

Daydreaming

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Introduction

Throughout this paper I will explore the ideas behind the processes in my work. I will start this by first discussing clutter and clarity. Those are the moments that I try to find the needle in the haystack. Next we will move on to interruption and focus, those instances of itching distraction from my task. After that, it goes into my assessment of symbols and their relations to me. Then I will arrive at layering, repetition, and single images. For this we will be looking at some of the references behind my thought process and work. Finally, we end on anxiety and the freedom from it, the tension and the relaxation.



Fig. 1

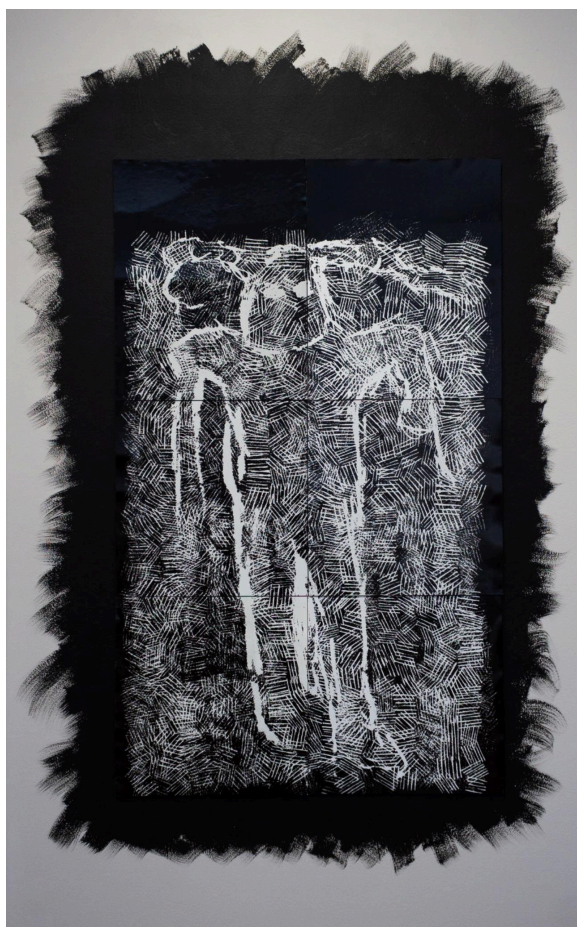


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Clutter vs. clarity

In the space of this exhibition, I wanted to invite visitors into my headspace through the portal of my work. I wanted them to see a bit of how I create and the many directions I can follow by impulse or distraction. While I don't see my work as precious, I

do see it as a means of personal reflection or expression of how my mind plays and dreams. My process is similar to how I choose to live my life. I try not to start out with anything too specific, to allow myself the ability to be open to ideas or opportunities that may arise. Thanks to my ADHD, I will undoubtedly be distracted by something that pulls my interest. I quickly become lost in the majesty of that distraction, either for an extended period of time or just briefly, and for that time I lose myself in it and forget all of my anxious worries.

When looking at *fig. 3*, I use this piece at the beginning of the exhibition to set up the remainder of the work. The cyanotype bricks that are on top of the cabinet are the outer version of myself, what everyone sees first. They are on bricks to convey the idea of having to appear solid and put together well in the society/world that we live in. The bricks are not held together by any mechanical or substance application, but rather stacked and sensitive to outside disturbance. The wear and tear of the bricks is meant to resemble the journey and struggle through life experiences that we sometimes wear on the outside. In the next paragraph we talk about the inside.

One of my favorite things is when I'm out, enjoying my day, grabbing some coffee and either on my way to find a nice spot to read or leaving one, I come across an antique shop. The thrill of possible treasures starts to excite me –that could also be from my love of pirates too– but something compels me to venture inside. I start looking around, exploring the space, picking through the trinkets, books, mementos. The invitation of the piece in Figure 3 is for the viewer to peek inside of my head, picking through images, books, and tools that are important to me in the same way that I sift through the antique shelves. The layering, patterning, and chaos of the stencil rollers on

the door and walls is meant to convey the sporadic, messy jumble of thoughts and ideas. In my head, and because of being granted the mentality of an inner voice, I tend to go off on different thoughts. This happens all the time: I think about the past, present, future; I think about conversations I've had, both real and hypothetical, or random thoughts about anything. The books that lay within the cabinet represent more of who I am mentally. The art forms represent what I find inspiring, motivating, and my different artistic interests. Also visible is the artistic philosophy that connects with who I am and the political ideological theory that I subscribe to. During my investigation into neurodivergence I found out that neurotics are more prone to have more radical beliefs. Most of my thoughts and ideas are going to come from these foundations.



