

ONE PAINTER'S JOURNEY FROM ART AND BACK AGAIN



Activity Based Intelligence

by Sydney Vogl

Don Lisy is in the midst of a lifetime love affair with art. It's been a bumpy road — one that even Lisy himself couldn't have predicted. There have been ups and downs (some years he didn't even pick up a brush), but he's always come back to his true love: painting.

Lisy has never been one for rules. Coming from Cleveland, Ohio, he is continuously inspired to use art as a way to rebel against the Midwest ideologies he grew up with. As a child, Lisy always knew he could draw, but never intended to make a career of it. "My senior year, I had no idea what I wanted to do for college," he says. Luckily, a teacher saw his talents and gently steered him towards art. "With his guidance, I started putting my portfolio together for the Cleveland Institute of Art."

At the Institute of Art, Lisy quickly began to resent the structured form of his art classes and the constant pressure to conform to the ideologies of the school. "I was the guy who liked to cause trouble and get on the teacher's nerves. I was that guy, rebelling in class. I didn't like the hypocrisy." After a few years, Lisy took an absence from school and began touring with his band. For a while, art took a backseat in his life.



Political Corpse

After touring, Lisy began picking up art here and there again, but quickly realized he wasn't ready for the entirety of the art world. "Towards the later part of the 90's and early 2000's, I started getting into exhibitions here and there, but I wasn't ready for the business side of art. I had a group show in New York in 2002, and a solo show in my hometown. Those two experiences were not very positive. I began to

get burned out, and for a few years I put down making art altogether."

In 2010, Lisy ended up in New York, where he began getting in shows around the country. He started evolving his work into the process he uses today. "I stopped drawing and started using watercolors on paper for a while, and I haven't really drawn much since. I evolved from painting on paper with watercolors, then

with oil, and started trying to gain control with my techniques." Lisy now exclusively uses oils for his paintings.

Lisy's pieces allow him to work through emotional energy, whether it's positive or negative. "What comes out of the painting in terms of colors, ideas, and energy, that's all subconsciously what's going on in my head at the time." While in the studio, he tends to focus on the process, not worrying about the end result. "I'm interested in it when it's out in the world, but in the studio, it's all selfishness. I hope it connects with people, but it's like I'm working out a math problem, trying to figure out a new way to paint." His pieces are all completed in one session, often without even a break for meals. "I work fast. I don't think too much about it. It's all about painting when I'm ready to paint."

Lisy is now working with larger paintings. "I had to work hard to be able to handle the large scale paintings. Now that I'm becoming more comfortable with the size, I'm enjoying the process of it all". For now, he will continue splitting his time between NYC and his studio, in his hometown of Cleveland. After completing forty-one paintings last year, Lisy feels that he finally found his process. "I'm much more deliberate and patient with my paintings." ♦



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