That Which Was Left Behind

By

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Creating art is a form of personal discovery. When I create, my subconscious calls out to various thoughts and emotions that are buried deep within myself. In the end, my process of bringing art to life is a means of bringing my true self to life. Art making is a method of processing a reality from which I feel deeply disconnected. Internally, and externally, art allows me to have a dialogue between myself, my work, my audience, and my world. Because of my own disconnection with myself, for quite awhile I had a hard time knowing what it was I truly wanted to do with art. I always followed through with expectations and the curriculum set for me, but never knowing what I truly wanted. It was only recently that I finally started to discover the purpose of my art within myself.

For the first couple of years at Purchase College, I was exclusively painting with heavy mediums such as acrylic and oil. However, I found myself hating the feel of it. My relationship with the material was just a constant series of fights and arguments that left me unmotivated to do anything. I kept trying to create purely from my head, trying to think of meaning and nuance within the work, trying to find the “idea”, which led my work to becoming unsuccessful and tiring for me. It was only when I started doing printmaking that I rediscovered a part of myself which I had long abandoned; my love for drawing. I specialized in woodcut, learning both western and eastern methods. More recently I learned intaglio, which has become my preferred method of printmaking.

With this discovery of printmaking, I began paying more attention to what I loved as a medium as I was painting. Then one day, I met my true love which led me into finding my process that revealed what I truly wanted to do overall with my art.

The mediums I fell in love with were gouache and ink. Mixing them together was an absolutely perfect solution and blended the worlds of printmaking, painting, and drawing that I had so amorously lost myself within. The concrete marks of both mediums called to my love for the straightforward and clear language of drawing. Additionally, the water solubility and flexibility of them also called to my love for the rough emotional expression and open mark making of painting.

Working with water based mediums has a beautiful feel, like a dance between hand, surface, brush, and medium. Such a smooth, beautiful feeling was what felt the most comfortable for my hand to create in a steady, yet emotionally charged and unfocused way onto the surface. As for how it led to finding my process, it started with gouache. When I went into gouache, I started trying to paint a lot more mindlessly, simply creating what popped into my head without any thought and seeing what came of it. However I kept running into the habit of trying to find the idea, which held me back. What changed this entirely was when I began using ink. What got me back into ink was an assignment which had me creating ink blots, and drawing what we found within as a sort of “Rorschach test”. I never expected this to work so well for me, but it assisted in that aspect of creating work thoughtlessly. This process became the foundation for my practice and revealed to me the meaning of my body of work.

When I was creating works in gouache, the goal in my mind was to create without “thought”. The idea behind it was that the images I created on the surface will call out to my own feelings and energies I am working with. Thus, there would be no need for coming up with an “idea”. This initial thought process carried over from printmaking. I was able to take it a step further with ink and gouache when I found the blotting

method. I start the process by creating a puddle of water mixed with ink on top of a glass palette, and lightly put the paper over the puddle to create an image on the surface. From there, I change up the process, experimenting with the ink to water ratio, moving the water around on the palette, adjusting how lightly or harshly I press the paper into the water, soaking the paper or leaving it dry, and even changing the medium for the puddle. I don't want to get stuck in ink puddles exclusively, fearing that the process might go stale. So I go different routes, mixing water based pigment with water and medium fluid enough to make a puddle, adding and subtracting the ratios of each part, experimenting with the colors I have. Furthermore, there are other ways which I add onto the already made blot, if it isn't well established, using the surface to wipe and clean up the palette to create more shapes, or even mixing ink, water, and bubble soap to create bubble blots on the surface. From there I begin using either ink or gouache to draw what I find within these shapes, not fully concerning myself with creating something completely realistic. As I draw more, I catch patterns and types of imagery and compositions that I find speak to me and reveal new content. I unearth images from my mindscape without conscious thought. I am concerned with creating scenes that suggest a sort of narrative. Sometimes they are dramatic and emotional, other times they would be satirical and humorous, or they would combine these moods altogether. This aspect calls out to a personal spot within myself and my upbringing. I felt that I had a very bland, boring life, where we lived in safe towns with people that acted like sheep. My family had our own struggles with keeping ourselves entertained due to the focus on making ends meet. In that sense, I had to find some form of excitement somehow for myself, and what better than the doorway into imagination that is mass media. Specifically that of books, television, and video games. Starting with a fascination

