

Mrs. Lupfer and Students,

First let me say how wonderful it was to open a package full of such thoughtful letters. I have heard of students around the country and even in other countries using my text portraits as school projects, but never has a class taken the time to actually reach out to me with their thought and questions. I sat down with my wife and daughters and read through each letter. Your enthusiasm for the project and my work was extremely flattering. I went to Instagram and looked at some of your work. Very impressive. I apologize for the delay in my response. It has been a busy time for me with a lot of changes happening in my art and I wanted to make sure I took the proper care to answer some of your questions.

So, here is a little info about myself and some answers to several of your questions.

I live in Lebanon, Ohio with my wife Kathy and three daughters (Ella, Liv and Greta). I live in a historic house built in 1853 that we are currently restoring. My studio is in the attic and has a great metal roof that makes the best sound for painting when it's raining outside. In addition to my text abstraction paintings, I also have a series of paintings that incorporate icon playthings (fisher price toys, big wheels, etc.). These paintings also use text in them, but they are much easier to read.

I decided I wanted to be an artist around the age of five. I took painting and drawing classes throughout my childhood and filled tons of notebooks with sketches. I earned a scholarship in high school to attend The Columbus College of Art and Design and Earned a BFA in Illustration. I later went back to school and earned a BFA in Art Education and Painting.

After college I worked as a professional muralist for a large commercial mural studio. It was an interesting job and it allowed me to travel around the country a bit and work on very large murals for companies like Disney, Planet Hollywood, and lots of restaurants and department stores. I eventually started painting residential murals and that evolved to my finally just painting fine art. I sell my paintings through participating in shows around the country. I also am represented by galleries in Ohio and Nashville. I recently became represented by an artist agent who will represent my work in California and Florida.

The first text painting I did was probably more influenced by Richard Prince (although I was familiar with Klee, I had never seen his text work). Like Prince's work, the painting was very clear and simple to read at the beginning. In the midst of painting it I began to feel uncomfortable with having a personal story be so accessible. That's when I began to play with the line distortion and using colors as a way of making the words both visible and hidden at the same time. There's a lot more art mumbo jumbo behind the concept. But the long in short of it is that I wanted to make a visual representation of all the stuff that goes on when we try to think back on a moment. How we try to make it mean something or stand for something. How the meaning changes as we get older, or as we tell them to different people.

Now for some of your direct questions.

Favorite colors are like favorite foods. It just depends on the day, although I have always been a fan of gray. My oldest daughter Ella was even given it as her middle name.

I don't really have a favorite NFL team. But when my neighbors ask I tell them the Cincinnati Bengals because it seems to make them happy.

Most paintings take an average of about 20 hrs. Sometimes they go quicker, sometimes much longer. A lot depends on how big they are.

Yes, talking to strangers is a bad idea. Drawing a stranger two giant eyes is a super cool idea.

I have two cats. I don't really like cats but my wife and daughters do. I really like my wife and daughter, so that's why I have 2 cats.

I don't really have a favorite painting. Sometimes I look at a work and it makes me feel content and then there might be a time I look at it and I see flaws I wish I could correct.

I don't hunt but some of my friends do. And that huge deer that you mentioned was killed about 35 minutes from where I live. I'm not sure if that's a good thing or a bad thing. The hunter was on the news and he seemed happy. I'm guessing the deer wasn't thrilled.

I can't really give paintings away, although it's flattering to be asked. It's just that's how I make a living and I made a promise to the fine people at Huntington Bank and I need to make sure I fulfill it.

My hobbies are running, working out, cooking, writing short stories and renovating homes.

Thanks again for your interest in my work and your kind comments regarding it. I hope at the very least they will inspire you to keep art as a part of your life, whether that is as an artist, a hobbyist or a fan of the arts. Feel free to check in with my work at www.derrickhickman.com

I have also attached some images of my work and my studio.

Thanks,

Derrick