
FROM PHOTOS AND EXPERIENCES TO PAINT

By

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Born from immigrated parents and raised in a one-bedroom apartment with three other siblings and just enough money to get by. Oddly common. Three beds in one room, yet the father persist to sleep on the floor with just a couple of blankets. Surely things will get better, right? Well, four beds now in one room with the father still sleeping on the floor now with two place mats and blankets. It would be foolish if I said we did not grow at all, but growth was hellishly slow and still feels slow to me. Yet I couldn't say I had a terrible upbringing, but I also can't say I'm comfortable where I am. My life is filled with so many memories and experiences, stories of the past and wishes for the future, dreams that came and went, all these things formed me like a hand shaping clay. These feeling and stories secreted from my hand as I painted and drawn these last four years of college. My memory and photos taken from my lifetime helped me question myself as well as the world around me. The last four years was a steady growth of technique and practices that eventually helped me become better with my materials and visions. My thesis hopefully captures all the hard work I've been doing and the growth I clawed for.

For my last year of college, I focus on refining the process of creating images with ambiguity and storytelling. Throughout my whole college career, I tried to make work with these themes in mind, but I was severely struggling with my materials and how clear I wanted my work to be. Coming to college, all I have ever done were drawings, just pencil and paper. I only ever touched paint maybe once or twice, and it was never oil paint. Looking at me peers

and hearing them say they came from an art high school or already came with credits had me belittled. I felt like I was left in the dust before the race ever began. The first two years of college I had to hammer in what paint was, how to use it, what paint best suits you, how to make canvas from scratch, the whole nine yards. The third year of college is where I was trying to figure out what inspires me and gives me passion to paint. Looking at my first couple of works, I noticed I was subconsciously leaving out information to make the work harder to understand. My theory was that I didn't like art that was a "come and go" work made to impress or show bright colors to forcefully grab attention, then once consumed left and never thought about again. With that in mind I began to create works that were meaningful to me and only through slow consumption of the work the viewer can figure out what they find meaningful. Making the work hard to understand was a balancing act. On one hand if I made the work too difficult to draw a conclusion from then the viewer might give up but if I made the work too easy it becomes a "come and go" work. I solve this by using narrative to nudge the viewer towards a direction similar to the one I had making the work. I would leave some recognizable object or some sort of cultural reference in the work so that they won't get discouraged. Furthermore, I do this, so the work seems welcoming to them and provides a connection to their similar life. It's as if I am slowly guiding them throughout the work, with the ambiguity acting as freedom of whatever conclusion they seem to fit.

The process of me creating my works revolves around how I feel that specific day or what occupies a majority of my mind, so painting these time related ideas creates a sense of resolve for my conscience. I rarely go back into a painting because I believe that it is important to have a visual reminder of what worked and what didn't. Also, as the old saying goes time

waits for no one, so why should I be stuck on an idea and feel like I must do it one hundred percent perfectly? I'm sure that for the rest of my life I will consistently create new ideas with new visuals to go along with it. I start with a topic that I am intrigued in and try to mentally figure out what visual language I can use to best convey my opinion and thoughts on this topic. Next, I look at my available photos I have on my phone, which I accumulated throughout days, and see if one of my photos can convey this topic. Usually, I do but if not, I then discuss with myself if I can create a photo well enough from scratch or can I find images online and collage them (sketches) to create a good composition that fits within my ideas. Within the sketches and while transferring them onto canvas, I try to keep in mind lights and shadows because this fundamental concept has huge advantages. You can get away with a lot if the values look real. Transferring the sketch is always done with just my eyes and drawing with diluted oil paint. No projectors or grids. I believe this practice helps me refine my drawing abilities. I also always stain the canvas, usually with burnt umber or sometimes with a more prominent color shown in the reference photo. This helps me not get distracted by the white of the canvas and helps with color choices. Lastly color. For color, I try to stay within the reference photo, but usually I amplify some color so that there are different moments of calmness and moments of intensity.