Fig. 4

Interruption vs. focus



Fig. 5

The normal misinterpretation for people with ADHD is that we lack focus. What is actually happening, though, is that we cannot control what we focus on. If it was creating and making art - something that I actually enjoy - then I would be willing to give

it hours of my time. If it is something that we are not really interested in, those who have ADHD tend to become more easily distracted and lose focus. It isn't something that we can control; it just becomes extremely boring and we look for something to alleviate that boredom. We work more on a reward basis, if that reward is joy and happiness if the task does not allow for us to be creative. Procrastination can be common among those with ADHD. During this time, depending on the difficulty of the task, we are considering different options. We are thinking about different ideas, looking at multiple sources, and brooding over the task again and again. We consider different foundations or surfaces, different mediums, colors, or finishes. Sifting through these ideas in the context of art making is an extremely pleasurable focus. Distractions are another common issue for us: we could find something as small as a bug going through its daily life, but for a moment during that time it is the most interesting thing in the world. The age of technology, especially social media, has caused this to be a lot more frequent of an issue.

These issues are very annoying and tiresome; I guess the only brightside is that you learn how to cram at the last minute, which might not produce the best results but it gets the job done. The inability to focus does have its drawbacks but it also allows for the opportunity to enjoy random occurrences in life. The freedom to veer off the track and explore what else is out there, to jump from one obsession to another on a dime is a blissful pleasure.



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Symbol vs. anti-symbol

Symbolism is not something that I see as sacred or essential. For example, the Christian cross is just two perpendicular lines; it is the semiotic meaning attached to it since that enhances its veneration. While I do understand the current meaning behind the symbol, it was in use before and after the crucifixion of Christ. I remember a conversation that I once had with my dad when he said that if you destroy a symbol then you destroy the belief or movement. That is an insane thing to think, but when the BLM movement was at its height and people were burning the flag and kneeling for the anthem, the resulting chaos was even crazier. How can you hold something non-essential so tightly? If your whole belief system is so dependent on this symbol, do you really believe in the thing the way you say you do? A symbol can always be

changed, trashed, or desecrated. I myself have three different tags that I use and am even thinking of new ones, because the point is to remain united to one thing. Two of the three can be seen in the works above. The 'Crown Guy', which is my variation of Basquiat's crown symbol with a face, is meant to represent anti-imperialism/authoritarianism/monarchism. It is a visual representation of the anarchist saying of '*No gods No masters*'. I also use the stencil of the image repeatedly in *Fig. 4* essentially constantly screaming it over and over again. The other tag in use is the skull and bone, with this one I appropriated the pirate skull and crossbones flag and simplified the to one bone to allow for expediency. This tag is a use for rebellion in general. With both of these, they have some meaning to me as far as they are both my creations, but even without them my beliefs would not change and the possibility of designing a new one is still possible. I like what I make and would love to avoid intentionally messing it up, but my life isn't going to end if something breaks or falls apart. A symbol is just a tool, a design to be used, not something to be idolized.

Layering/Repetition vs. singular image/text

Emotions, artists, and art forms that influence my work are as follows: anger, rage, anxiety, ADHD, chaos, peace, tranquility, silence and personality disorder; Robert Rauschenberg, Frida Kahlo, Jackson Pollock, Piet Mondrian, Hannah Höch, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring; dada, surrealism, abstract expression, maximalism, minimalism, graffiti, and street art. With all of these artists, I see them as ingredients in a recipe. One is not more important than the next but without all the dish is not as impactful as it could be. I am drawn to each of these artists and movements for no more than one or two reasons each. For example, the creativity of Rauschenberg's mixed

media collage work, the way Pollock so thoughtfully worked at his drip paintings, and Basquiat's visually simple appearance being packed so densely with deep thoughts and ideas. Dada embodies rebellion; Abstract Expressionism communicates ideas and emotions through form and color; graffiti and street art exude a dynamic guerilla style. I constantly swing back and forth, up and down, or anywhere in between these thoughts and ideas.

