

The following pages are my response to an assignment for my Composition class that I could not complete in the specific way that it was assigned. The "Interview Assignment" required the student to stand silently in his or her studio while fellow classmates asked questions about the student's work. The student would then record the questions, but not answer verbally. The questions will later be answered in the form of a performance, song, audio recording or some other type of expression in front of the class.

My idea was to interview the class individually, including the instructor, about their thoughts on making art. I broadened my field of inquiry to include the faculty of the New York Academy of Art as well as my past instructors, past and present classmates, educators and professional artists from New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Minneapolis and North Carolina.

This survey is not meant to be the end of an inquiry; each question is merely a starting point for a possible discussion and further exploration about what it means to make art and teach art making. My sincere thanks and appreciation to all who've taken the time to participate.

Jeremy Day

## **Marta Banach**

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

Secondary school

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

I actually don't have anyone like that.

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

The only thing that training and practice improves is technical proficiency. I don't think one becomes an artist. You either are one or you are not.

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

The latter for sure. Lol.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

Sport style training is the best. Long story short, I used to train dancing intensively. Training involved physically and mentally exhausting rehearsals at least 5 days a week consistently for over 4 years. The training also involved critical self analysis that allowed me to recognize areas I need to fix and plan necessary to fix them.. I've got a lot of good habits (physical and emotional) from that and I always try to apply that training mindset to my art life.

## Naomi Lee Baumol

### What is your earliest memory of making Art?

I've been drawing for as long as I can remember, but, as a child, it was something I did, constantly and automatically, like breathing. At the time, it was the process of drawing, less than the outcome or "meaning" that I valued. I certainly didn't think of anything I produced at the time as capital "A" art. The first time I can remember really thinking about working towards a particular end, to express something about my thoughts or feelings was in my early teens.

### Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

The way I see it, there are two ways in which another artist may have had an influence on my work: either as a teacher, or by studying their work. As far as instructors go, I have been lucky enough to have had several excellent teachers who have been instrumental to any technical prowess I can claim to possess. The instructor who has the most direct influence on the techniques that I consider most central to my work, is Michael Grimaldi. He taught me, among many other things, a certain way of thinking about composition and space that I consider integral to the work I am currently making.

The artist whose body of work has the most direct influence on my technique would have to be Georges Seurat. Although I don't attempt to mimic his marks, I do strive in my own work to achieve a similar unity of mark-making, which lends such a strong sense of excited stillness to his paintings and drawings.

### Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

I believe that with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become proficient at the arts. But I think being an artist requires a particular mindset, and the ability to observe and examine life in a way that many would find overly difficult, painful or dull.

### Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

I would rather be the type of person who would rather make good work and be unliked, but sadly, I am not. I am very much the kind of person who cares deeply about what other people think. This contradiction is one I struggle with. Although it is difficult for me, I try very hard to put my work ahead of my likeability, because I find it ends up being much more fulfilling.

*What is your idea of the best training for an artist?*

I think any schooling for artists should be primarily focused on technique. I believe the more abstract part of art-making: development of concepts, choosing subject matter, etc, is so personal and unique to each individual artist, that a generalized class attempting to nurture those skills is unlikely to accomplish much. In my experience, those skills best come from solitary self-exploration, and from discussions with a carefully selected group of mentors and trusted colleagues. This is not to say that the schooling is unimportant. The technical training lays the groundwork for the necessary self-exploration, and provides material for the most fertile discussions. And as ideas do begin to blossom, it provides the language needed to express and communicate those ideas into "Art."

## Emily Berleth

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

I was six, and Crayola came out with a new color, "flesh," and I made a picture of a tower using the color. (This is 72 years ago, and I still remember the picture and how proud I felt.)

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Degas and Freud.

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

No, I think it is more complicated than that but I can't say I know what makes an artist. I've seen people who work hard and study and take workshops and are knowledgeable and technically competent but are missing something and people without training who are wonderful artists.

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

I guess as long as I like myself I'd rather do good work (but I do like to be liked).

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

Showing up at the easel or drawing board every day, taking classes with good teachers, looking, reading.

## **Meghan Cox**

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

Always drew, but wouldn't consider myself making art until well after school.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Changes constantly- yesterday I was looking at Diarmuid Kelley and Israel Hershberg.

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

I think training is very important, but I like to think that there is a \*spark\* an artist has that may transcend training.

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

Good work and unliked- without question.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

Observational training paired with art history education.

## Jeremy Day

### What is your earliest memory of making Art?

My Dad worked nights at a printing plant and would bring home long rolls of glossy white paper for us to draw on. My brother and I would construct war scenes with helicopters and tanks and Nazi soldiers getting blown to bits.

I was a very observant child. I remember looking at certain things and thinking about how beautiful they were. In summer, the fast-moving cloud shadows. Tall grass blowing in many directions at once. Mist above a pond in wintertime. I can still see these things in my memory.

### Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

When I was a teenager I read that Degas would sometimes rework a canvas after several years. I sort of did the same thing, keeping him in mind, looking at my older work in a new way and since then I've enjoyed trying to figure out how artists put together their painting or drawing. Edwin Dickinson's method of premier coup was something I immediately related to- confirming some of my own habits- not having to walk away from a painting session with an image that resembled the motif in every detail, but as more of an account of the struggle to record nature on the spot. Plus, both Degas and Dickinson used the smudge to great effect.

### Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Yes, I do think that anybody can become an artist, if one person can- why can't others? I don't believe all artists have to be born with special abilities. Some are, others are not. But I would say that a lot of training and practice won't make them a great artist. What makes a great artist, to me, is an ability to turn a curiosity of life and nature into an aesthetic experience that moves the viewer in some way.

### Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

These days I would much rather make good work. Work that is satisfying to me, is good. I don't mean it must be revered and considered good by anybody else, but it must at least suppress the feeling that I've wasted my time or that I've been on the wrong track. Doing good work is a distraction from knowing that ultimately it doesn't really matter.

### What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

Drawing from Nature. Looking at Art of the past. Observing artists at work.

## Simon Dinnerstein

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

I remember copying some photographs or drawings when I was 7, 8 or 9 years old.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Albrecht Durer and Antonio Lopez Garcia.