My work ranges from figure drawings to zoom in compositions that act like abstraction to conceptual art. One of my favorite painting I've done would have to be a zoom in view of interlocking hands. These hands are representing a relationship between two people who both have a tight grip on one another. One of these hands are painted with a desaturated green, same as the environment around the hands, to symbolize a decay/sick feeling. The other hand has pink flesh tones and a suffocating blue and purplish color to represent the choking caused

by the tight grip. This work is my favorite because it seems so abstract from the zoom in composition, but to me, it had a story grounded in reality. Some of my recent paintings have a more quiet and intimate feeling to them. I try to amplify the photo aspect in these works to show the isolationism photos have and make the viewer consider their role in viewing these works. I want the viewer to feel as if they stumbled onto the world of the painting and have no control on the outcome of that work. They are just a lucky pair of eyes that got to see a glimpse into this odd world. One large painting is of two pairs of feet wearing very different ideas of expensive clothing. Another large painting is of a home which either seems to be engulfed in fire or is just covered in the golden color of autumn leaves. A much smaller painting holds the uncomfortable image of a baby crying, which leads me to personal experiences of hearing a baby cry so much that it begins to choke. Another work has an image of an old but not forgotten world of the past surrounded with objects that signify an adaptation into a new world. All my work is based in the theme of isolation, quietness, intimacy, and ambiguity. These themes stem from my enjoyment of viewing one of my favorite artists.

A lot of artists inspire me with ideas and different ways to paint. One of my most influential artist must be Edward Hopper. Looking at his works, I always found enjoyment in the loneliness the figures share in his paintings. The way he painted also help convey the sense of emptiness. The soft brush strokes and refine blending really allow the viewer to focus in on the relationship the figures have with one another and the world they lived in. Both Hopper and I paint a scene that is depressing or somber, and so another artist I found influential to me is Francisco Goya. Goya lived an odd and melancholy life. He painted for royals and saw his dreams of a better society die in front of him. Later in his life, he made his most famous works

just for himself, and these works were somewhat disturbing. The desaturated colors and the social/cultural subject he chose can leave viewers a little uneasy. That is what caught my attention. I don't want to paint traditional landscapes or portraiture, and I don't want to make paintings that can be read easily. Goya's subject and colors help slow down the reading process of paintings by forcing the viewer to figure out why certain colors were chosen and what do they do to the subject. Also, I don't want to paint happy images that are quickly appreciated then left for the next dose of dopamine. I combine the loneliness found in Hopper's paintings with the social/cultural wants in Goya's paintings. For color, I bounce around using bright colors from Hopper and desaturated colors from Goya. These are the two most influential artists so far in my career. Besides these two artists, I love looking at what my peers create. Seeing what the people besides me are creating helps me observe what works in art at a general level and what can be broken through into new boundaries. Also, the discussion I overhear or am a part of helps me get a little insight into what art is currently popular, what art is on the fall, and what art might be on the rise. Regardless of the fluctuation, I'll probably stick to what make me passionate about art.

My senior thesis show was a four-year-long journey to figure out what type of art I want to create. Ambiguity along with isolation from photographs clearly stuck with me for a reason. Colors that help slow down the reading also perpetuate. I want to create work that is slow and difficult to read but offers a question about everyday life for you and me. My senior thesis is only the end to my college career, but not to my lifetime career of making.

Bibliography

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Works



Can't Explain
Oil on canvas
10''x 20''



Untitled
Oil on canvas
11"x 14"



Untitled
Oil on canvas
15"x 18"



Untitled

Oil on canvas

12''x 15''



Change

Oil on canvas

22''x 28''



Untitled
Oil on canvas
18''x 20''



*Term of
Endearment:
Fucking Rodents*
Oil on canvas
24''x 66''

Untitled

Oil on canvas

44"x 61"





Untitled

Oil on canvas

38"x 46"

We're Fucked
Oil on canvas
66''x 79''

