

### 1. When did you start making art, and why?

I tell people that I was the kid that liked crayons more than they did. I was the one that would finger paint in first grade and step back and squint my eye. I was fascinated by this power I had to put my imagination on paper. I don't think it really hit me until sixth grade that art is what I was going to do for the rest of my life. Up until then I was still dreaming of playing professional baseball for the Oakland Athletics. Even though I was good at art as a kid I still didn't think it was going to be my profession. The reason I started really getting into art was because I realized I could make a composite sketch of my imagination. I have talked to people before that flip out at the idea of being able to draw because that is all they have ever wanted to do but they can't. The only thing they can do with a pen is writing a grocery list. I can take that same pen and draw a monkey swinging a chainsaw. It's as if they don't know how to drive the pen but I do.

What really motivated me as a kid was the idea that I was better than everyone else and they couldn't buy the skill if they wanted. Short guys can buy a nice car but they can't buy an extra foot of height. Not only can I draw, but I'm also six foot nine. I didn't ask for the art or the height. It was in me and it's who I am.

Another thing that really motivated me as a kid was Garbage Pail Kids. They opened my eyes at a very tender age as to what you can do with a pencil and an imagination. I site them as one of the first things that made me say, "I want to draw. I want to do that." I look at those same cards today and still have a warm place in my heart for them.

### 2. You mention in one of the interviews on your site that you've arrived at what I guess you could call your artistic "voice" or style relatively recently - can you describe your struggle in that journey? Why it took the time it did, what kinds of voices you went through in that process?

I remember a point in my art when it made the switch and where I felt that it's voice was truly louder than me yelling into a mega phone. I think a great deal of it is being able to understand anatomy well enough to make it up on your own. Another part of it is understanding the medium. For example, I used to hate inking my drawings. Now I have people gushing over my pen work. What also happened was that I truly embraced what I have and unleashed it in a way that I may not have before. I started to let a lot more hang out and truly not care what other people thought. I let the demons in my head dance on my paper.

Recently I got to a point where I felt my art was actually good enough. I could not get any better than I am today and I would be okay. It's not something that happened overnight but I feel like at one point it just hit. Up until then I flirted with a number of different techniques and applications. That's just what you do as an artist. You try on a lot of pairs of pants before you find the one that fits. Also, now that I am getting attention my work has a look that people recognize now. When that happens you have to keep it up in some way. If you switch it up too much people won't recognize it. An artist is married to the look he creates and I'm cool with that now.

### 3. You make art for clients and for yourself, what are the differences between the processes and end results of both kinds of art?

There is a big difference between my personal work and work for clients. When I draw for myself, anything goes. I don't have an art director telling me what I can and can't do. It's the very reason I got into drawing in the first place because it was fun and I am the boss of the paper. If I want to draw someone's stomach ripped open, I can. If I want to draw a beautiful animal, I can do that too. I don't care if I offend anyone or if nobody likes it because I drew it for myself. I didn't do it for a paycheck. Those are the ones that end up being the most honest pieces.

The work I do for clients sometimes comes off a little stiff because I am over-thinking it and not letting it just happen. I get too worried about thinking about what the client wants and not enough about what I want. I've been lucky enough to have worked for a few companies that let me do whatever I wanted. They'll give me an open assignment, pat me on the head and tell me to go have fun. Those are the times that my freelance work sings. That's when it is as close as it gets to my personal work.

Sometimes I'll work with a client and they're scared to direct me because they don't want to say anything that might lead me in the wrong direction. I appreciate it because they respect the creative mind but then

it can also become this stunted relationship between artist and client. I don't know what they want me to draw, and they don't know how to tell me what to do. Strange. It's like having a conversation with someone that only speaks broken English. They could be asking where the bathroom is and you tell them that you don't have to go.

Another example about doing freelance work is that I got thrown into the business side of things when all I ever wanted to do is draw. When I started working for clients, all of a sudden I was my own one-man company and I had to negotiate contracts, shake hands and make eye contact. That's something a lot of artists aren't good at because they were busy perfecting their art at a drawing table over the past fifteen years or so and have become black belts in the art of being antisocial.