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Not sure, lean toward *no*. The training and practice can be taught. Some part of being an artist, the mystery, drive, pulse, imagination, instinct can't be taught. My instinct would be that, in the long run, these latter characteristics, along side with training and practice and teaching yourself and just drive, is what is needed.

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

Again, not easy to answer. I don't think the issue is necessarily on the *well-liked* or *unliked* scale. I think the artist should be true to something, some inner ideal or goal or trajectory. The artist should seek to allow this force or spirit to flow out into the world. If this happens, *well-liked* and *un-liked* become superfluous.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

Allow technique to serve as a means to find some inner dimension or personal statement. The aim is to find this inner core or dimension. Various directions, in terms of materials and rendering and technique need to be understood as *means* to an end. Use copying, drawing and painting the figure as a way of backing up your technique. Be wary of the gods of rendering. Start expressing yourself or searching for your sense of poetry early on. Your vision or your personal journey will find the means or technique to back it up. Look at as much art as you can in person. Seek out the beautiful exhibits that come to New York. Check out Federico Garcia Lorca's essay on *duende*. "The duende...is a power, not a work; it is a struggle, not a thought."



## Peter Drake

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

I remember drawing a house in perspective when I was four. My older cousin made the frontal stick-figure type and I think I freaked him out.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Vermeer and Giotto. Vermeer has been a technical guide for me and Giotto more of an iconographic model.

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

I think anyone can make something that looks like art. I don't believe that everyone needs to make art, which is what makes someone an artist to begin with.

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

I have experienced both and it does have an effect on you if there is no support for your work. Also, I think the word "liked" is misleading. Being supported critically is more like being respected for your thinking.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

I think the best training is one where you feel that what you want to accomplish is supported by your education. If your goal is to be a digital animator, you should pursue that education. If you want to make complex paintings, you should find a program that encourages that kind of exploration.

## Andrew Drilon

### What is your earliest memory of making Art?

I must have been somewhere between 4-6 years old. I recall drawing with my twin brother on the floor of my sisters' bedroom. We were using crayons or colored pencils, and drawing on the backs of old medical documents my mom used to bring home. The part I vividly recall was that I had attempted to draw Spider-man without any reference and found myself astonished by how good it looked; like, anyone could have seen and identified that drawing as Spider-man. I was so proud. That's probably also the earliest memory I have of being super proud of something I did.

### Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

There have been so many, because apart from studying at the Art Students League, I was an autodidact for years, emulating artists from books and tutorials online. If I had to name just two, I'd say Michael Grimaldi (who taught me in person at a class) and Frank Quitely (whose work I studied and dissected since high school). Grimaldi taught me to understand and summarize overall light effect in a value structure, starting from a strong general and moving towards a clear specific. Quitely taught me the joy of a thoughtful line, and how that's made powerful by composition and open space.

### Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

I think most people start out as artists in childhood and then stop at some point growing up, because they get self-conscious or distracted or whatever. It's all just self-expression and storytelling, in my opinion, and I think the adult world judges art by how well-crafted and honest that is. You can train and practice for the craft part, but the honesty is a recurring choice. From my view, "professional" considerations aside, I think anybody can be an artist if they can just relax and let their inner kid out to play.

### Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

The latter. But I don't think either absolute is possible--Lord knows, some days I make bad work despite my best efforts, and even on good days, my work doesn't please everyone. I can't help being me. I'd mostly rather get paid to do the work I like--whether the art is good or not, or popular or not, whatever. My dream is to be able to support myself doing art alone. That would be heaven.

*What is your idea of the best training for an artist?*

I think it's doing the work you aim to do as soon as possible. DIY if necessary--if it's making a comic book, draw and photocopy and release it. If it's being a gallery artist, make your own pop-up show and invite people. Fail and succeed as you go, but keep going. School is a construct; a microcosm of life in general. I think quintessential academic training is an perpetual condition that should never stop, and critical realities of professional work only reveal themselves when you're actually in the thick of it. So if you want to really learn, the most practical solution is to put yourself in a situation where you must.

## Chris Feiro

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

Drawing as a child

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Antonio Lopez Garcia, Euan Uglow

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

I think everyone can learn basic skills like drawing, design, craftsmanship. But I don't know that everyone can learn to be an artist.

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

I would rather make good work and be unliked.

## Michael Grimaldi

### What is your earliest memory of making Art?

As a child, I drew incessantly and because I was always actively drawing, I cannot recall my earliest memory of making art. I do recall though, the first time I found out what art could be. I was probably six years old and I found my mother's copy of Janson's History of Art. I remember vividly seeing Sodoma's Saint Sebastian and I tried to copy it. This was the first time I attempted to draw something from observation (I think) as everything else I drew was from imagination or memory (dinosaurs, spaceships, etc)

### Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

I suppose every artist whose work I admire has had an influence on my approach to art-making so they are too many to count. Most directly, I have always had an admiration for painters who have a foundation and understanding that all works are simultaneously representational and abstract. As such, I have a deep affinity with the work of Walter Tandy Murch whose work became increasingly more abstracted as he matured. The surprising thing to me is that as his work became more visually obscured and abstracted from the real, the more resonant, empathetic and visceral his work became.... This also seems to function the way that poetry and literature operate - by forming analogy, metaphor and consciously manipulating the language through which content is delivered, it creates meanings beyond the capabilities of the content, narrative or story alone (particularly Bartelby the Scrivener and Moby Dick by Herman Melville and The Hollow Men and The Wasteland by T.S. Eliot)

### Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Yes if the person has (or develops) character and an unwavering curiosity about visual phenomenon, art and the human condition.

### Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

The latter although a primary concern of an artist is to visually communicate their unique interpretation of the world they inhabit. If they do so effectively, the work will communicate shared and collective components of existence. It stands to reason that this will be appreciated by some.

