

EVERYTHING IS CONSIDERED

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Painting  
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2013 – 2016

Savannah College of Art and Design

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## EVERYTHING IS CONSIDERED

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Saying "thank you" is something your mother teaches you to say when you are a child. This phrase is so common we rarely realize how important it is. In 2014, while I was in graduate school in Savannah, Georgia, I was walking my groceries home through Forsyth Park when I was shot at point blank range by a gang member. I wouldn't be alive today if it weren't for the systems that saved me, the Police Department, the EMTs, and my friends and family. If this experience taught me anything, it's to appreciate people and live life to the fullest, and my thesis expresses that philosophy. People are the key part of the experience, and making sure they feel honored and respected is my work as an artist. My thesis has three parts. At the center is a café table with chairs, representing a shared experience. The second part are paintings of San Antonio's Five Missions, representing my home and community. The third part of my thesis is the people themselves, coming to see the paintings, sharing in the experience. This is best represented by a coffee cup I designed that I presented first to the Savannah Police Department, the people who helped me that night, and then to my friends and family. The coffee cup hides almost unnoticed at the start of my show but is my thesis completely: people coming together to share an experience and have a cup of coffee, thus making art everyday.

Keywords: *painting, meta-modernism, post-modernism, thank you, gratitude*



Fig. 1 - Rex Hausmann, "Rain Rain Go Away", 2015, acrylic and ink on canvas, 72" x 48"

"I think that delving deeply into something is better than letting it go."

– Vincent van Gogh, Letter # 175 to Theo, October 12–15, 1881



Fig. 2 - Ray Smith, “Corner”, 2005, oil on canvas, 39" x 24"

### ***Intro to the Intro***

*In this corner... weighing 165 lbs. .... middle weight.... wearing the blue with the red gloves, hailing from Brooklyn New York.... the boxer!*

In Ray Smith's “Corner” a trained boxer as true as Leonardo da Vinci's “Vitruvian Man” stands ready. This boxer is an individual wrestling with himself. This paper is a stream-of-conscious narrative—with emphasis on the stream that flows into a river. It’s a memoir, a manifesto, a thesis that’s not only about art but about experience.

The roundabout direction of this paper is the works, philosophies, and books that might not be linear in nature, and my personal works of art. Philosophies found in the writings of Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Art*, Dave Hickey's *Air Guitar* and Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze's *Rhizome in A Thousand Plateaus*. Writers whose entrées were to be viewed as a series of interests rather than one linear narrative. The

conceptual and visual artists Daniel Buren, James Lee Byers, Joseph Kosuth, Takashi Murakami are also welcome here. These artists and writers lead the viewer to believe that there is more to the image than just the image itself. There is a story to be told.

In my personal search, I have found Ray Smith's painting explains the streams, missed jabs, and side stories in life that are as important as the main story itself. Each jab of the boxer holds a place of significance. Each stream is part of the journey. Each adventure a shared experience. And all of it related through the making of images.

Like the Smith boxer jabbing but staying casually poised for action, I try to tell my story through words when usually I paint or arrange images. As the sculptor of Lacoste, France Evert Lindfors, once said, "I am trying to shape sculptures out of black and white lines." He was speaking of words on paper. This paper is a personalized story citing everything from the opening sentence of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* to Japan via Takashi Murakami's artistic origin from as far back as the atomic bomb. With the A-bomb we landed a punch, ending a war and ushering in an era called Post-modernism, where all the hero myths brought forth by our fathers were put into question. This questioning gave rise to a stoic depression that needed to pass—a depression I unexpectedly found in my own life. We needed heroes once again to save us. But we didn't need just any hero or any story. We needed Joseph Campbell's *Hero with One Thousand Faces*, who showed us not what made us different but made us the same. In these heroes, we found connection. The Post-modern nihilism transformed to Meta-modernistic optimism. And the story became one of hope.

My story is no different.



Fig. 3 - Rex Hausmann, "The Old Man and the Sea", 2015, ink and acrylic, 48" x 72"

Call me Rex. I am an artist, a narrative artist. Now let me tell you my story. A story about a life well lived. A life that came dangerously close to almost not being, but more on that later. At the end of this narrative you may not understand everything, but you will go away saying "man, that was a good story", and that is my goal. Sometimes I use paint to achieve this goal, sometimes not. As the French artist Daniel Buren once wrote:

*"Art as it is, is the illusion of something and not the thing itself."*  
(Buren, *Art and Theory*, p. 862)

This is my story.

Part 1 – STORY





Fig. 4 - Opening Night of McNay Art Museum, San Antonio Texas, 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Rex Hausmann