A big difference between personal work and work for hire is some of the fine-tuning. If I am working on a piece for myself I will pour everything into it and noodle out details that nobody but me will ever notice. When doing work for clients there might be a tight deadline and I need to get it out so I start cutting corners. A little less blending here and less love there. The sad part is 70,000 people will see that in print as opposed to the ten people that see the perfect piece in my sketchbook.

4. In that same interview you mention that you opted not to go to college to learn about art because you felt self-directed learning would yield art that was truer to who you were. How did that work out for you? How are you represented through your work?

At the end of high school I was awarded numerous scholarships to some of the most prestigious art schools in the United States. I decided to pass on all of them because I didn't want my art to take on the look of whoever my instructor may have been. I wanted to toil in my room and see what happened. It's not to say that I couldn't have learned a thing or three if I had gone to school, but I just wanted develop my art on my own as I had been doing all the way up until then. It seemed to work out okay.

I see a lot of these kids that are coming out of art school and if you know the school and it's instructors you can spot it in their work. They develop these crushes on their teachers and put them up on pedestals and often times mimic their work. There are also a lot of teachers out there that I think are under qualified.

Everyone that I know who went to art school is toting around a massive bill that they will be paying off for the next twenty years and a lot of them didn't graduate or get a job as a result of going to school. Art school is a blessing for some people but I didn't feel that that would have been the case for me. I want to fail or sail on my own. I have always been that way.

The way not having gone to school has helped my work is that I have spent countless hours at my drawing table concocting techniques that work for me and are unique. Approaches that I don't see other guys doing. I get artists looking at my work and they aren't quite sure what mediums I used or how I did it. I like knowing that. And I think it is a direct result of not having gone to school and being molded by the instructors.

5. You were talking about wanting to draw because it was something you realized you could do better than anybody else - what role do you think ego plays in an artist's decision to take up and continue making art?

I think egos play a huge part in it whether an artist cares to admit it or not. It's how you gauge your ability. Without stupid people there would be no smart people. It's the same situation with art. I distinctly remember when I was in first grade and everyone was sitting around drawing those Transformers toys. My drawing looked better than everyone else's. Even as a six year-old that was enough of a boost for me to keep doing it. You get enough of that when you're young and you are more likely to keep it going. Then you have to make it through the teenage years without getting sidetracked by girls, drugs and booze. If you can pull that off than you are on your way. I saw a number of artists when I was a kid fall prey to those distractions.

I walk down the street and see a painted sign and wonder how I would have done it. If I could have done it better. Same as when you go to an art show. I see a lot of guys that do some amazing work but know every artist in there is comparing their own work to that which is on the wall. It's human nature. You see it in

every aspect of life. People want to have nicer cars, bigger homes and better handbags than each other. Everyone out there competes in some way or another with their peers. Be it a better-executed drawing than the other guy or be it the first one to outer space. We get along, but we still want to be ahead of the other guy. With me, I try to out-render, out-color and out-imagine the other guy. I've got a long ways to go but I'm climbing.

6.You mentioned that when you sit down to create something for yourself, anything can come out. What usually does?

When I draw for myself the images that wind up on the paper are usually more along the lines of the twisted/altered realm. I love to take two different ideas and put them together. I still enjoy doing the whole human/robot pieces. I also do a lot of pieces of people in a state of disrepair. Body parts rotting away and lower jaws falling off. I'm sure psychiatrists would have a field day with me. In fact, they already have. Little good they do.

I enjoy drawing pieces that other people would have never imagined had it not been for me. Doing a landscape or a portrait is fine for most people but not for me. I've got an energetic imagination, so the least I can do is show it. Sometimes people see more than they like but that's not going to stop me from doing it. When I have an idea in my head it's got to come out. As morbid and twisted as it may be I still need to get it out there.

7.How much of why you work is external inspiration, and how much is internal motivation? Or are you moved by a different force?

I'm heavily inspired by what I see. I find a lot of inspiration from other artist's techniques I admire. I see what they do, chew on it for a while and then take my own spin on it. I live in a city that I gain a lot of external inspiration from. The dirt, filth, homeless, crowds, structures and alleyways all play a part in a world that I create in my head. I walk around the city everyday and am in constant study of what I see around me.