*What is your idea of the best training for an artist?*

1. Exposure to art-making and encouragement at an early age (ages 5-13 perhaps). Allowing children to experiment, create, and explore ways of communicating visually without imposed ideas of what is correct or acceptable. While active in forms of creation and expression, expose children to museums and allow them to admire what they gravitate towards.
2. Exposure to more specific art forms that the child, teenager or young adult shows interest in and begin cross-referencing the historical precedence for an artist's choices. Example: If the artist is interested in comic books, expose them to historical graphic works (Dore, Massereel, Lynd Ward, etc). Encourage disciplined learning of methods and techniques specific to their interests (Color theory and mixing, perspective, etc...)
3. Immersion in a rigorous program (atelier, undergraduate, etc) that teaches the fundamentals of Drawing, Painting, and Sculpture from observation, Design and Composition, Linear Perspective, Materials and Techniques, and Art History along with developing skills in writing, research, science (biology, chemistry, optics)
4. Immersion in a rigorous program that helps to assimilate the acquired interests and foundational skills into coherent visual statements. Exposure to historical and contemporary modes of communication and expression from different cultures. Encourage in-depth research into areas of interest. Exposure to new materials and technological advances that could be utilized toward achieving one's artistic vision. Development of solid professional practices (studio management, understanding gallery relationships, writing grant proposals, etc).

## **M. Tobias Hall**

### *What is your earliest memory of making Art?*

I have many memories of drawing and coloring when I was young (highly encouraged by my parents) - probably starting to recall some of them around the age of four. One in particular - I was at a Mexican Restaurant (Papa Felipe's) with my parents and grandparents in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I was making a picture book about pueblos and mountains. Around that same time, I remember making a clay pot with my grandmother. I have other memories from that age of drawing knights and pirates - but those aren't as vivid or as specific as the restaurant scene.

### *Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.*

Two certainly aren't enough. I have to prioritize my main teachers who generously shared their technical and conceptual understanding/awareness with me.

(This might get strange and long winded, but it's how I've come to understand myself as an artist and teacher through their influence)

Anthony Ryder, Tim Stotz, Michelle Tully & Michael Grimaldi - a common thread being that they each studied under Ted Seth Jacobs at some point in their education. I believe that his ideas (along with those of their other teachers) have evolved and bloomed within each of them in a unique way, respective to their temperaments and strengths.

I began with Tony (whose temperament might be closest to mine - allowing for incredible ease into the teaching). To me, he represents integrity and the soul - (luminosity) the spiritual aspect to the relationship I have with my work - the quest to connect with something divine/sublime (whatever that might mean... seeking transcendence or perhaps a semblance of infinity) through deep experience.

Michelle is the heart - the poet. She demonstrates color, grace (fluidity of movement), empathy and compassion in her work.

Tim is the mind. He made my efforts conscious and intentional. He woke me up from an innocent/naive state and provided me with a number of conceptual tools to question, to promote insight and to (hopefully) gain higher levels of awareness.

Finally, Michael has influenced me by encouraging a solid physicality - the body - through structured form, perspective and anatomy to my work.

This artistic pursuit mirrors life, absolutely. The soul and heart come more naturally to me, but the mind and body are a part of my practice that have been more elusive.

*Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?  
What is your idea of the best training for an artist?*

Yes, though another answer that isn't black and white, in my opinion. "Artist" in itself is obviously a subjective cultural construct - that definition and the standards might differ from person to person. As far as becoming a better artist, I believe that if the context is right, anything is possible. First of all, it depends on the student's desire (unrelenting determination), goals and willingness to be open (humility & self reflection - the ego will only block the potential for growth, though, a healthy amount of obsessiveness, self critique and self competitiveness is important). Next, it is finding a compatible teacher (in temperament and or philosophy) to allow for a fluid connection of to the student. Likewise, the mentor has to remain open and egoless as well - with intentions of selflessly lifting the student up. Each has to hold the other accountable.

That is describing an idealization of course! I do think that some people have a natural inclination - easier access - into technical aptitude and an artistic state of being. However, once in that state, there can be no turning it off - there is no leaving it.

*Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?*

I would rather make good work (work that I feel good about) even if it is unappreciated by others. (My personal standard of) Quality and a depth of experience are always my priority. Trying to please others when it comes to a form of expression that - when at its best - is genuinely personal will only create self consciousness and rigidity in the performance. The resulting work will suffer. I view the creative process as a self reflective (even if meditating on external ideas) psycho-spiritual & philosophical pursuit - a union of unique conscious experience with physical reality. It's not about pleasing others ...and monetizing it is also problematic to this intention.



## **Sally Han**

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

Drawing a bird with my grandpa when I was a kid.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Hans Bellmer, Domenico Gnoli and Gregory Gillespie

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

No, it's all about "self-motivation".

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

Personally, I would make good work and be unliked but I'd like to try both when I am learning/ practicing.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

Don't compare to others but to myself, and have a strong discipline.

## Mia Herbosa

### What is your earliest memory of making Art?

I was maybe 2 or 3 and my mom bought something called sand art. It was different colored sand you sprinkled on glue you applied to black paper. She set it up outside, in the sun, in the patio. I was mesmerized by it and stayed out there a long time. Even when she left already. I was trying to copy what she did which was a sailboat on the blue water .

Another time, same age, she let me copy a red peony of hers on a wooden tray. She left me alone, giving me her brush for awhile and when she came back, I had a peony just like hers. It was oil paint. I loved it, loved the buttery texture and the feel of the brush licking the wooden tray. I still remember.

### Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Hard to say. Teachers, maybe Ron Sherr and now Harvey (Dinnerstein), before, Frank Mason. I change with time, depending on who I am currently listening to. Everyone has a strong point.

The famous artists that I wish I could paint like were George Inness, but I never did get into landscape. Always loved Vincent Van Gogh, Rembrandt, Vermeer, oh yeah of course Jan Van Eyck, Holbein the Younger . When I was a teen I loved Toulouse Lautrec a lot. I loved his freedom, his boldness and his lines. Can't narrow it down to two. I also had a phase where I loved Whistler (early 20's). I just love the ones who make me feel something. Something very strong, like love. Then of course there is also Sargent and Zorn for their technique and skill. I also like Eakins.

### Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Yes but some no. Majority of people, no, not possible.

### Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

I'd like to be me, liked or not, it doesn't matter. I'd like to be able to communicate what I see and feel, what I witness and notice, and I'd like to do it clearly and succinctly my way. I'm constantly looking for tools to find how I can do it best, or who can help get it out of me, this thing I have inside me that wants to say something. I don't judge it as good or bad, just work that's pure and sensitive and worth a part of my life to me. I seek to do something with my life that makes

me feel good because I know I'm good at it and the feeling I have while doing art is like a high nothing else can give. Many times when I do something and they don't understand I have a voice inside that says it's ok someday, one will. It doesn't matter what others think what matters is that you didn't waste your life and you did what you want and you did it well, at least as well as you could. I don't think it's possible to make good work and be unliked.