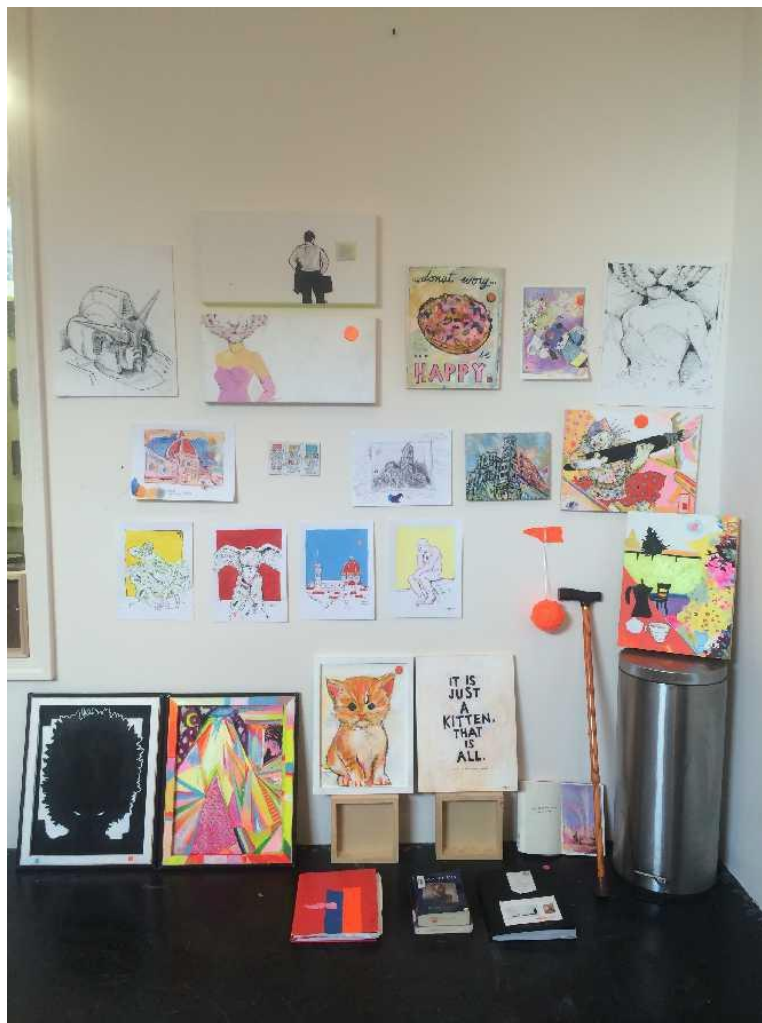


Fig. 5 - Studies from My Studio While in Wheel Chair, Rex Hausmann

*The Story the Savannah Morning News Did Not Tell*

Let me say this. Art is not about hiding. Art it is about confronting what you fear the most and finding the positive. The following is a written account of what happened the night of July 15, 2014; the night I was shot in the leg at point-blank range. I opened up a closed file for this paper, something my family and I have been trying to get over for the past two years. Perhaps the account will bring closure. Perhaps not. I do not think you ever really “get over” something like this. But there is a healing element to the whole process. The act of making art became a sort of machine proliferating itself through the making of things. It allowed me to wonder, think, and process. I dug deep for the show *A Letter to My Folks*. I dug to find answers. What I found was not just for myself. The process I went through has also seemed to help others.

The end goal of my show at the McNay was to piece together my life, not only healing though the physical damage to my leg, but also to mend mentally from the experience. I spent a lot of time with my family, working through therapy and creating works for the show, all born from a tragic memory that was neatly tucked away in the folds of my cerebellum. Perhaps it is in these things that I found what resonates with others. Giving closure to some things while opening others. Healing is the most important part.

Notes from hospital, July 15, 2014. Savannah, Georgia:

*I was at Forsyth Park after getting groceries with SCAD transportation. I was walking home on the lit paths. There were college kids playing on the amphitheater. The grass was wet from the rain. I passed the rose-smelling garden for the blind. It happened at the street lamp (on the park side). My assailant presented his gun to me and said, “We are doing this. Come over here.” I said, “No, I am a scholarship student and have no money. You can have my groceries if you like”.*

*“Leave me alone and go away,” I said. He stopped and thought a minute. He said, “Just give me your wallet.” I said, “NO just leave me alone.”*

*I tried to get as close to the street lamp as I could and be in the middle of the street so I could draw attention.*

*Then a voice from the bush said, “Do him.”*

*The man shot me in the left leg. I fell. He ran. I called for help.*

*Two cars stopped. An African American man in a black car and another African American man.*

*Then a neighbor who knew Bill and Debbie Saxman came out and said that the police and ambulance were on their way.*

*Then the police came, put me in the ambulance, and I went off.*

*Thank you to all the staff at the hospital. SCAD for coming out*

*immediately. Bill and Debbie Saxman. The staff and all who helped*

*me. I will heal and I can’t wait to paint in the next few days. I have a*

*15-hour review and a critique to finish.*

*– Rex Hausmann*

I was confronted with a shocking reality on that cool night in Savannah. I remember the feel of the wet grass. The blades as they crushed under my bright yellow Puma shoes. As I walked, I smelled roses. The garden for the blind. I remember thinking how nice that was, that some person at some time would think of people with disabilities like that. The roses gave off an effervescent smell. The night was muggy. The breeze was cool. Then, I met someone whom I have been praying for off and on since. I don’t even know his name. Imagine that, praying for someone who you don’t even know. Even someone who would make a tremendous mistake. A mistake that changed both of our lives forever.

He hit me with his shoulder as he casually walked by, pulling a gun as we passed. He was wearing a military jacket. I still remember the glow from the street lamp and his eyes. At first he was bold. He announced a couple of suggestions that I declined. One being to follow him, the other for me to give him my wallet. I said no.

I just wanted him to go his way and me go mine. The gun flashed. At first I didn't know what had happened. I felt the blood trickle down my leg. Then, I felt nothing at all. My adrenaline was pumping. I said, "You just shot me. Who shoots someone?" His eyes widened in disbelief, and he ran. I tried to run but was not able to. I had a new friend in my life.

Apparently my new found friend had bounced in my bone a few times, trying its best to leave, but due to the small caliber of the handgun, the bullet couldn't decide where to go and finally nestled down for a good long sleep in the bottom of my femur bone. Something that while on its way did as much damage as possible. I was picked up by the EMTs and the Police. Something I will be forever grateful for. I don't think you ever forget things like this, only learn to live with them.