with mythologies, I was very much inspired by dramatic and narrative storytelling, which carried itself over to my imagery. Such imagery looks to render romantic scenes, to project emotions behind the tone and narrative of the visuals. As for the satirical aspect of my imagery, that part more calls into my own personality. Especially in printmaking, I enjoy presenting dark themes through humorous elements as a reflection of my own view of life. I view our present reality as something bad that we all just have to deal with. It can upset me, but I'm more just tired of it to a point where I can't take it seriously, where I feel like I can joke about how things get worse to a cartoonish degree. Granted, I don't really get political with my imagery. I create imagery from various emotional distresses in my life, or the feelings I experience from said distresses, and project it in a less than serious manner.I render these images without caring for a purely clear or realistic depiction. While I have an idea in mind for what I'm creating, I like leaving images open for audience interpretation. It allows for an enjoyable process of conversation between art, audience, and artist. So now the question is, why is it that I continue to create my work?

As I posited intially, creating art is a form of personal discovery. This subconscious method of creation becomes a means to reach out to the parts of my perception that are unknown to me. I had a difficult time with knowing what I desired within my own art practice due to my own habits of dissociation. In that same sense, that extended into many other aspects within me. How I process emotions, what I personally want, what I am truly willing to accept and reject. My own disconnection with myself has turned my reality into something fragile, something where I question absolutely everything I perceive. So through tapping into that subconscious part, I can

make peace with how I was brought up, and feel closer to myself. I can speak about that which I was ignoring, I can feel what I am pushing down, I can make up for what I've missed out on growing up. The rhythmic process of setting up my blotting station in a calm way, applying the blot with pure emotion, and finding a balance between focus and emotional outburst in drawing acts as a sort of release for everything I'm feeling inside. The melody expressed within this act is further felt within my mental state, going from a state of emptying my mind, to bringing myself right back into reality when revealing the finished work back to the world around me. That which I'm holding back becomes properly processed in this step-by-step method. Additionally, in expressing it to my audience, I can have a conversation with them about those same ideas, not just keeping me connected with myself, but with the world around me. I work purely in solitude for a means to connect myself within the complex puzzle of reality, to interact with it. The act of creating my work, and allowing both my audience and myself to observe it unveils an interesting revelation for both parties. With a dialogue on what the subject matter could possibly be, my work serves as an emotional rorschach. My own personal intention for my work will differ completely from the audience's interpretation, especially considering the openness of the imagery. Through this I can learn more about who I am talking with, and vice versa. Overall, it is a grounding performance of the discovery of the self, and of the true reality before me.

To go into further depth on my influences, I've found myself working within 2 traditions, those of which being surrealism and expressionism. Such traditions I've managed to hold a sort of inner connection and understanding with. At the end of surrealism, I followed the traditions of working within the unconscious space as a form

of expression. I rejected the local and realistic rendering of natural life in order to reveal a foreign, hidden world from my own subconscious. On the other end with expressionism, I followed with ideas of exaggeration in rendering, color, and brushstroke in order to convey emotional response. Combining these two traditions has been what my process has centered itself around. Additionally, I have engaged with the practice of surrealist automatism, creating my work through turning off the conscious process of thought and letting the subconscious take over in rendering a drawing or painting. While the traditions are the foundation upon which my process is based upon, it is further assisted by the styles which I observe to help render my works.