*What is your idea of the best training for an artist?*

I'm not sure, everyone has to find his own way. If you're meant to be an artist you will be, trained or not. You will find a way, if you have the will to be one. That's what we all do.

## Emily Hirtle

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

My earliest memory was when I was 5. I was drawing a frog named Philbert.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Andrew Wyeth and Mary Cassatt

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

That's hard to say, yes and no, I think they also have to have this innate sensibility and keen eye and not every body has that you can learn and practice and get better but if you don't have that other part that's really important you're not an artist you're a hobbyist.

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

I'd rather make good work than be liked.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

That's also hard to say because the best training is conglomerative drawing, painting, and sculpting from life working observationally and looking at art and reading about artists and their process knowing well where you belong.

## **Suzanne Justice**

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

Setting up my stuffed animals to draw with crayons haha

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

-Louise Bourgeois

-Frank Auerbach

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Absolutely not. A well trained robot but not an artist

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

Good work and unliked!!! Good honest work

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

Experience, time and opposition

## Helena La Rota

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

Making a stained glass in pre-school and making the figure's hair go all over the place. Blue, yellow, orange, and red – transparent.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Frida Kahlo, Alfons Mucha

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Only in practical terms, and art is rarely practical.

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

Both. At the same time. That's probably what ends up happening regardless of our preference, since no one can be universally liked or unfailingly good.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

The initiative of learning cannot be imposed, and the scope of knowledge cannot be limited. An artist is a learned observer of the world, and to train the curiosity to explore it is invaluable. Artists are not only visual.

## **Jacob Lunderby**

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

When I was 24, in graduate school.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Sigmar Polke, RH Quaytman

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

It is possible, but not definite.

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

I would rather be unliked and make good work.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

I feel that an idealized response from my point of view would be:

Rigorous foundations

Seminar(s) complemented by self-directed studio work

Independent study/ studio visits with a range of artists and academics

## Bill Murphy

### What is your earliest memory of making Art?

In kindergarten class I painted a picture of Zorro who was very popular at the time.. the teacher sent me to the principal's office. I was on my way to becoming an egotistical artist.

### Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

James Whistler. When I began etching landscapes from life I discovered the Thames etchings and the early things he did on a walking tour of France with Legros in his early twenties. Fantastic drawings utilizing hard ground etching. Vermeer. If you are setting the bar, set it high. More conceptually than technically, as I never really emulated him in oil paint; but fascinated by his destruction of edges, his sublime, mystical light.

### Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Yes. Not necessarily a good one, but competent to an extent.

### Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

Irrelevant question. Sorry.

### What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

I don't think where a young student studies (matters) as long as they are around a number of artists and art students. Experience the life of an artist. Become inspired- though largely one is already in that state or not. But if one chooses to work representationally one must spend a concentrated time on learning how to draw. This happened to me in my second and third year of art school.



## Casey Murtaugh

### What is your earliest memory of making Art?

My earliest memory of making art is not really a memory but I feel like I can remember it cause I have the actual thing that sparks the memory or made up memory or whatever it is. Anyway, I collaborated on an illustrated storybook with my dad when I was around the age of 6 or 7. We came up with the storyline as a team and he and I made the drawings together. Not part of the question but...my dad has been a major player in my path/want/need to (wrong word) becoming an artist.

### Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Only 2. Hmm. Cy Twombly and Eva Hesse. but just cause I had to pick 2.

### Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Yikes. Well, this is a funny question. It's kinda like can anybody make a decent dinner if they've looked at a book of recipes? Or...can you learn how to give yourself a set of rockstar abs after attending a million core classes...I don't know...? Are you a chef or an athlete after putting in the work? Maybe? I guess the word or term or title, ARTIST, has more meaning to me than the others mentioned above. I teach art to high school students and it's pretty obvious that even though they're all "getting" the same stuff, there's a recognizable difference between the students that wanna get an A and so they'll do the thing...and the students that wanna change the rules to make it their own thing...and the students that just throw in the towel straight away...Not sure what I'm trying to say here. I think I truly believe but could be convinced otherwise...it's a thing within the person. Skills can be taught and learned but it's something more than just those things. I think people can be taught how to appreciate art and maybe make some things but the inner drive/want/need/etc feels somewhat separate. I go back and forth on this though. Ha. How many times did I use the word things?? keep track.

### Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

I feel like this question doesn't apply to me. Haha. I only make things I wanna make and try to help my students to do the same.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

I use and kinda swear by the 8 studio habits of mind (which can applied to ANYTHING):

1. Develop Craft
2. Engage and Persist
3. Envision
4. Express
5. Observe
6. Reflect
7. Stretch and Explore
8. Understand Art Worlds

## **Prinston Nnanna**

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

tracing my hand and illustrating a turkey out of it for thanksgiving

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Dr. John Biggers/ Kermit Oliver

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Everyone is an Artist in their own way

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

I'd rather focus on illustrating my thoughts to the best of my ability and continue perfecting my craft

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

Self taught, and trained by a scholar

## Andrew Reiss

### What is your earliest memory of making Art?

My earliest memory of drawing is cartooning on the reams of paper my father would bring home from his printing job. I remember hating drawing and painting in kindergarten because we had to use crayons and poster paints. I drew a lot when I was in bed for 2 years, first in the hospital and then at home due to polio and not having much else to do. This is when I was 6 and 7.

### Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Interesting question, calling for different answers for different periods in my life, when I was much younger it was probably Jack Davis and Wally Wood, two great WC comic book artists. Then probably in my early teens it was Goya and Daumier. In my 20s probably Poussin and Philip Pearlstein. In my 30s perhaps Dickinson, Degas and Velasquez. In my 40s, there were no 2 artists that were a particular influence. Same for my 50s. In my 60s, my primary interests were in 3 artists, and they were: Matisse, Picasso, and DeKooning. Now, in my 70s my main interests are in Seurat, Cezanne, Matisse and Mondrian. That is the most I can narrow it down, and of course there are many other artists I can mention.

### Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Depends on what you mean by artist. If you mean skilled draftsman, painter or sculptor with something interesting to say, i.e. highly skilled professional with a very original viewpoint, absolutely not. It takes a mixture of talent, intelligence, hard work, determination, an inner necessity and honesty, and just plain good luck.

If you mean, can many people acquire relatively okay skills, sure. If you mean artist in the general sense used now, post Duchamp, almost anyone can be an artist. Good artist or interesting artist is another story.

Some artists, like Bill Traylor, Martin Hernandez or James Castle become artists without any training, in isolation either physically or mentally, because they have a burning inner necessity to express themselves by any means possible. Van Gogh would be another example.

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

I would rather make good work and be liked for my inference of thought but between those two choices I would take good work and be unliked, unless the bad work made me a multi-millionaire and allowed me to live out my life in peace and luxury, away from Trump.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

1. Cast drawing and sketch class.
2. Then long pose life drawing, anatomy study, perspective. Sculpture, both ecorche and regular should be taught at this point.
3. then painting portraits, landscape, still life using academic methods.
4. along with a thorough education in the history of art.
5. Depending on the student I would teach a composition class involving basic composition class up through large, complex multi-figure paintings as done by the old masters, people like Hopper, Benton , Dickinson, Balthus , et al, and great illustrators. And/or principles of Bauhaus color and design theory, modernist concepts from Cezanne thru cubism up through post-modernism, from an aesthetic and technical viewpoint. This last piece is optional, depending on the nature of the student.

## Edmond Rochat

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

Looking at illustrations and trying to copy them.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

The work of John Koch and Vermeer

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Yes

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

Dichotomies and hypotheticals like this are really not that helpful.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

Working with capable artists who can explain the fundamental principles of drawing and can give a path toward competence.

## Hannah Sanders

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

Maybe summer camp? We were using leaves and mud and stuff to make paints. I also remember I had a friend whose mom was a painter. She would paint extremely abstract paintings and I was confused but fascinated. One day, I was drawing next to this friend when we were really little, and she goes, "Hannah, the first rule in art- never erase!" I always try to do that- even now. It seemed so right to hear that and I think the more I listened to her advice- and never erasing, even in figure drawing classes - it's been really valuable working and resolving around totally obvious mistakes, keeping and working with them to get them to "work". If they don't work, I'd still try to take the the piece or drawing to a "finished" place, then try it again.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Farfield Porter - I like how he paints rooms/landscapes/houses, things I used to ignore bc I thought it was sorta boring, but then I was like- he paints things, objects first, and then lays the atmosphere, the air on top of everything! Like he was deliberately obscuring the detailed things he did first?

Kai Althoff- I like how his materials can be nasty- acidic epoxy fields. He also covers up big pieces of the story he's painting. Story and narrative and history seem essentially central, too.

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

I think the want to do anything is the ticket. I guess, I don't really agree that sufficient training can transform someone into an "artist" because what does that mean? Can't one be clever, visual, and communicative without training? Practice, is necessary for anything, especially artists- as are diligence and discipline.

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

My art is my own and I care not where anyone's eyeballs go how their opinions stack up. GET OFF MY LAWN!!!

*What is your idea of the best training for an artist?*

I'd ask instead, what makes you excited? Is it the texture and primal nature of paint? Is it how a DJ turns a room? What is the unique thing that churns one's brain and drives them to want to communicate in that key?

For me, artmaking is about pain, its material tangibility. I like the mess of slimy watercolor pencils on oversaturated paper. I also like Fred Sandback's string simplicity and watching how viewers behave with his work. There are so many qualities that come together for me as "art" and "artistic sensibility." Recognizing the things that coalesce this way is my journey- so to your question, the best training would be: what gets you to where you need to go? What will help you learn how to communicate? To push how well you communicate?



## Sean Smuda

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

A Pop-art pencil drawing of a gas station that looks like a gritting face age 10 (still have it), more self-consciously a photo of my photography teacher seen from above spinning against black looking at a negative strip 10th grade.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Cartier-Bresson, Rachel Harrison

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

In as much as artists synthesize a spirit of their times, deep memory, strong technique, and insights between them (plus a dialectic with history): maybe

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

The latter

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

The Bauhaus if Michael Asher taught there

## **Hsien Tan**

### *What is your earliest memory of making Art?*

My earliest memories of making art was about 3 years old. I use to draw with my Dad's fine Bic pens.

### *Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.*

I can't really name just 2 artists who have been a direct influence in my technique, as I'm not sure if I have a technique.

### *Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?*

Yes, as long as there is desire, a drive, and a need to make art, anyone can be an artist.

### *Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?*

I would rather create good work, or experience satisfaction and be unliked. Art is a personal journey.

### *What is your idea of the best training for an artist?*

I cannot speak for others what makes the best training for an artist because I don't have enough experience. However, speaking for myself, I would prefer finding a mentor. Visual arts is not just about colors, shapes, and draughtsmanship; but words and ideas, and how one sees and makes sense of light, life, and time is also important. How do we balance contradictions such as freedom and discipline, limitations and infinity, color and non-color?

If a mentor could convey to me, lend me insight into how she/he interprets our lives onto a 2 dimensional surface, I would be fascinated to be a part of that. If a 'master' or mentor would be generous enough to share her/his personal experiences in practicing drawing and painting, I would consider it a rare gift.

It is a personal journey.

## **Rudyard Tatarinov**

### *What is your earliest memory of making Art?*

I always remember being surrounded by art growing up. My mother, being an artist herself, would encourage any creative pursuit. When I was in elementary school my mom taught a small art class for kids my age. The students were mostly made up of my friends, and I would work alongside them. The first piece that stands out in my memory was a graphite drawing of a goat. It was mostly linear, very flat, but I received many commendations from the students and my mom. The drawing was framed, and I felt very self-satisfied. I would later abandon sitting in on the classes because a competitive element arose, unnerving me and causing the work to suffer. I didn't pick up art again until high school.

### *Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.*

I look at a lot of artists, so I find it hard to cite just two. My first few years at the Art Students League I remember studying from Degas and Hopper books. Apart from books, I was probably influenced to a large degree by Harvey (Dinnerstein) and Costa (Vavagiakis).