After I was rushed to the hospital and stabilized, I asked the nurse for some paper. In the hospital bed, I wrote as much as I could remember. I drew three images, a horse, a duomo and a fish with glasses. Even only hours after being shot, I was back into thinking about art and the making of objects. I had no idea, no concept of what had just happened to me. What I thought was I would be back in class in a few days, ready to give a thesis review. I was going to show my little black figures that were based on the *Burghers of Calais* that I wanted to show at McNay's 60<sup>th</sup>. I was getting them ready for class before the whole incident happened.



Fig. 6 - Rex Hausmann, “The Burghers of Calais”, 2014, clay, tire and wood in space

I was wrong. It would take me six months to walk—and nearly a year and a half to achieve the mental ability to move on. I still don’t know if I have reached that point yet. Being in France helped a bit with a project called *The Processional*, but other than that, as Jay Z says in *Blueprint 2*, “I’m paranoid.”



Fig. 7 - An Image Taken Where I Learn to Walk Again, Wearing My Grandfather's Jacket that Later Became "Bro Montana" as part of *The Kitten Project*

While I was learning to walk again, I lived a very small life. It lasted for about four months. I could only go to a few places in San Antonio while I healed at Reeve's Rehab. And then, I backslid—I hit my healing leg and fell into a brief dose of insanity that brought about the painting "Rain Rain Go Away":



Fig. 8 - Rex Hausmann, "Rain Rain Go Away," 2015, acrylic and ink on canvas, 72" x 48"

“Rain Rain Go Away” was a drawing first. The neon colors symbolize life itself. If light passes at 299,792 kilometers per second and a bullet from a 9-millimeter handgun passes at 1500 feet per second, then the intersection of the two is this painting. One day, coming home from physical therapy, my dad and mother helped me out of the car due to my leg being held captive in a gigantic black leg boot.

This day was a fall day, and my brother called on the phone. His wife’s sister was having a baby! We were so excited that we all jumped out of the car. For whatever reason, I thought I could walk again. I have no idea what was on my mind at the time, but I hopped out of the car. What I didn’t think about was that my leg would hit the ground. When it did, the sharpest pain I have ever felt went through my body. It was rage. Pure, simple, blinding rage. My leg hit the ground and with it an atomic bomb went off inside of me. I was beyond words. I was beyond pain. I was in rage. I was mad at everything and everyone.

*What had happened to my mother, my father, my brother, my leg? How was I going to pay for all of this? Was I going to walk again? Was my scholarship going to hold? What was going to happen? Was this man ever going to be brought to justice and would I heal? Would I ever walk again!?!*

This event was my catharsis, and the painting, “Rain Rain Go Away,” my autobiography. The panda was real. He was me. The baseball hat has a donut on it. A symbol for the small pleasures in life with the slogan “Donut Worry Be Happy” scrolled across it. The panda’s sunglasses are hiding the blood shot eyes of a person so racked with anger they hold everything back. The hairdryer was blowing away all of the bad juju that was being rained down by the four assailants who were a part of the shooting. The one who shot me. The one who was the real evil and commanded, “Do him.” And the two in the car who were waiting for me. They are all in the dark angry cloud raining down all kinds of gunk. I tried to make the

most putrid green possible, taking color theory of Joseph Albers and finding some grounding in green and yellow. His color studies worked.

A small Athenian Hoplite protected my mind. He was a leftover from one of the first drawings I had done as a student in grade school. The sprinkles that surrounded the panda were from my hometown of San Antonio. The colors are exploding from the center. The sun was in the background and the red square holding the corner down. It's all there. The painting was not only everything that had happened to me—it was me.

After getting over the insanity, my daily routine went back to normal. The art store, my family home, and the studio were a few places I would go. I visited the McNay Museum of Art (San Antonio, Texas) once in my wheelchair to see the exhibition space I was going to show in. It was massive. A 72-foot gallery with a 43-foot width and four walls. Rene Barilleaux (chief curator of the McNay) gave me the largest gallery in the museum saying to me, "Rex, I gave you this space and I knew you could fill it." What Rene didn't know was why I was in a wheelchair. I explained to him the situation, and he paused taking it all in. He said, "I cannot believe this... will you be OK?" I assured Rene I would walk again and that the show would go on. I would tackle both healing and the making of paintings for his gallery. It was an epic challenge. Something as large as Jason's journey with his Argonauts. My Argonauts being pens and pencils with paper as my Argo, a stand-in for Jason's boat. Part of the challenge was healing. Something that was healing in many ways, and perplexing in a lot of ways. A blank canvas to paint a very large story. I was processing my world, and I needed color. The black of "The Burghers of Calais" was thrown out the window. I needed sunrises both in my mind and my work.



There were sketch books, duomos, sunrises, kittens playing. All things that made me truly appreciate the small things in life, I drew them. I also built these little toys from my childhood, kits from Japan called Gundams. Later in the studio, I built a Gundam with paint.



Fig. 9 - Rex Hausmann, Study of "Gundam Pariaktoi", 2014



Fig. 10 - "Gundam Pariaktoi" in Studio Getting Ready for McNay

I still remember calling Lee Imbimbo, an architect and friend in San Antonio, saying “Lee, I need to make a three-sided sculpture with a two-dimensional surface.” We troubleshot the idea. My dad was the one who would come up with the solution. A theatrical flat was the answer, an ancient Greek device called a periaktoi. A periaktoi is a three-sided painting very

much like the Kabuki screen in Japan. I needed to build a giant robot to protect myself. To my family. I needed one, so I painted it. Also, I needed to communicate what had happened, but how do you say such a shocking story. Simple, you hide it in plain sight. I drew not only a Gundam, with a pink sprinkle backpack. I drew a text message conversation to myself. Encoding the whole incident, start to finish. It's all there, in emoticons. Ready to be read, like the hundreds of millions of text message conversations that happen in a day. There the Gundam is, looking for the sun to rise, paint brush in hand.

