

As a child of a military father, I spent most of my childhood moving school to school. I never felt like I fit in with my peers, nor did I really try. A majority of my time was spent with my nose in a book being completely fascinated by the narratives and the colorful illustrations. Because of this, I often find myself separated from my peers in social situations. Whether it is a house party, a bar or even a New Years celebration, I find myself being completely and utterly unable to communicate with those around me and enjoy these social situations that are demanded of me. Therefore it had become more comforting to imagine myself in social situation with personifications of animals rather than my peers. Just like the childhood picture books I admire as a child, the main subjects in my paintings are personifications of animals. Using the awkwardness I felt in social situations I developed a narrative that is inspired by childhood illustrations.

Storytelling is something that I enjoy immensely. I learned at a very early age, that if you are able to tell a good funny story, you are more likely not to get beat up and less likely to get into trouble. Being able to find humor in difficult situations as well as being able to convey this to others in a way that they find hilarious is something that drives my paintings. Stories are past on from one generation to another. They have withstood time, and have been around longer than written language. Stories are something that I think everyone can relate to, and often times



(Fig 1)

These are the things that bind us to each other. “Wild Moose Chase” (figure 1) illustrates this concept of storytelling and is one of my favorite paintings in my show for that reason. Seeing a moose is an Alaskan experience. Everyone who lives here has seen one at least once. It is almost impossible not to. People flock here every summer and go to Denali just to see one munch on grass. I decided that for this piece, a purely Alaskan painting, I would share my story of the first time I had seen a moose in hopes that would be something that my viewers could relate to. Not only was this my first “Alaskan” painting but it also was the first that I had created for my show. This new disjointed way of painting for me that was inspired by cubism for the geometric style, Francis Picabia’s “On the Banks of the Cruese 1909” for the color and scenic quality of nature and the pop artists such as Roy Lichtenstein’s ability to inject humor with recognizable imagery and content, was the perfect way for me to bring my storytelling into

my paintings. From there I continued to build off of my experiences and off of pop culture references for my subject matter.



(Fig. 2)

Pop culture references are something I rely heavily on in my artwork. I believe that by using these references I am creating something that many people can respond to positively and find humorous. The 2013 movie ‘Sharknado’ was something of a cult phenomenon this summer despite it having an utterly absurd plot. Not wanting to be left out of something so strange, I watched the movie that everyone seemed to be talking about. And it was awesome! What is better than a tornado filled with sharks that are wreaking havoc upon Los Angeles? I became obsessed with the thought of a sharknado, and I wanted to somehow emulate this. For this painting I also wanted to push my color choices. In prior paintings I had adhered to “natural” colors for the animals I was painting. This time, I was interested in trying to represent the shark

in cool colors such as blues and purples that are sort of similar to the natural gray of sharks, but pushing it. I decided on a color palette that was a variety of blues and purples with a tad of red added into the purple to show volume. I also began to make the disjointed pieces that make up the shark into larger pieces. Making the pieces larger, I felt, would make the shark itself look larger, and give the viewer's eye a chance to rest. I was worried that my paintings were getting too busy, so when it came to the background I decided to keep the top right corner empty in order to not only have a place to have the eye rest, but also using it as a tool to have to eye move in a circular motion. (Figure 2)



(Fig. 3)

The painting “Rose’s Beaver (Paint Me Like One of Your French Girls) (Figure 3), is another painting that relies heavily on the idea that the viewer has seen, or at least is familiar with the cinematic classic “Titanic”. I try to make the reference something that is subtle so that without knowledge of the film the viewer can at least take something away from the painting.

The same is true for “Holla At My Boy Leo”(figure 4), a self-portrait as a platypus. In this painting I also referenced Mona Lisa. Although when most people think of the Mona Lisa, they often think of the Renaissance period. I think though, that because of its easily recognizable parodies in art and pop culture, it can be considered a part of popular culture. It is not crucial that the viewer to be able to understand the references made in the paintings, but the subtle nature of having it inspired by pop culture gives it a time and hopefully urges the viewer to look deeper into the painting to understand it. I hope that by giving my paintings these subtle hints at humor, I can reward the viewer for the amount of time spent looking at the painting.



