

Artist Statement

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I enjoy experimenting with digital forms of design and technology. The electronic drawing tablet in particular allows me to pursue a more controlled way of drawing which I find useful. Smoke from burning incense sticks became a primary motif due to its organic form and memento mori suggestion. Memento Mori, Latin for “remember you are mortal”, symbolizes how life at its earthly state is meaningless and death is always the end result. The 17th century Dutch artists pursued this theme in their vanitas paintings. Still Life with Fruit, Glassware, and a Wan-li Bowl by Willem Kalf shows how fruit succumbs to the impact of time by the aged texture of the fruit and dark background swallowing it up. The same could be said when smoke submits itself to the forces of nature to transform rapidly and disappear. Thus, art reflects life at a temporal state with hints of the end result, death. The combination of smoke and the human form in the The Last Supper painting by Tintoretto provides me with inspiration of seeking a reinvented meaning behind the smoke and pursuing it as an instrument. Thus I attempt at combining the ephemeral quality of smoke with objects in Photoshop to reflect the theme that life moves fast as smoke does. Like pieces of a puzzle, I hope to fit objects together with the smoke and establish the same themes of ephemerality.

As well as reflecting upon the finale of life, I also seek to display grim themes behind my works. By aging, people can see their goals become obscured due to the harsh reality of the world. By portraying macabre themes in my work, viewers may see this as a warning sign that unhappy outcomes exist. Interest for me does not lie with the repetition of bliss and trite themes, since these can give people false impressions that life will be perfect in all stages. I feel a strong need to dissent from this perfect equilibrium society hides itself behind. My belief that art serves as a mechanism for rebelling against tradition is fueled by the philosophy of Frederick Nietzsche’s The Birth of Tragedy. Nietzsche argues that there is a threat of man accepting a viewpoint on life that there is no purpose to it and everything is in a state of chaos. However, by using art, man has a reason to exist. My passion comes as a result of playing into controversial topics like abortion and rejecting customary mores. By appealing to my disposition to rebel, Nietzsche’s viewpoints provide energy for me to break taste-driven boundaries established by society. Observing manipulative photographers like Joel Peter Witkin provides inspiration and motivation to improve my technique. His photographs emphasize human deformities in his living subjects and also involve corpses as well. I am not only fascinated by Witkin’s bravery in subject choice, but also in the way he manipulates the surroundings to highlight their existence. Witkin’s approach to include subjects that were previously marginalized from society reflects upon my ambition to explore multiple sides of certain issues. In a quote from an interview, Witkin states, “I am no longer the helpless observer, but the objectifier who chooses to share the “hell” of his confusion visually, rather than confront the quality that distinguishes a vital and functional being from a dead body”. I agree with Witkin that creating art should provide individuals with a god-like quality and defy morals established by society.

To conclude, art has been a way for me to become the devil’s advocate and reject brainwashing by powerful groups in society. By providing a dynamic arrangement of possibilities, art makes life more interesting. Without a good variety, humanity would transform into mindless machines and fail itself by not living up to its fullest potential. For me the ability to create serves as a method of self-satisfaction by rebelling against traditional norms.