I painted and drew nonstop.



Fig. 11 - Rex Hausmann, "Gundam Pariaktoi", 2014, ink and paint on (3) panels, 80" x 120" x 3"



Fig. 12 - Rex Hausmann, “Duomo Study”, 2014, ink on panel, 20" x 24"

Drawing after drawing after drawing. Through the McNay show, I presented my world. I painted for months on end. First in the wheelchair, and then as I learned to walk again, I started big drawings. The first larger works were called “Full Grid”, based on art history flash cards that I made up in my mind. On the flash cards, I put a color grid of Ellsworth Kelly. The one in the Metropolitan that is on permanent display in the modern section. I have always looked at that exhibition with great admiration. Kelly's ability to choose to work so simply for so long. Something I wish one day to be able to attain in my own work. On top of the color grid, I drew line drawings. Line drawings of sculptures that are important to me. I wanted to teach people through drawing. This is what I find important and these are what will inform you about my work. When I made them, I was at my brother's apartment in Austin, Texas. This was the Fall of 2014. The Texas rains were coming in. I remember watching the movie *Patton* on Halloween night because I only had enough energy to work on art, eat dinner with my brother and his wife, and play with the cat as I drew and cooked. I would sketch the drawings and paintings and then draw and paint. It was a magical time.

I wrote this while making the Flash Cards:

*The idea behind “Full Grid 2: Flash Cards”, is simple: to educate and inform the viewer. With “Full Grid 2: Flash Cards” I wanted to write an artist statement with art! These “Flash Cards” are much like the flash cards one sees in grade school. Art history icons are rendered in a simple line drawing surrounded by an Ellsworth Kelly-like background as seen in his work “Spectrum V”. The paint on the background is applied in a rough manner, bringing to mind the brush strokes of the painter Jasper Johns or the sculpture of Jim Dine. Each line drawing is simple and well-drawn. The “under drawing” is as important as the final product, bringing to view the process by which the flashcard was created. In the book *Postmodern Art Education: An Approach to Curriculum* published by The National Arts Education Association, it was written that “Currently, people tend to be less certain that new art indicated progress over old art. Perhaps more individualistic and abstract styles merely estrange public audiences resulting in a loss of socially shared content.” The book goes on to state through the writer Suzi Gablik, “To the public at large, modern art has always implied a loss of craft, a fall from grace, a fraud or a hoax... it remains one of the more disturbing facts about modernism that a sense of fraudulence has, from the start, hung round its neck like an albatross.” The hope of these works is to educate the viewer on works of art as much as enjoy the work of art in front of them. The aim is to take people on a journey through art, by making art rather than writing about the intentions as seen in a traditional artist statement.*



Fig. 13 - Rex Hausmann, “Full Grid”, 2014, acrylic and ink on canvas, (6) canvases with drawings 36" x 48"



As I healed, I went bigger! I started with “Block Head” and “Tiger Lady”. “Tiger Lady” is real. She is my big sister Felicia Smith. She came to the opening at the McNay with her mother Gail Smith, my high school art teacher, who I still keep in touch. Felicia looked like a million bucks at the opening. I was proud to have her as my “date” that night. Not a date as in a romantic couple, but a date as in friends who have journeyed a long way together. It was an honor. Then there was “Block Head”. “Block Head” was a rendition of my brother in that he works at an accounting firm and is always trying to manage time. There is a clock on the wall that has the hours 10 and 2, referencing the old marketing adage from the 1950s. Then in the middle was “Rain Rain Go Away”. A panda, me, blowing away the bad rain of a mean cloud. The cloud was a spin on Takashi Murakami's whole, well... everything. A little Athenian Hoplite is protecting my mind from insanity and the panda is wearing one of my favorite flowered shirts. Later to come would be duomos, robots, large sunrises and a number of other images all telling an autobiographical account of the healing process through art itself. One more such painting was “Fountain Head” also displayed in the McNay.



Fig. 14 - Rex Hausmann, “Block Head”, “Rain Rain Go Away” & “Tiger Lady”, 2014/ 2015 Images from McNay



Fig. 15 - Rex Hausmann, “Fountain Head”, 2014, ink on canvas, (2) panels 51" x 82"

“Fountain Head” came about after sitting with an old friend of my father’s, Cappy Lawton, one afternoon when I was finally able to get out and about on my own with a cane. Cappy had given me my first show at his restaurant many years before, only a few blocks down from the McNay.

On this afternoon, Cappy said to me “Well, isn’t it every artist’s dream to hang in a museum one day, and you’re only 31! A big honor.” For me, the honor was to be from San Antonio, and to show in San Antonio at one of our premier spaces.

Cappy asked me at lunch, “Why is it that I don’t see more paintings about oil? There is a lot of work there, and there are a lot of people that may be interested in the subject.” My answer is this painting “Fountain Head” (2014).

As for oil, the image of an oil derrick is of most powerful interest. I liked the energy of the object. How oil just comes gushing out of the ground. I wanted to put text next to the image saying “The oil is in your head” or “The energy is in your head”. I started to talk to a few friends. One in Kansas, one in Brooklyn and one in Los Angeles. ALL of them said, “Well, Rex – oil has nothing to do with us, and that may be cool in Texas, but frankly all we think about is

money – and it's just getting in the way of your idea for the fountain being in your head... so try another image other than an oil derrick... maybe something else.”

I needed to find something wonderful to think about. I needed color.



