure wouldn’t be complete without Buddy. He’ll be riding shotgun. “Our work will be over then,” Paul says. “And then we can have a little fun.”