(Fig 4)

For my painting “Polar Vortex” (fig 5), I had an extremely difficult time deciding how I wanted to portray a polar vortex. Since the news of the climatic change of weather in the Lower 48, I thought that it would be an interesting concept to explore. Originally I was going to paint a

polar bear in the subway systems of New York City. I thought this would be humorous as it was colder at the time in New York City than it generally is in the natural habitat for a polar bear. After thinking this idea over in more detail however, the concept seemed to lack actual thought and the type of subtle humor I was hoping to achieve. I felt like maybe simpler would be better in that instance. How the idea of actually making a vortex of polar bears got created which merely incidental.



(Fig. 5)

The masonite I paint on is extremely fragile as well as extremely large. When these two elements combine in a relatively small studio space, there are bound to be accidents. As it were I came into the studio and somehow my masonite had tumbled off the easels it had been strapped to, and the lower corner of the masonite had a marvelous tear in it. With this new tear, I decided that like my paintings “My Dog Ate My Canvas” (fig 6), in which my teething dog

thought the corners of my canvas would be an excellent chew toy. I embraced the idea of working with the damaged surface and responding to what could be considered a disaster by making something from it.



(Fig 6)

Every painting in my show has a preconceived narrative behind it. These stories are important in the overall scheme of things, but I try to still keep the paintings ambiguous enough that the viewer can project their own experiences and their own story onto the painting. The large format of most of my painting adds to this. You can look at the painting from across the room and be able to get a general idea, but because of the intentional vagueness the viewer must come to see detail, further engaging their attention. I want to be able to reward the viewer for coming closer. I want the story to be interesting and humorous just as much as I want the painting itself to be visually appealing, these two factors are the most important and when creating each painting. The painting and the meaning behind it, both need to be interesting and appealing in order for it to be successful.

The story always comes first when I paint. Once I have the story planned out I begin the painting. Spatial relations are something that is very important in my paintings. With subject matter that is separated into so many pieces, the painting often becomes very busy. It then becomes extremely important to make sure I make the composition interesting and complex, but also find ways that I can keep the viewer's eye moving and have places for it to rest. If I do not allow the viewer a place to rest their eyes, the painting becomes frustrating and uninteresting.

Cubist works such as Picasso's "Three Musicians" as well as synthetic cubism as a whole inspires the way I divide my pieces. I think of my paintings as puzzles, I want them to be able to fit together as a whole but also for each part to be able to stand on its own. I try to divide my pieces in a way that will look like they have volume but also keeps very flat. By breaking apart the natural curves of a figure I can emulate volume. My use of black lines is also a great tool. In this regard Roy Lichtenstein's works are a big part of why I use such thick black lines in my work as well as children books illustrations. By giving the figure an outline I can create a cartoonish feel. This helps push the idea that there is a story behind the images and that these figures are important in the narrative. The square composition of my 4 by 4 ft. paintings is another tool I use in order to give my paintings the look of a comic book panel as is as each work is just one scene of a story.

For my show I had a distinct idea on how I wanted the space to look. I knew that the deep rich colors in my paintings would be able to stand out well. Against the stark white walls of the gallery the gray wood stain was chosen for this reason as well. I didn't want to use black



because I use black so heavily in my paintings and it could easily flatten my plane out in a way that would hurt more than help the paintings. I wanted my paintings to work off of one another. I wanted them to compliment one another in a way that would keep the viewer interested in looking at my whole show. I had four 4 ft. paintings, so I hung one on each wall at the same height then I hung the smaller paintings in groups that related one work to another. On the First wall I hung my “summer” paintings, the ones that were mainly green and oranges. The middle wall contains underwater scenes. From there I had my “portrait” wall. This I felt was the weakest part of my show. These were the smallest paintings, and I worried that since I had them all in the far corner, they would come off as uninteresting. I viewed these paintings almost like a series of their own. These were the last paintings I did, and I felt like they were my weakest. In these works I tried playing with puns and one-liners, which in hindsight were not as strong as the larger more narrative pieces.



(Fig 7)

As I mentioned before my main objective with my paintings is humor. Everything I paint is in direct correlation with my awkward experiences and my desire to be able to relate to someone. While I find all my pieces at least a little bit funny, I understand that my viewers may not find them to be entertaining nor may not get the reference. I don't think this is something that is overall important. What I am hoping is that my viewers are able to come to their own conclusions with my works. Like my painting "The Traumatic Event of Mistaking A Lynx For A Dog" (fig. 7) I am sharing with my viewers awkward situations, and hoping that they are able to relate to these situations or find humor in them.