

TEMPLON

ii

WILL COTTON

DAMN, Summer, 2020

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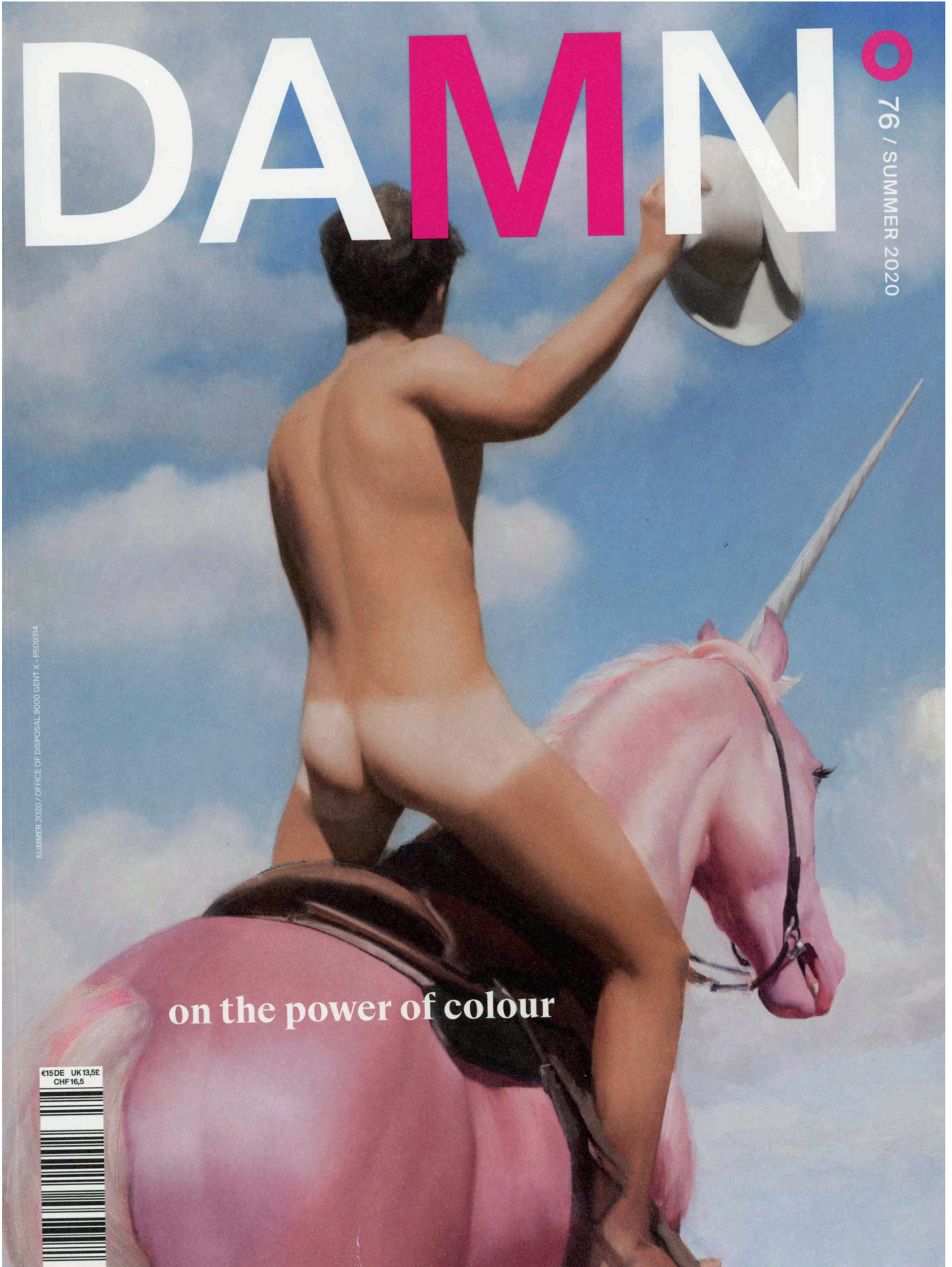


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on the power of colour

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In American artist Will Cotton's latest exhibition he uses the mythical role of the cowboy to make sense of his country's political schizophrenia in the midst of the ongoing electoral campaign. "The problem with Trump of course is that his character defects prevent him from being a good leader," Cotton says. "Like the cowboy, he refuses to accept criticism, he's essentially a loner who's actions are impetuous. He'll shoot first, and ask questions later, and lacks empathy."

The work - currently showing at Galerie Templon in Brussels - offers a new take on the most iconic of American cultural symbols. Featured are a series of oil paintings as well as new drawings in oil, sanguine and pencil. "The paintings in this show present the possibility of transformation," Cotton says. "The cowboy, in the presence of the unicorn evolves to overcome ignorance and to know empathy."

Born in 1965, Will Cotton studied at the New York Academy of Art and fine arts school in Rouen and has worked across disciplines from patisserie to music and fashion. At first the large oil paintings appear to have a classical style, yet intrigue the viewer with an unanticipated twist on the expected - pink unicorns in lieu of horses. The pink unicorn counters the virility and violence represented by the figure of the cowboy and also explore gender and queer issues.

So why pink? "The colors I use are usually most influenced by pop culture iconography," he explains. "It's our common language which evolves over time. A hundred years ago, pink was the color for baby boys."

And as with all art the big question remains, can Cotton's work make a difference? "The difficulty is reaching an audience that doesn't already agree with you," he admits. "The art world is a relatively small bubble with fairly homogenous politics. I've seen more of this happening in the medium of television. There have been a few television shows in the U.S. that have been credited with having a profound influence on public views toward homosexuality. *Will and Grace* and *Ellen* are a few examples." / GK



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