### *Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?*

I think that technique can be picked up by anyone given the time. Poetic sensibility is a matter much too recondite to attempt describing in an email, but I believe it exists to some degree in all great work. I would also add that being an artist requires perseverance and an unwavering, unrealistic-stubborn faith in one's work. Doubt is ever present.

### *Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?*

This question reminds me of a Nathaniel Hawthorne quote, pronouncing "the truth seems to be, however, that, when he casts his leaves forth upon the wind, the author addresses, not the many who will fling aside his volume, or never take it up, but the few who will understand him, better than most of his schoolmates or lifemates." I am in sympathy, appraising it to be more valuable, the prospect of communicating something singular but recognizable among a small group, than widespread renown for something superficial.

*What is your idea of the best training for an artist?*

Since I work in a realist style, I think it best to spend a few years working from the live model. I would supplement this with frequent trips to museums and an independent study of art books. It's mostly self-instruction as artistic expression is incredibly singular.

## **Peter Van Dyck**

What is your earliest memory of making Art?

My earliest meaningful memory of making art is looking through a Matisse book when I was going to bed. I saw an early still-life of his and I wanted to do one of my own so badly that I got out of bed, set up a still-life and painted it that night.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Camille Corot, Rackstraw Downes

Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Yes. But I think the true commodity in art making is not talent or training but desire (love of both art and life)

Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?

Without question I would rather make work that I love and be unliked.

What is your idea of the best training for an artist?

Hmmm....that's a tough one. I guess I would choose an education that is focused on a deep pursuit of a single language over a shallow pursuit of a variety of languages.

## Costa Vavigiakis

(transcribed and edited from a telephone interview by J.D.)

### What is your earliest memory of making Art?

I had gone to Greece, I think I was 8 years old, and my uncle had taken me to Delphi, and I had seen the *Charioteer of Delphi*, which is an early classical bronze. I was taken by it, it was my initiation into art. In a sense- in retrospect- these effigies, the concepts, the images I make [...] have a tactile, sculptural [...] they're amplified sculpturally, dimensionally [...] they're high on the dimensional impact, you know, and I realized years later that I wanted in a sense to create that experience that I had, that first- the virginal- the awe experience, you know its kind of like a burning bush [...] and that's what artists do, basically, what we do is we create these images, these art pieces that [...] are virginal, awe inspiring, that move people. In that context, the earliest memories of making art, besides the drawings of women with their breasts shooting down airplanes [...] selling them for pennies, I remember that. I wish I'd kept one or two [...] After that *Charioteer at Delphi* experience, I remember this, and this is a classic thing for me, for children as well, I remember at that time it was such a powerful experience I felt like I was given [...] I had a secret, I felt like I was given something that was really special, secretive or whatever. And I remember I felt changed, I felt different, I felt I had something different, something unspoken.

I went to a Greek Orthodox school from 1st- 8th grade, at that time they [...] still had a rote education thing going [...] one class consisted of History, Literature and Grammar all in one [...] We were required to read, memorize and orate a poem or read an essay of a history chapter and then summarize it in oration. And for me, I was shell-shocked, I had a really hard time orating, it was like incredibly stressful for me [...] In our history books [...] each chapter opened up [...] with a picture of a bust of the hero, Alexander the Great, or whatever, so I would do these... renderings in pencil of these busts and what I can remember (even back then) [...] I was interested in that translated, that transcribed three-dimensional (imaginary 3-dimensional [...] when you look at a picture that you know is a sculpture...) so in a way they were memories of the sculptural experiences that I experienced in Greece only now I was doing them in class and they were my- like a lot of us, I'm sure like all of us- every artist has the same experience when we went there with the art it was the safe place- it was a place that was our safety place, our secret safe place.

Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Technically, the two artists I'm going to mention are 15th Century Netherlands master Rogier van der Weyden and a 17th Century master Velazquez. Those two artists are- technically speaking now- in terms of painting are similar. Both are wet on wet direct painters. In drawing every artist's procedure and protocol are similar. The sketching modality of every artist, you know, you could take Rembrandt, Rubens, Raphael, all the way down, Menzel, any artist sketching, Degas, even Ingres. So, Raphael would be the epitome of that. I tell students to study Raphael because they're so legible [...] as opposed to Michelangelo -- stages of (legibility), but then they get so ethereal, I mean how do you break down a later Michelangelo? It's kind of smoke, you know its all smoke and he'll do something that will be blasphemous- he'll be taking a straightedge (talking about the late crucifix drawings) he'll take a straightedge to cut into this smoky atmosphere... and it works- it's this amazingly, how do you do it, its almost like breaking every freaking rule.

But as far as the painting... this is the thing I debate this with Ephraim a lot: he thinks I'm not a direct painter- and this is what I debate with him- is that he has a limited definition of what a direct painter is [...] well, you've studied with Harvey (Dinnerstein) and several people, but he comes from, his main teacher was Francis Cunningham, who was a monitor of Edwin Dickinson [...] basically every teacher does their own interpretation [...] so for instance, Dickinson studied with (Charles) Hawthorne, but then you also have (Henry) Hensche that studied with Hawthorne and if you look at Hensche's work and Dickinson, or what they taught they were very different- well, not very different, but they taught differently, you know, Hensche had this high chroma thing going [...] but they were both interpreting Hawthorne. So, Cunningham's interpretation of Dickinson was, well, the spot technique. Direct painting for Ephraim- his paintings were really, basically maybe two or three layers, so, he would mix up a piece on his palette and directly apply it on the canvas and then have the next piece applied on the canvas and then the next piece, so its kind of a piece by piece cell structure that builds out - as opposed to maybe the (Jean-Leon) Gerome, like the French Academy painting- which is not just French... you can see this if you look at the early portrait of Rembrandt in the Frick - if you look at let's say the hand of the person holding the note you realize that he painted "band by band" and stitched the bands together (blended the edges into each other) and thats how the French Academy teaches, band by band by band and connecting, blending.