Fig. 16 - Rex Hausmann, “Fountain Head” (Study), 2014, ink on paper, 10" x 8 1/4"

Later, I was in my sketch book, remembering the advice of my friends and I Googled “natural energy”. From there dams, waterfalls, turning wheels and volcanoes all came up. Asking what is “American”? I thought, Teddy Roosevelt! He tried to preserve our natural parks... so a national park that is of interest... Yosemite... and then “Old Faithful”.

I wanted to put text by my painting, much like the painter John Baldessari saying what an image is or is not. I did this little sketch in ink in a waiting room at the hospital. The ink sketch

then became a large painting. The painting “Fountain Head” is as much about being in one’s own head as being in America, as it is being amazed by our natural world. The text is there to help anyone who needs help getting to the idea. The colors are life itself!

The McNay was a major life event. In late January 2015, everyone I knew in San Antonio was invited to an opening weekend, one of the highlights of my MFA process. It was all there at the McNay. My family and friends. My world presented through paint. There were rising suns and colors vivid and full of life. There were pandas and duomos and robots and kittens and tiger ladies. There were fountains and ideas.

Life is just amazing when you allow it to happen. After the show at the McNay, my family planned to meet my brother in Milan, Italy. He had a fellowship at the Bocconi School of Business through the University of Texas at Austin. Seeing that his graduation marked the one-year anniversary of what had happened to me—July 15, the day I was shot—we as a family committed to saving up enough money to celebrate with my brother and to get out and travel.

In France and the trip around Europe, the real healing began. I traveled to the home of the duomos, Italy, France, Turkey and Greece. I traveled for the better part of three months and then taught in France for another three as a teacher’s assistant in Lacoste (a SCAD satellite campus in a medieval village in the Provence region of France) with The Savannah College of Art and Design with Steve Knudsen, who also helped me write this thesis. This gave me six months of international travel. Everywhere I carried with me small sketchbooks that I filled with drawings.





Fig. 17 - Rex Hausmann, "Sketch books from Europe 1", 2015, varying sizes

In the foothills of France I found three things: time, community and healing. I couldn't help but draw. I didn't know anyone and I did what most artists do. I retreated into what I knew, and that was interpreting the world through art. Little did I know that the process of drawing would become a social dynamic itself. The drawings started to proliferate some kind of metaphysical cathedral of joy. It was amazing.

Everyone loved the drawings! I even remember a note I took, a drawing that said "don't you have anything more important to do?... no not really." The drawing answering itself with a drawing. I guess you could say that art started to answer itself.



Fig. 18 - Rex Hausmann, "Sketchbooks from Europe 2", 2015, varying sizes

Everywhere I went I would draw. I drew people, I drew buildings, I drew landmarks. Not only did I draw and leave it in a sketchbook, I wanted everyone else to draw as well and share in the joy of creating. I taught people to draw with Steve Knudsen while in Lacoste. I ran around and gave drawing lessons on “quick drawing”. I drew on canvases and I drew on napkins. I drew and I kept all my work in books and then the books started to become a painting.



Fig. 19 - Rex Hausmann, “The Sagrada”, 2015, 10" x 8 1/4"

I started with The Sagrada Familia cathedral in Barcelona by Antoni Gaudi had seen the Sagrada Familia earlier in the summer when I was touring with my family and was amazed at what the Catalan was able to create. I was looking for a structural metaphor. Something solid.

The structure didn't say what I needed it to say. The drawing needed to be more.

Then we, as a group, went to The Pont du Guard, one of the most massive structural elements I have ever seen! Professor Patrick Haughey enlightened the students and the TA's

of the magical history of the place and of the Roman Arch. This fueled my fire. I was closer to what I needed to say, but wasn't quite there yet.

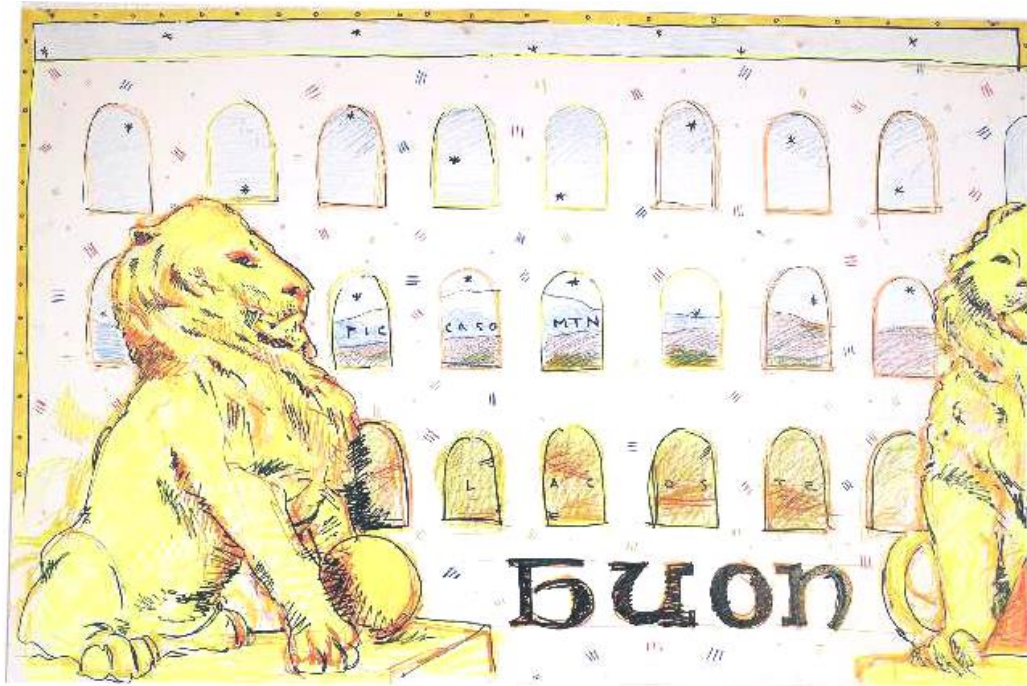


Fig. 20 - Rex Hausmann, "The Pont du Gard", 2015, ink on board, 36" x 48"