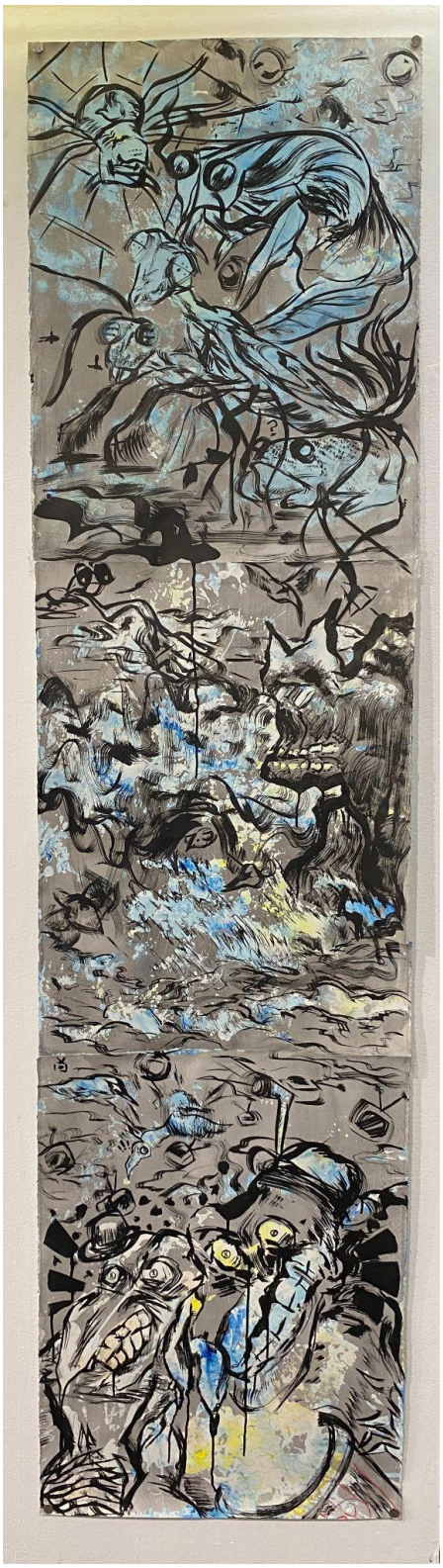
I've never dedicated myself to just following one style. Rather, I feel a connection to aspects of multiple styles itself and want to bring them into my own methods of rendering. When working with ink and gouache, I've been most inspired in general by Eastern methods of artmaking. In Chinese and Japanese ink painting, smooth, flowing, watery strokes flirt with tense, dry strokes. Or it could be the compositional aspects of Indian and Tibetan painting with very overcrowded spaces within the composition, rendering active movement and emotion amidst a group of subjects. When drawing and printmaking, I find myself more inspired by Western methods of art. I find inspiration in American cartooning and animation, enjoying the dramatic and loud expressions from shows like Tom and Jerry. Or, the other various ways that animated magic enchants the audience with clever visual gags and forms of exaggeration. These aspects of American cartooning and animation allow me to create more work along satirical lines. However if I'm choosing to get more gritty with my subject matter rather than keeping it less than serious, I will look back to the dramatic marks and settings created

by German and Spanish woodcut printmaking. Artists such as Kathe Kollwitz and Jose Guadalupe Posada represent these two cultural methods respectively in their beautiful harsh mark making which I derive much inspiration from.

Lastly, I wish to touch back upon my point of artists, now that I have begun touching upon the subject. Many artists have managed to touch my heart with their work. I can list off multiple, starting with Roland Flexner, who has demonstrated to me an inspirational command of fluid medium and ink blotting to create landscapes that have a grounded feel to them. Artists like Roberto Matta and Salvador Dali influence me through their methods of creating awe inspiring worlds and scenes that come simply from their subconscious. Trenton Doyle Hancock, Utagawa Kuniyoshi, and Nicolas de Jesus all have different, yet equally engaging methods of storytelling through their work. I find myself drawn into the emotions and atmosphere rendered in works by artists such as Francisco Goya, Francis Bacon, and Zdsislaw Beksinski. Or lastly, I can simply find a lot of visual connection in my drawing quality with artists such as Ralph Steadman, Edvard Gorey, and Maurice Sendak.