I paint directly, but I'll blend as I go. The painting that I copied when I was a kid, *Juan de Pareja*... and that blew me away- its one of the most legible Velazquez

paintings because you see- you kind of make sense of the brushstroke, you see the brushstroke more in that painting than you do in some other paintings because Velazquez is one of the most enigmatic painters [...] its hard to decipher Velazquez [...] you know we have Sargent who deciphered him [...] I realized one of the things that he did was actually use the canvas as his palette. So he would mix and blend on the canvas as he went. That's what I do, so I'm not as concerned about getting it pinpoint accurate when I place it on the canvas [...] I'll add paint, basically I'll be mixing on the canvas and calibrate it and it becomes a modulated connection sequence.

And the Rogier van der Weyden, or the Netherlands connection, technically, is that for me the paintings-- the drawings have a different thing, but the paintings for me, form-wise, the person can go literally nose to nose on them - the whole idea is you get up really close and they don't pixellate. You go up, put your nose up to it and they'll still look like the illusion of what it's supposed to represent, texture-wise. I'm not saying aesthetically, I'm not saying artistically, I'm just saying technically the demand... that kind of technical demand is very high, or I should say its labor-intensive [...] and when you add that a lot of these (paintings) I have here now (in the studio) are against light backgrounds, it also adds a difficulty in the labor because basically you have to use ambient light to have them not feel cut-out [...] and ambient light is one of the hardest things or the last things to master [...] the light edge has to be duller and darker than the background which is... it flips the order of foreground and background [...] and its so tough, its a more demanding modeling technique.

[...] the first time I went to Italy I thought I would be responding to Venetian art more, the more tonal aspects. Well, the next trip I was into the High Renaissance [...] but the first trip I was taken by the physicality of the Sienese art- I didn't even know what the fuck that was, you know, every trip is a revelation and one trip I took [...] was really moving [...] I went to Germany and saw Rogier van der Weyden [...] when you get up close to it you realize that just like the Prado's *Descent from the Cross*, is a fair amount of pigment, and its blended and we're talking about chiaroscuro painting a century later, but really, the pigment load in the lights are higher than the pigment load in the darks and it's a fair amount of pigment that's blended, so, again it looks like at least the superficial layers of a wet-on-wet technique- *direct painting technique*.



*Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?*

I had a very solid beginning studying at the high school of art and design with Max Ginsberg and Irwin Greenberg. When I graduated several of my classmates and I signed up for Harvey Dinnerstein's class at the National Academy of Design. It was known then (as it still is now so many years later) that if you want to develop into an artist then study with the best. When Harvey first saw my work, he paid me the highest compliment he could, he said my work looked like a young Burt (Silverman), so he initiated a meeting between myself and Burt. Burt must have seen the same thing because he gave me a full year scholarship to his studio, something that had profound effect on my life. I was a shy kid. I would go early. I was always the first one there. I waited in the corner, in front of his bookshelf, but I didn't take out any of the art history books, I rummaged through all his sketchbooks and I would take out one sketchbook at a time and I looked at all the life that Burt had captured between their pages. Of all the things that Burt taught me, the habit of constantly sketching was one of the greatest.

The interesting thing, as I was thinking back about this- after high school, I can remember it was '77, we were going to the morning class [...] I know that I wasn't aware of Harvey's work, I was a kid, I don't know what the fuck I was [...] I wasn't aware of Harvey's work because that year [...] you know how the National Academicians would have their exhibit every year (or every other year)? I saw this painting [...] and you know when you're young you're kinda stupid... not stupid, monomaniac, you know, you think that *this is the way* and *this is the only way*. As you get older you get smarter from your experiences [...] that's what happens [...] I remember seeing this piece that was in there- I was aghast- I was like *holy shit, I'm studying with this guy, I think it's awful* - now this piece, one of my favorite Harvey pieces now, you know, *Stay Amazed* (the painting he did of his son) but when I saw it I was like, this kid with Velazquez- I was like what is this [...] static, you know what I mean [...] (it) looked artificial to me and I'm going, *I'm studying with this guy?*

And so, Burt (and Harvey was very important, obviously) the thing with Burt, interesting the perceptual and conceptual - for me, Irwin and particularly Max... they taught very straight observation, from these hot lights- incandescent lights, with overhead ambient fluorescent lights in these schools, so you have the greenish tint with the shadows, but we were straight [...] we were learning how to paint the appearance of things. Now Burt was much more liquid, he bridged all the perceptual and conceptual based on knowledge and experience so he was a very fluid and liquid painter and for me I remember (I swear) I did maybe one or two pieces that were any good [...] I struggled so intensely in that class because

it was hard for me to keep up. One week we'd have several sessions with the same model, but he had a skylight and when it was cloudy he'd turn on these fluorescent lights and it changed for me dramatically I didn't have the information, the experience, how to connect the dots when something is not literally the same [...] I told Burt years later- I learned a lot from that class, you know it just came to me, I learned a lot- its just that I wasn't applying it directly because I was processing...

Harvey teaches you how to be an artist, actually, more than anything. As a teacher, I'm so stuck on putting credence in the methodology and you know people put so much credence in a methodology for a business end, which drives me nuts [...] you're reinventing the wheel [...] We still teach one-point perspective and that hasn't changed since Brunelleschi rediscovered it and Alberti decoded it, you know, transcribed it [...] but I think because we put such emphasis on our methodology, developing [...] that you forget... and that's where Harvey comes in, you forget.. I don't really ascribe to it, I mean totally, because I reject it a little bit, but you can't deny that it's a cliché and it does bother me because its a lazy person's cliché: *either you have it or you don't* - I always reject that, but *there is something to it*.

So, in other words, sufficient training and practice... anybody can be a competent artist, a fairly competent artist, you see it in obviously what's produced generally in all the ateliers... I don't know if they are any different than other schooling, I'm not going to put down any of the ateliers, but I would say they're like any training ground, you'll have a handful of real artists... high-level artists... so, the point is, you can train anybody to draw sufficiently, 'cause basically that's what we do when we naturally look at something, there's no reason why you can't learn to transcribe how we look naturally at something which is what Leonardo taught us to do. Your eye envelops it, moves quickly, all that stuff we talk about in classes, so yes but the thing is, the will and desire... there's acumen, sufficient acumen, but then what propels a person to go beyond that is the will and desire and all the other stuff you want to say that *you can't teach*, you can't teach that stuff... I think it's a matter of what we perceive as excellence.

