

In my experience, creating art is much like doing a jigsaw puzzle upside-down. I am never quite sure how each piece is going to turn out until it is finished. Occasionally, I am not even positive that the piece is actually finished. There is no real plan. I just gather my materials, start working, and usually work for hours without ever stepping back to look at my work. Because of this, once I do take a step back I am always surprised at what I have created. To me, the act of creating art is more intuitive than intentional therefore it is difficult for me to attach a meaning to it. Every time I look at my art I see some new and different meaning.

The creation process: I walk into a bookstore and head straight for the “Vintage” section (garage sale-boxes of books/ grandma’s house – bookshelves). I slowly scan the shelves for interesting titles and worn binding. The older the book the better. The more obscure the topic the more enticing. Upon finding an interesting cover, I open the book. If the pages are brittle and yellowed, scribbled on from a previous owner, stained with spilled coffee, food particles, and fingerprints I know I have found a keeper. I like for the pages themselves and not necessarily the words written on those pages to tell a story as well. Not the whole story, just enough to hint at what the story might have been. Next, I look at the magazines. Sometimes a single outrageous mustache, an interestingly twisted cartoon drawing, or a strikingly antiquated phrase or written thought is enough to prompt a purchase. There is often humor in history and these pieces of literature are quite hilarious if read closely.

I enjoy things that make me feel like a child again. That is a big part of the reason that I use vivid colors in my art. I also like the idea of being able to touch art. I like to stick my hand inside of it and move pieces around. There is some excitement in disregarding the boundaries of a canvas or a piece of wood. I try to stretch the space I have as far as possible until something falls off. These little things make me feel like I am breaking some sort of sacred art rules that I never learned. (I never even get in trouble for it.)

Along the same lines, I often use mediums that I am unfamiliar with. I conduct little experiments in my work. Trial and error is all part of the process for me and I like to preserve those errors. Eventually, I hope to display my art in a sort of time line that will vividly demonstrate my technical and creative evolution as an artist.

This selection of artwork uses pages from a 1940s sex encyclopedia, a 1950s dating etiquette book, and a 1960s book on Marxist theory. I create my art for three reasons: 1) It is an outlet for pent up creativity that may otherwise force me into a spinning vortex of debaucherous and unproductive activity, 2) I see this kind of art as a creative attempt at melding my academic background (Master’s in American History) with my artistic interests 3) I really enjoy capturing and displaying the oddities of published thought into a sort of collage of historical absurdity.

To me, this work demonstrates that, upon close examination, things are not always what they seem. If I look at my artwork from far away I like the way the words, sentences, and the edges of page neatly line up. It looks clean and organized to me. The only pages that are out of line with the majority have been purposely placed there by me. But, up close investigation reveals that some of the “neat” pages are upside-down and torn. The ideas discussed are not all humorous. Some of those published pages make blatantly insular, sexist, and unreasonable statements. The distant image of perfection seems to be capriciously held together by immovable nails and thread. If one thread was cut, the entire thing may unravel. The aesthetic additions of shiny screws, bright colors, and polished metal serve to distract from the truths that may be revealed if someone decides to look closer. Isn’t history funny that way?