Creating art has served to be a personal form of discovery for me, someone who has experienced the misery of falling far too deep into dissociation. Dissociation has severed the ties from my own mind to that of my wants, my perception of reality, my emotions, and my capacity to interact with the world in front of me, as well as the people who exist within it. I would be stuck in that mental fog longer, were it not for my process of creating being a means to ground myself back into this twisted, abhorrent, yet all the same beautiful reality we are a part of. As I engaged with this method further, I realized

that I'm not just touching upon the revelations of my own subconscious, but of a collective unconscious unearthed from the reality we all reside in. I can understand myself and find comfort that there are both people similar and completely different to me. I can find joy in other people's methods of attempting to make sense of our reality and search for meaning in it through what aspects of themselves their own art calls out to. When I can see art as a means which keeps us all interconnected with each other, it makes everything feel more real, much less horrifying, and a lot more beautiful.

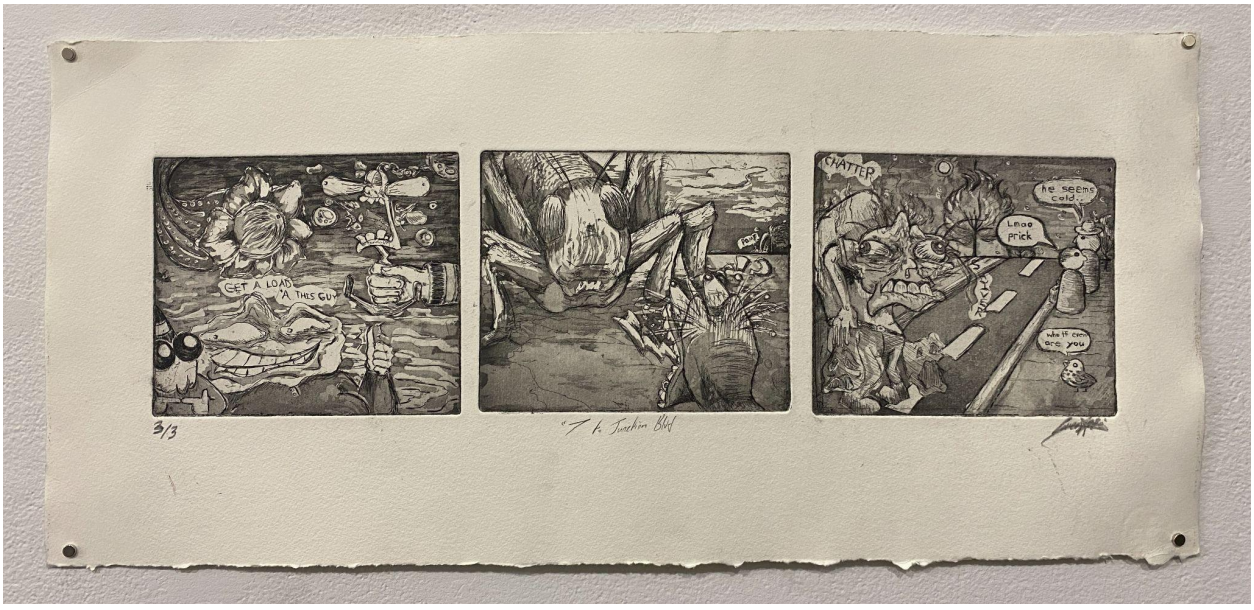


“Shock” and *“Awe”*, Ink, paint and marker on paper, 22” x 90”, 2023

“Revolt”
Ink
22” x 30”
2023

“A Fallen Humiliation”
Gouache
22” x 30”
2023

"Open to Closing, Spring Season", Intaglio, 10" x 13", 2023



"7 to Junction Blvd", Intaglio, 22" x 10", 2023

“.....”, Gouache, 12” x 18”, 2023

“The Zoo is Open”, Ink and pigment, 22” x 30”, 2023

“The King’s Downfall”, Pigment, 22” x 30”, 2023

“Clash”, Intaglio, 15 1/2 “ x 22, 2023

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