

1. Adolescence and childhood are periods of life during which everyone builds their foundation. What kind of teenager were you?

I was quiet and somewhat introverted... a bit awkward socially, but not a loner. I remember once being described by a teacher as someone who blends into the wall. On the other hand, I was very involved in sports, particularly baseball, so I was able to express myself that way. Most of the drawing I did then was in spiral bound notebooks during classes in school or at home... doodles. I liked to draw and was interested in art, but the idea of being an artist didn't occur to me until later.

2. Who were your influences growing up?

My mother, who raised my brothers and me by herself from the time I was 10 years old. Three of my baseball coaches who stood in as father figures in my life and an english and art teacher who each sparked my curiosity about life.

3. How did you become interested in art?

I drew alongside my mother a lot as a kid. She loved to draw and I developed a love for it as well. I am interested in all kinds of art, but drawing with my mother is how I first became interested in it.

4. You began drawing on napkins of bars and restaurants... was it because you drew all the time? What was your life back then?

The napkin drawings began a few years after I moved to Philadelphia. I worked in restaurants and later as a bartender for many years. I carried sketchbooks around with me for a few years, but eventually began to draw on napkins. I liked the way the napkins absorbed the ink. I just liked the feel of it much better than sketchbook paper and it was no longer necessary to carry a sketchbook with me. I just needed to carry a pen.

5. Currently, you choose to work on a very special paper: Japanese paper. Why?

The paper is a Japanese mending tissue made from tree bark. I began drawing on it when I was in graduate school in New York 14 years ago. I injured my shoulder and was unable to paint for a while. I had tried to find an archival paper in Philadelphia but had not yet tried in New York. I looked around for a week or so until one day an employee at a book and art conservation shop suggested I try mending tissue. I experimented with various kinds and settled on what I've been using ever since. Once I began to work on it, I knew I had found my medium!

6. Please, Could you take us through the process you go through to create an art piece?

Ok. I begin by stacking and or folding the paper, depending on the size, so that there are multiple layers, similar to a napkin. The paper is tissue thin, translucent, and needs to be folded in order to create enough surface depth to hold and absorb the ink. I then glue the edges. The initial marks begin through a series of straight lines that develops the underlying structure. For large drawings, this can take weeks. The process varies, but generally, that's it. I continue to build up with lines and shapes until the image begins to emerge. Some areas, like eyes and the highlighted contours that define various images throughout the drawing, are not inked. I don't think about what the image might be ahead of time which is one aspect of the work that keeps me so interested in what I am doing. I never know what will emerge during the process.

7. Your favorite topics seem to be fertility, growth and death. How would you define your own path and evolution through these themes?

These topics are an important aspect of my work. The symbolic references, such as snakes, skulls, genitalia, eggs, and spiritual figures that emerge during the process all contribute to these ideas. As I've developed the imagery and explored these themes, they have come to predominate and have enabled me to express universal ideas that also often reflect my personal life in some way.

8. We can feel a great determination and a deep drive in your choice of color: black. And perhaps grey tones...Could you please tell us more about this?

Black ink is what I always used with the napkins...the pen I carried with me. The imagery I developed with the napkins continues through to my current work. Essentially, what I'm doing now is drawing on really nice napkins. I tried other methods of working. I painted very colorful paintings for 15 years or so, I completed several murals in Philadelphia, I made etchings, but I never stopped drawing on napkins. I would paint in the studio and draw on napkins outside, in cafes, bars and restaurants. I still use the same pen...also Japanese, by the way. So, the thing that attracts me to this way of working is the simplicity of materials that stimulates a direct flow of images. This allows for a direct line, so to speak...just like drawing on a napkin.

9. Beyond the nearly mystical imagery, we can feel that your work is a commentary of how we live in society...True? Wrong?

The notion of transcendence in everyday life is a key idea in the work. Beyond that, my work is a slow process, carefully made by hand. Quality is an important idea and I try to make good work. But what's as, if not more, important to me is the meditative process itself, where my attention is completely focussed on and absorbed by the activity of drawing. This aspect of my work is what motivates me as much as seeing the finished drawing. My work is very personal and I am not intentionally commenting on how we live in society. But it does express the spiritual in life and there is a devotional aspect to it. So in that regard, it is.

10. What is the major point of your research in your creation?

Through my art I have come to know the world, and myself better. A teacher I had in high school, while teaching an ancient civilizations class, took from me and showed our class one of my doodles one day. He explained to the class some possible interpretations that the image may have represented within the culture he was teaching us about at the time. That was the first time I remember being interested in what he was saying and I began to pay attention. I think the major point of my research has been drawing and paying attention along the way to what interests me. Drawing is what sparks my desire to learn and understand things. My interest in ideas related to art and life in general have led me to explore the world of ideas and taken me to places like Angkor in Cambodia. It's hard to say what the major point of my research is because it continues to evolve and change as I do. Some of my interests and influences over the years, as they relate specifically to art-making, include...my mother's drawings, editorial illustrations in the NY Times book review from the late 70's and early 80's, the east village art scene, figuration libre, self-taught art and art brut, Jung, Freud, Rank, religions, cultures and art of the east and west, obsessive, slow, and meditative art, indigenous art, William Blake, Pierre Bettencourt, the idea of flow, psychedelic art, erotic art, and recently, the concept of meta-doodles.

11. What are the elements in your life that contribute most to your artistic development? And how do they nourish your art?

My artistic development is driven by an urge to create images and anxiety. Drawing has been a constant throughout my life. So, while the development has come from many areas of my life, and reflects many different experiences, it comes, in large part, from the act of drawing itself. Having said that, I value my formal education very much as well as the education I received working in dive bars in Philadelphia. Being immersed in that center city bar culture, surrounded by humanity in all its varied forms for so many years, left an indelible mark on my psyche and was fertile ground for my artistic development.

12. Do you have any concluding thoughts that you would like to express?

Yes, I would just like to say, thank you very much for your interest in my work and for providing a venue for others to be introduced to it. I appreciate it very much.