

UNDERSTANDING MY WAY

by

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Before I was reviewed at the portfolio day at the Massachusetts College of Art in the spring of 2005 I spent my entire high school career being influenced by my fathers interest in painting and design. It was then in tenth grade that I was to be introduced into the art form known as graffiti, which initially pushed my influence and determination towards fine art. From there, I gained more and more knowledge of the underground/street art form, eventually developing into an interest in colors with compositions and structure. And as school went on to the point where it came time to develop a portfolio my interest in graffiti had only grown bigger but had also opened my eyes to a possibility of other things than just aerosol art, being abstract art. I eventually started pursuing my trade in monoprints and paintings in which I created them with an intuitive state of mind for my portfolio.

Four years after my acceptance at SUNY Purchase College, my art has grown in many different ways. I've gained experience with critiquing and understanding art from an aesthetic point, which has opened my eyes to aspects of structure, balance, sparseness, subtlety, high-contrast, equal pressure along with many other things. This education has taught me to look at not only myself in this light but more importantly my art. From this growth of experience, my art has transformed from randomness and with obscure actions all over the surface plain in which I work, to structure with letters and formality in which any public viewer can identify and understand.

As I started my freshman year of college at SUNY Purchase I began with fundamental courses such as Design I, Drawing I, Sculpture I and Creative Writing. All of which I wasn't really enthused about except for Creative Writing because I never had the experience or interest in any of those concentrations prior to college. Design felt too structured and made me feel like I couldn't work outside of the grid while everything had to be executed with fine craft, which clashed with my style because I was so interested in abstraction at the moment. With sculpture I felt overwhelmed with how hands-on it was and just wasn't comfortable with the responsibility of finding found objects to aid your ideas of your project. Finally, drawing just felt too figurative and meek. I needed color. I wanted wildness and the option to free my mind and speak it at the same time.

At that point I was getting a little too out of hand in terms of wildness and mind freeing. It got to the point of arrest. During the month of November I was arrested for graffiti making and destruction of private and public property. I spent a night in the University Police Department precinct handcuffed to a rail cemented into the floor of the room awaiting my arraignment the next morning in Harrison Town Court. After seeing the judge and spending the day in county jail, I was then to be found guilty for everything at school and was suspended the following spring semester of 2006. With that eye-opening under my belt, I returned to Purchase that Fall of 2006 with intention of making up for what I had done by improving my negativity towards damaging property, to creating something along the same line but in a legal fine art manner. I went on to taking printmaking courses and re-taking Design I. After the time of my first printmaking course, Extended media, I proceeded to follow my interest with printmaking by taking another course until I eventually declared my major in it. I eventually ended up taking all of the fundamental courses such as Intro to Intaglio and Silkscreen and Lithography and Woodcut, ultimately leading up to Advanced Printmaking.

As I grew as a person but also as an artist, I started to understand and see myself better in my own art. I was able to foresee what I would want to put into my pieces and how I should stray away from it. Because from the beginning of my career at SUNY Purchase I had been working abstractly with every chance I got. And once I entered the printmaking department I almost primarily worked intuitively, whether it be Intaglio, Silkscreen, Lithography or Woodcut. And after a while I began to develop a style from understanding other peoples points of view from the critiques I had received.

When I started out, I would work with what I knew. This being graffiti related things, such as arrows and other angular objects like boxes or triangles or stars. And as my work progressed onward, I would merge them together to create more of an abstraction and less of a literal translation of them. Eventually leading to an absence of such iconic symbols to random shapes intertwined with horizontal, vertical and circular lines with color and other random compositions.

My theory on art at that point was to make what you like and do it for yourself, and if people enjoyed and saw what they liked then that was that. If they didn't enjoy it then that was fine as well. My intention was to make art that spoke for itself. In my mind, abstract art didn't really need explaining, so why stand there looking for viewers who were confused to help aid their understanding about it. I felt like most or all of abstract art spoke for itself and that it was either hit or miss. If you liked it, you liked it. And if you didn't you didn't, there wouldn't be anyone there telling you that what you thought was right or wrong. I felt as though that it wasn't necessary to explain my thought process in making what I made because everything I did was so intuitive; so how was I to verbalize the point in the piece where I did what I did because it felt right at the time. It all felt like an opinion paper; there was no right or wrong, it was all an expression of my feelings and taste in aesthetics.

Eventually I grew out of being an artist living by the motto of "Do what you feel" and looking for more structure. I started to collage more when I was introduced into Leonard Stoke's class about color theory where I felt more comfortable about making abstraction. Because with the collages I was creating at the time, I had more of a thought process and couldn't just lay down pieces of paper on top of each other and hope for the best with the end product. This thought process eventually reached its way over to my prints where I ended up working with the idea and theme of collage altogether. This form of art kept my interest for about a year or so until I was reaching my senior year. I spent the first half of it still making collages and other abstract works until I had created a letter font-like form. And at that point I looked at that print and said to myself "I'm sick of doing this inane abstract art, all I like in this piece is the letter." So from there all I started to work on were letters.

As letters and fonts became a part of my life, I wanted to still keep a little abstraction on the side, so I started introducing the idea of abstracting the recognizable. My thoughts on art had started to mature towards the public and how the everyday viewer would interpret my art and be able to understand it or at least identify with it. I knew that no matter what before understanding most art, the majority of the viewers base their likes or dislikes on aesthetics.

So not only have I gained a sense of style within myself by maturing while at school, but I've also grown in terms of being able to talk about more than just what art should make you feel and what one should be thinking about when creating it. Because I think the most important and core of creating art, is figuring out what drives you to do what you do. And once you've figured that out, you can direct your taste to a marketable standpoint and then can create forever.

I've gained this confidence and attitude from the years of spending time with my peers and teachers by receiving advice and criticism starting with the most insignificant piece to my senior project. I can confidently and finally say that everything I've taken up to this point has had some sort of influence on me and has brought me and molded me to the point that I'm at with complete satisfaction. I've completed my senior project and know exactly what I think looks good and can stand by my opinion and back it up with confidence.