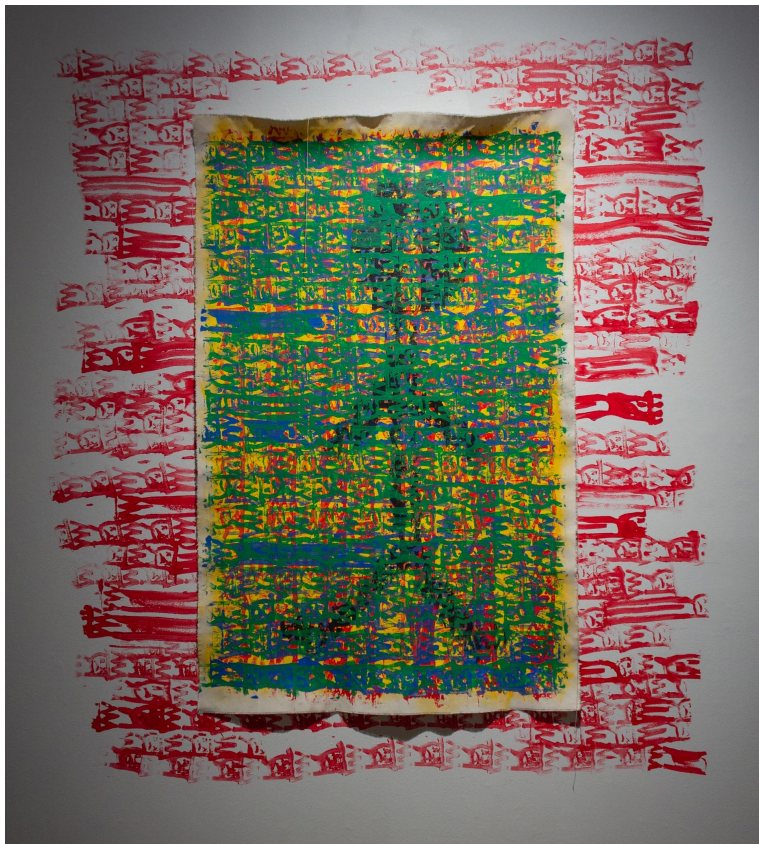


Fig. 8

It's hard for me to choose a single lane, or focus on a particular style. I like to jump around between different mediums or different visual choices depending on what I and the piece decide that it needs. It could be a dense composition with a variety of colors and media or a singular image. This pendulum of artistry can be difficult when trying to

monetize my art, but why should artists not be able to explore differences in their creativity? The idea of never trying new avenues of creating is something I can't entertain. It is the reason I enjoy being an artist in the first place. Artists should be more applauded and appreciated for their creativity, their ability to be flexible, and their ingenuity. Stagnation dulls me, it brings about the increase of depression, with boredom and resentment to follow. I would rather get frustrated trying to figure out something new than get mad at doing the thing I love. So my decision to go from a heavily layered piece to a simple image keeps me from getting to the point where I no longer want to do whatever it is.



Fig. 9

Anxiety vs. freedom



Fig. 10

My work is psychological, in the sense that I am interested in the way the mind works. The mind is such a fascinating place, but a lot of people are scared of their own thoughts for some reason. This fear of being alone and forced to be with yourself is something that terrifies people. It doesn't have that same effect for me though, which could be the product of being raised as somewhat of an only child and moving from place to place due to my father being in the military. My younger brother was more so raised by his mother until his high school years, after I had already graduated and joined the military. This constant isolation gave me the ability to learn to enjoy my solitude, to entertain myself without the need for someone to be consistently there. I am the opposite of those people I referred to earlier who feel a need to be surrounded by people (extroverts); I become heavily anxious around other people and can't wait to leave. The need to be constantly around people is something that I just don't understand. It is foreign to me. People who are more extroverted will say "that's depressing" but I would say it's depressing that they constantly need to seek attention and validation from others. Being by myself is freeing: I'm not worried about impressing someone, not concerned about their judgements of me. I'm allowed to be free and happy with the person who loves me the most. My mind is free to explore the depths of its thoughts and worlds undiscovered. My ideas can flow freely without interruption. While I do understand art as this thing to be used as a statement to the world, to me it is a lot more personal. That joy of self discovery and imagination is the most amazing feeling.

Thus I come to the end of this thesis having done an overview of my thought process and ideas. I am not someone who has to know the secret behind the magic or

the reasons for every little detail. While I can find those things interesting, I would rather enjoy the here and now. Without the random and spontaneous, the adventure and the secret passage, everything would be a guided road map to follow. How would we ever be able to become as unique and as fascinating as we are? It's the collage of experiences and inspirations that shape, guide, and define us as individuals. I was the kid who touched the iron and stove despite warnings of their heat...risk and adventure are my delights!

Biography

Dontré Major is from Oklahoma City and is a product of the Millwood High School public school system. After graduating, he joined the U.S Navy where he learned an important lesson: never again volunteer yourself. After leaving the Navy and giving them the peace sign minus the index finger, he spent a short time working as an electrician where his favorite project was the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington DC. After a year of working in the DC area and worsening back problems, Dontré decided to follow his true passion. He enrolled at the College of Charleston in South Carolina and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Photography. As an artist, he has been a part of multiple group exhibitions and a solo exhibition. He applied twice to Tulane University's MFA program, giving the Newcomb Art Department a needed second chance.

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