Internal motivation probably plays a bigger role in the creative process for me. I still have to want to sit down everyday at the drawing table and have something to show for it at the end of the day. You can have all the ideas and inspiration in the world, but unless you act on it and put it to paper it doesn't count for much.

I also play a lot of tricks on myself. I tell myself that those other artists are drawing today so I know I should, too. It goes back to the competition side of it. You have to keep at it and keep doing it to be able to run with the rest of them.

I meet a lot of people that don't have the ability to draw and are fascinated and jealous by the fact that I have this talent. I feel the need to use what I have. Not only do I have a crazy imagination but I also have the technical ability to replicate it on paper. That's an ability that shouldn't be laid to waste. That's a force that often drives me and keeps me at it.

8.There's a repeated use of monkeys in your work - where does that come from?

I did an art show about eight years ago that had about ten pieces in it. One of the pieces was a chimp pointing a gun and flipping the bird called "Furious George". Everyone loved it and as it turns out it was the only piece I sold in that show. I figured I was onto something with that and I did a few more. Those, too, were a hit.

A couple years went by and I didn't do too much with them. Then I started working with my friend, Victor, on a story about a chimpanzee family in the zoo. He was writing it and I was drawing it. We lost steam on it and it didn't get past about twelve pages. Though the comic died, I got back into doing the chimps in my art shows and people continued to relate to them.

A couple of years after that I started doing comic books for Heavy Metal Magazine. They let me do whatever I want so I decided to develop a chimp character that walked among humans as a regular member of society and write about how he reacted to everyday situations. I write and draw all of the stories and it continues to get a lot of acclaim and a growing fan base. People often site it as their favorite work that I do.

9. What's your relationship with monkeys? What do they make you think of?

Once, I was at the zoo in San Diego, California with a friend of mine. We were both in front of the gorilla compound and we were standing there separately drawing the silverbacks. The place was pretty crowded with families and baby strollers. At one point the gorilla ripped up a fistful of grass and threw it at my friend, Matt, who was drawing him. We had a good laugh and went back to drawing. Moments later I was drawing the same gorilla and all of a sudden a clump of dirt and grass landed in my sketchbook from thirty feet away. Now, Matt and I weren't even standing next to each other when this happened but he threw dirt and grass at us in particular. Nobody else had been hit. In some way, the gorilla realized that we were studying him and he wasn't too happy about that. They have a lot more going on in their head than we know.

Like gorillas, chimps are human without being too human. They aren't checking email and washing their car but they have similar characteristics to humans. I see chimps and I see lesser-developed humans. Most people see the same thing and that is what makes them universal in commercials and advertising. We relate to them just enough to sympathize with them. When I look at them I could see them wielding a chainsaw or riding a motorcycle if they knew how to use like tools. Luckily, through the power of my illustration I get to make that concept real and have a chimp do that as well as anything else I can think up.

10. And your slick grotesque sexual cyberpunk style - how did that develop? Is it an insight in your experience with the world or is it an escape from it?

I'm fascinated by the idea of taking something as beautiful and perfect as the female form and destroying it with a grotesque sexual cyberpunk twist. I like to give it an in perfection of sorts. I want people to look at things differently.

I guess I developed it because I have a fascination for machinery. Like most guys I love things like motorcycles and tanks. Even though there is an obvious difference between man and machine, there is also a close relationship between the two. Man creates machines to carry out tasks that we can't humanly do on our own. The human body is a machine on it's own and I like to make that obvious. Also, I'd be lying if I didn't cite the original Schwarzenegger movie, Terminator, as an original inspiration.

It's a little bit of my experience as well as an escape. It is an experience in that it's inspired by the world around us and by seeing how things operate. You can look at a construction site and see a bulldozer pushing around land but inside that machine is a man telling it what to do.

The way that it would be an escape is that it puts up a wall of protection. If you have a big mechanical arm with pinchers for fingers, nobody is going to hurt you or get in your way. A woman with big mechanical arms is something we will never see, so it is also an escape in that sense.

The art I do is an escape from the everyday. I get to hide in the safety of my imagination. I may draw it for everyone else to see, but I always draw it for myself first and foremost.