To me, when I mention about Harvey and Burt, why maybe I didn't put that much credence in them [...] in our generation, it's like what the fuck we wanna... it's this Oedipal thing, we want to kill our teachers and unlearn all that shit that you hear from today's contemporary view of the teacher -- we *credit* our teachers, we wouldn't be here without our teachers... and that includes *Nature*.

I'm reading on Dutch art and realizing that period of time, particularly the North - they were the secular part of that region that really totally separated from the Spanish rule, there were so many artists and there was a dearth of patronage, really, you didn't have the extent of the religious and aristocratic patronage [...] and it's the same thing with the United States in the 18th and 19th Century... so many artists in a dearth of patronage, but the thing is what motivated, what propelled people to become artists and I think its pride. *Pride*. Pride in the fact that they defeated the major colonial power, pride in pioneering and pride in the land [...] I think what makes a person pursue greatness [...] it's something you can't teach... you don't want to and I don't get into and honestly that's why I don't... I'm pretty much a straight shooter, I don't like to get into people's heads... that's a personal search [...] but to be a competent artist, yeah, you can teach that... but a great artist, that's up to each individual.

*Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be unliked?*

As far as my work, to me, I choose that if one person out of a hundred appreciates my work that's good enough for me. It's always been what I want to say, how I want to say it. I've always been pretty adamant about that, so as far as its viewed... I don't strive for popularity [...] today forget about it, today it's an obsession with fame and celebrity [...] I grew up in a different time... in the 70s it was a rejection of fame and celebrity.

*What is your idea of the best training for an artist?*

My temperament is autodidactic. It teaches you ingenuity which is a really important mechanism. Ingenuity and objectivity. That's it, those are the major driving forces for the artist. I'm always ad libbing. I like to create things when I'm saying things... I like to say it for the first time 'cause it's like fun... well, the fun is *discovering*... the artist's temperament, generally speaking, is restlessness... ingenuity... need to create... need to think new... need to think differently... otherwise it gets really boring.

The negative to autodidactic development is that it takes *so much fuckin' longer!* I could've learned this so much earlier!

So, when somebody asks me about doing a masters program, I never say no to a person because I never had that education. I don't feel confident telling people not to do any masters program [...] any degree program let's say [...] or even any atelier [...] but, personally, I think ultimately the artist has to be on their own in order to develop their work... and even earlier on I think that, so I always tell

students that my best teacher was painting outdoors. We used to call it on-the-spot painting. Outdoor painting. I did that when I was a teenager and all through... you can't control things so you have to be more ingenious, you have to rig, you have to be a problem-solver, rigger, and the main thing... *you can't fuckin' blame anybody [...]* like the controlled conditions and lets say it- this is a horrible thing [...] you know models get so angry and frustrated... they do a good job, they're there, they get paid a low wage and they get humiliated because they get blamed for not doing a good job, "the model moved" they hear it all the time... they have to put up with a lot of shit, can you imagine, you're doing a good job and you have to hear it all the time what a shitty job you're doing?

But that's nothing new, the self-training is eventually what you have to do and I think the earlier you do it, the better because it teaches you to take chances... that's the thing, it teaches trial and error and not being afraid to do that.

## Alejandra Yancey

### What is your earliest memory of making Art?

Kindergarten - Crayon tracing of hand and then embellished to become a turkey.

### Name two artists whose work has been a direct influence on your technique.

Chris Ware- my technique is not directly influenced by his (I wish it were but he is truly beyond average). But I do hope one day to create something that aims towards his direction of how things are meticulously executed. He does not just rely on just one strong skill. I see that he does everything with intention (i.e. choice of visual language, sequencing and pacing of images and words, what subjects will be presented (and perhaps obsessed over) AND all ultimately done with a sense of aesthetics. After reading (and viewing) one of his works, I feel as if I caught a glimpse of someone else's life and have more of a sense of empathy (or something in between catharsis, melancholy, and hope- I'm sure there's a greek word for it). Anyway, I'll reiterate that how Mr.Ware considers every aspect of his art is awe-inspiring. It is the opposite of how I do things, which is usually done with little foresight but at least having an awareness of how I currently work will hopefully help me take gradual steps towards the direction I want to go.

I think my most recent teacher Frank Porcu has strongly influenced how I construct drawings and creating the illusion of depth. I would also say Greuze is another artist I try to copy at times, something about that cross-hatching and sense of volume is pretty fantastic.

### Do you think with sufficient training and practice, anybody can become an artist?

Yes, although I think some folks may be more adept than others. Having some strength in will power and an ability to stay objective ( - not take external/ internal criticism/ discouragement too harshly) will come into play. I think also having a sense of curiosity in the world and being humble enough to continuously learn from others would helpful especially in training.

*Would you rather be well-liked and make bad work, or make good work and be disliked?*

I rather be well-liked and make bad work. Although it seems really tempting to choose "good work" and to think one could get to a point where they can finally consider their work good. In general, I like people (most of the time) and I want to have friends. If I make good work and am disliked, that sounds like a lonely existence and perhaps maybe more of issue relating to personality vs the quality of work. I want to ultimately make work to share with others. Not everyone has to like what I do but I hope at least my immediate family respects some of my work and bonus points if other people that I like and respect also enjoy some of my work. I guess it depends who my audience is. But if I don't even like my own work or don't believe that I could make something more worthwhile (me being the judge), than all of the above falls null. I guess my answer is I rather make work that I am proud of (or is getting there) and be liked by very few vs. making very good work and being disliked or being liked by many for work that I personally think is gimmicky/ shitty.

*What is your idea of the best training for an artist?*

The best training for an artist, depends on the individual and their goals. Some people need more structure and thrive in a more regulated environment, others are naturally autonomous and essentially learn as they go and instinctively know what they want. One's learning should never stop, and ideally one shouldn't isolate themselves entirely from the world. Finding a balance between artistic influence of others and having independent space to try out another way is key. So I guess a training that teaches you basics and introduces you to others artists and techniques and what has done before (this can be done informally or in an academic program) and allowing the individual to chose what speaks to them, study those things and then have the room/ flexibility to improvise and experiment. Having a mentor or some sort of advocate for the individual would be extremely helpful as well as having a supportive community/ friends.