When I found what I was looking for, it was something that painting could not give me. Because, painting in and of itself—as Richter says— is pure idiocy. I was not getting what I needed, like in the works for the McNay. The sketchbooks didn't work. I needed life to be the canvas. I needed something more... and I found what I was looking for in the people of Lacoste. The question was no longer if I needed inspiration, but rather how could we, as a community, help one another to transition into a group of people all giving what we had to one another. Even in something as small as a smile or a group drawing.





Fig. 21 - Group drawing with the Architecture students at SCAD Lacoste, Fall 2015



Fig. 22 - The painting studio in Lacoste, Fall 2015 with “The Processional” in process.

The people became the art. The students, the faculty, the staff, the history of Lacoste. Everything became a canvas. This began with a journal entry I made with local sculptor Evert Lindfors, his wife Barbara and a person named Bruno Pitot. Evert is a celebrated artist in France who studied at the École des Beaux-Arts and who throughout his life has had many museum solo shows. The following is an excerpt from my time visiting Evert in his studio.

*“Look at the thing and draw it, then see what you've drawn. Your drawing will show what you've seen.” – Evert Lindfors*



Fig. 23 - Evert Lindfors, Work in Studio, 2015

I first met Evert by chance, and it all caught the attention of a man named Bruno. When I landed with fifty-two students both undergrad and graduate to the small town of Lacoste, Bruno welcomed us out of an old 1989 BMW roadster. Bruno said to us, "Welcome to little Lacoste. It is not a big city like Paris, but we like it here and we welcome you." What we didn't know but were soon to find out was that Bruno knew everyone and everything in Lacoste.

Bruno is—among other things—a fourth-generation Lacostian. You will find him cooking at Maxine's in Paris on the Seine River when he is not in Lacoste.

The day I met Evert, he was sitting in the medieval town warming himself by the sun. A man of about 80 going on 40 with the energy of a 25-year-old. He was in front of the library at

the end of the steep hill when I said politely, “How was your fig tree this morning?” Referring to a 65-year-young fig tree he planted in front of his home and studios when he moved to Lacoste from Sweden. “Fine, fine,” he said with a smile. “How are you?” I replied, “I’m drawing and painting every day, life could not get much better.” “Let me see your drawings,” Evert stated. Showing my drawings to Evert began a conversation that would preoccupy my mind for some time.

Our conversation began with this. “I believe you, you have it!” Referring to the artist’s touch. “I can see it in your drawings. You see, you can tell a lot about a person by their handwriting in the drawings. Especially the way you place text with images. A drawing is like a song.” Evert motioned with his hands as much a conductor as a storyteller. “Art is like a symphony. There are low points and high points, crescendos and rests.” Evert swept side to side with his hands, playing the sound of a bassoon with his lips and then switching to the sound of an imaginary piccolo, his fingers playing in the wind. Then as soon as Evert started, he stopped. Realizing what time it was, he got up. “I have to eat lunch with my wife and I must get back to her.” He smiled and went on down the hill. I sat in amazement.

Taylor, a friend and fellow student, walked by and said, “Who is that?!”

“A genius,” I replied.

Little did I know I just met the Giacometti of Lacoste.

Thanks to Bruno, I would later have an introduction and a visit I will never forget. Upon entering Evert’s studios, yes I say studios plural, you go up some stairs and into an opening filled with old books, small toys, bikes, plants, sinks and buckets... All of which may have not

moved for a good 20 years and some that may have been picked up just yesterday. One walks up some more steps and through another borough of books and bric-a-brac. Chaucer, Hemingway, science, sculpture, French literature, magazines—every manner of reading material imaginable. An experience that is somewhat akin to visiting the art critic Robert Storr's office at Yale University only this time less linear in focus. A table made of one of the thickest planks of wood I have ever seen greeted us. Evert and Barbara sat for coffee.

Bruno and I joined them. Bruno translated for me in French when it was necessary. Evert was quite fluent in English. Evert's wife was astute and polite, speaking five languages, none of which I spoke well. Bruno spoke four and Evert five. I was the typical American speaking one, English, and three not so well, Italian, Spanish and French, that all canceled each other out as I spoke in a mix leaving me with one language again, English. Typical American.

There we sat chatting. Everett with me, and Bruno with Evert's wife. Four artists conversing about the point of art. Evert with sculpture, myself with painting, Evert's wife painting and drawing, and Bruno cuisine. Bruno said cooking is not a science contrary to popular opinion. He said he watched his mother cook, and to cook well one must observe things and not demand of them. "An apple will tell you what an apple wants to be, you must be patient and observe it well and wait."

Evert said, "Art is like a mountain, like a volcano, when the volcano wants to speak, it speaks. And then when he is quiet for a while everyone waits and then goes back to normal life... But when the volcano wants to speak, everyone listens." Wise words from a man channeling Hokusai, the Japanese printmaker.

Evert insisted that art could not and should not be forced. It comes when it comes. If one does force art, it only becomes about the mind and not the heart, and in that case it's good for

nothing and should be left alone. After painting the McNay's 60<sup>th</sup>, I totally understood what Evert was saying. Art speaks when it needs to speak. There is no other way to explain its necessity.

