

Artist Statement

When I was growing up, I lived in a town that was split down the middle by a set of train tracks. As a kid, I was stricken by the graffiti that would fly by on the trains. When I was in third grade, I had decided that I wanted to be a graffiti artist. I spent years and years perusing graffiti blogs because they were my only source of contact with the graffiti world. All of the people who would post pictures of their work preached that line quality was the only thing that mattered. People would be mocked if they posted a picture of their drawing and it was not neatly outlined or solidly colored, so I trained myself to have a steady hand and never to color outside of the lines. I spent years of my life with my nose buried in my “blackbook,” writing my name a thousand times until I got the curve on the “D” just right. As I continued to explore graffiti, I was intrigued by the rich history of this underground counterculture, but I also realized that it was past its prime. By the time I had become interested in this art form, graffiti was no longer a pure expression of self and a rebellious art form that was accessible to everyone. Rather, it had been hijacked by thugs who would crudely spray names on the sides of boxcars in order to brag about how they had done something illegal. Graffiti had become a trendy act rather a form of art. After realizing this, my aspirations of being the next great graffiti artist quickly faded, but my passion for drawing did not. I began to explore other modes of art in which I felt my graffiti skills would benefit me, and I found myself attracted to Pablo Picasso, Piet Mondrian, Arschille Gorky, and other abstract painters. This exploration lead me to the work that I am creating now.

As long as I have been creating art, the graffiti-derived desire to create clean, hard edges has stuck with me. When I am making work now, I always start with a hard edged, precise design in mind, usually inspired by a modern, minimalistic, architectural space or an interesting grouping of shapes in nature. I work on a piece by adding, subtracting, layering, and building colors of acrylic paint and spray paint until I have achieved a piece that is pleasing to my sensibility as an artist.

As I am sure is true for everyone, my artistic style is influenced by the things I have seen in my life. I mentally collect images that I find interesting, and I create a collage or generalization of those images in my mind. This collection helps me to define what I like and what I do not like. For instance, I like Pop Art. I am intrigued by the bold styling and the way painting and printmaking techniques are combined in the pieces that I have seen. I am also intrigued by my idea of cubist art. I like the way in which artists like Picasso and Braque looked at and drew things. The color choices and paint handling of impressionists like Cezanne also have a more subtle place in my idea of what beautiful work is.

While I have a pretty firm mental grasp of the very specific type of image that I strive for, I am also aware that my idea of a beautiful piece of art does not always align with my audiences’ idea of beautiful art. The paradoxical dynamic between the sensibility of the artist and that of the artist’s audience is one that I wish to further explore in my fourth year.

My work, which often features spray paint as the prominent medium, is largely a rejection of modern, “trendy,” graffiti culture. While true graffiti style will always influence my work, I wish to push the limits of what has been done with spray paint in the past to incorporate elements of other artistic movements such as Impressionism, Abstraction, and Pop Art.