Evert used an example of Pierre Bonnard, the French painter. He said that one cannot explain Bonnard, Bonnard simply was. The play of light in his paintings, warm next to cool, sharp next softened line. They all come together and play harmoniously to form, what is to state simply, magic.

After visiting Evert's studio, Bruno said to me, speaking up for the first time in two hours, "you see, every time I visit the studio of Evert, it's a very emotional time for me. I grew up listening to Evert teach at the school. He was always sculpting. I saw him making his work as a child and he would always stop and talk with me. Evert is Lacoste. He is this place and this place is him." Just then one of Bruno's friends passed by, a man sporting an Adidas tracksuit and looking like a soccer player. Bruno asked him to take a photo with his iPhone and he did. Evert, Rex and Bruno, three generations of artists talking one to the other. One artist to another.





Fig. 24 - Evert in his home with Steve Knudsen and Kristen Phipps in Lacoste, fall 2015

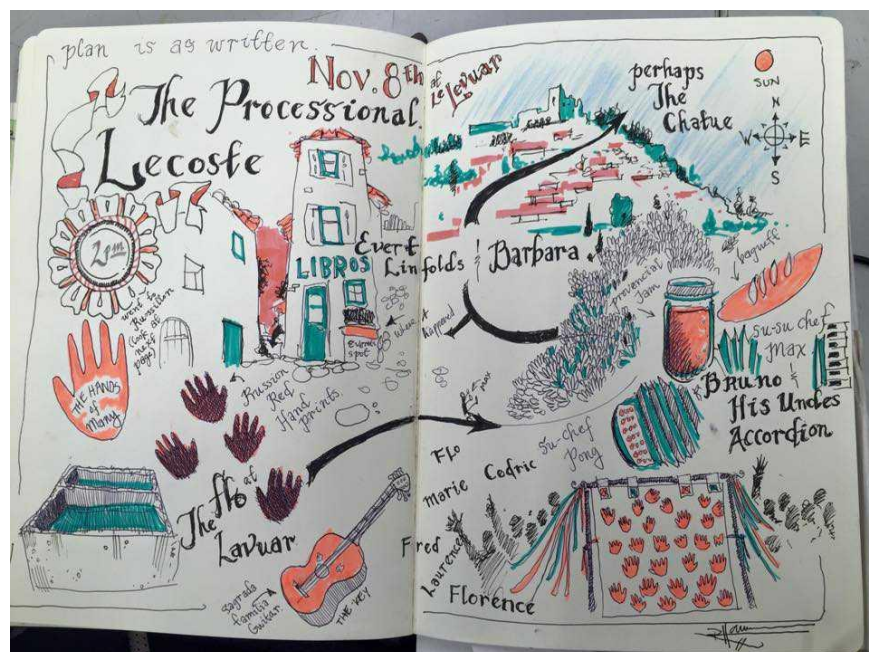


Fig. 25 - Rex Hausmann, "The Map", 2015, *The Processional*, Lacoste France, ink on Molskin, 12" x 28"

You see, it was in that conversation that I saw what I needed to make. The process of art had to change. My painting and approach had to change. They did. The work became "The

Processional”. But in a true metamodernistic way, let me not explain it, but someone else. A young student with a gift for writing, Ciera Bowlby.



Fig 26 - Rex Hausmann, “The Processional”, Lacoste, France, Fall 2015

The Cathedrals of Rex by Ciera Bowlby:

*“There are few pieces in an artist's life that have the ability to impact and influence an entire community. There are even fewer times when the artist has the ability to impact an entire village in the Provencal Valley of the Luberon in southeastern France, and make them a part of the work itself.*

*However, Rex Hausmann, a graduate painting student at the Savannah College of Art and Design bridged the gap between American student and villager. His piece, “The Cathedrals of Lacoste”, incorporates not only the present impact that the village of Lacoste has had on him, but is also representative of the lasting impression he hopes to have on the village.... It wasn't until a Sunday morning spent in an empty church pew that Rex realized what it was that his piece needed, People. After saying a small prayer, and walking up the hill, he ran into sculptor and village native, Evert Lindfors, sitting on the walk wall outside of an old bakery that SCAD renovated into a library for its students.....*

*From there, the idea of the processional took its final shape. It would start at the lavoir, a large stone wash basin located at the bottom of the hill where women would wash the laundry. The painting and the people carrying the painting, or holding on to the processional with streamers would then proceed up the ancient cobblestone street to Evert and his studio, honoring both him, and the lifetime that he has spent creating in this village.*

*"Those are some of the people I really think about. I don't think of painting as a static object. Painting is like film," Rex said, straightening his posture. "And in film, you need a lot of people to make it work." Just like the myriad of people now making this dream a reality."*

You see, this is truly the heart of this paper. The people in life are as much a canvas as the painting. To be able to integrate the painting into some use, free of politics, just people being people. People enjoying what they do have, each other, and then integrating art history to create something truly unique is at the heart of "The Processional".

How getting shot in the leg turns into a museum show and how a sketchbook turns into a whole processional is beyond me in terms of explanation. You just make things and react to the world around you. Now, you know my story, so let's jump to the theory behind it.



Fig. 27 - Rex Hausmann, "The Processional", 2015, oil on linen with poles





Fig. 28 - Rex Hausmann, "The Processional" (Back), 2015, oil on linen with poles

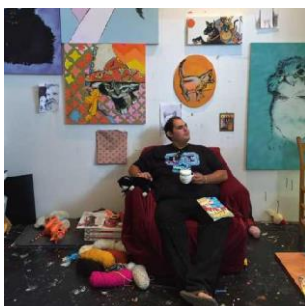


Fig. 29 - Nestor Reyes in the background with Gene Hausmann and Rex H

Fig. 30 - "Kitten Project", Rex Hausmann in studio

Fig. 31 - James Lee Byars, "The Death of James Lee Byars", 1994, Des Kunstlers

### *Kitten and a Coffee Cup*

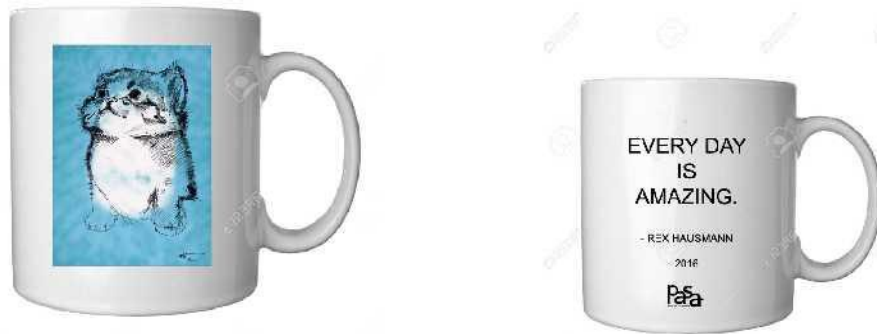


Fig. 32 - The Carlos Coffee Cup for San Antonio Police Department and Savannah Police Department, Rex Hausmann 2016

The initial idea of the coffee cup was to host a southern chicken dinner five blocks from where the incident occurred in the summer of 2014. An act of healing with hospitality and forgiveness, an “insitu” occurrence to borrow a word for Buren. A meal that was to be hosted at a church as a thank you to all involved in what happened, The Savannah Police Department, the EMTs, the neighbors who rushed out and put a tourniquet on my left leg, everyone that summer night in Savannah, Georgia. What could be more hospitable than a southern chicken dinner or a cup of coffee for a police department costing \$5.53 to produce? A price that any government institution could accept as an honorarium because it is well under the \$50 spending cap.

In the act of giving a humble coffee cup, the gesture says thank you, or perhaps not even thank you. Perhaps simply stating that “every day is amazing”. This is in hopes that the policeman or policewoman who picks up that coffee cup would go out on the street encouraged. Encouraged to go out and do their job to the best of their ability with something as simple as a good cup of coffee. By using text on the cup, the viewer is asked to make every

day amazing. A statement as suggestive as Sol LeWitt's instructional wall work or as declarative as Joseph Kosuth's "One and Three Chairs". As LeWitt said:

- 1. Conceptual artists are the mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.*
- 3. Elegiacal judgments lead to new experiences.*
- 5. Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically.*
- 9. Concepts and ideas are different. The former implies a general direction while the latter are components. Ideas implement the concept.*
- 11. The artist may not necessarily understand his own art. His perception is neither better nor worse than that of others. (LeWitt, Art and Theory)*

Let's focus in on the key concept of the cup. Encouragement. Encouraging a person to go out and do the best job they can do. This encouragement brings to mind what the Japanese call "Shokunin".

*Shokunin - the Japanese word shokunin is defined by both Japanese and Japanese-English dictionaries as 'craftsman' or 'artisan,' but such a literal description does not fully express the deeper meaning. The Japanese apprentice is taught that shokunin means not only having technical skills, but also implies an attitude and social consciousness. ... The shokunin has a social obligation to work his/her best for the general welfare of the people. This obligation is both spiritual and material, in that no matter what it is, the shokunin's responsibility is to fulfill the requirement."*

– Tasio Odate

The concept of Shokunin is something I embrace with the coffee cup. The act of giving the gift of a coffee cup that will be presented with a story. The story attached to the coffee cup is art itself. A story and a conversation. A back and forth discussion with another human being. A simple act of gratitude. I go back to Buren and his conversations under the awning. Byars and his need for explanation and gold. Duchamp and the conversation of chess. Klien and his *Immaterial* works. Guattari and Deleuze and the Rhizome. Buriard and Relational Art. Hickey and his Air Guitar. As Franz West said about art being useless. West ending up in making chairs

so that you could at least sit on something while discussing useless things. A useless thing all of a sudden becoming useful.

*“All of his sculptures (Franz West), be they useful or useless, take the human being as their measure”. (Austrian Sculpture Park)*



Fig. 33 - Rex Hausmann, “Carlos”, 2014, acrylic on canvas with ink, 36" x 48"

### *Coffee and Conversation*

Now to the kitten on the coffee cup. Not just any kitten but Carlos, Dustin and Ashley Duffy's cat. Carlos was named because he was found in San Antonio. A Latino name was coined by Dustin saying, "I thought it just sounded like San Antonio." Dustin said to me while I was in rehab, "I want you to meet my cat. He never gave up on life and he reminds me of you. In all your healing process, you have never given up." When I learned to walk again, I kept thinking of "Walking in an Exaggerated Manner" by Bruce Nauman and Paul McCarthy drawing lines on studio floors in the 70s with his body and a bucket of paint in his *Black and White Tapes*. I can't tell you why, just the way it is and it helped me walk again.

Dustin and I have now become good friends. His wife Ashley and cat Carlos have become part of the series of conversations that created a coffee cup with a kitten on it. We now meet every so often discussing mostly gardening and craft beer. Branching relational aesthetics to a whole new level with lasting aesthetics or rather relationships in life. This I think is why Duchamp started to play chess. He played chess because of the two-way conversation with people, not the one-sided conversation of the studio.

Probably one of the proudest parts about this paper is this letter from Dustin, explaining a tremendous amount of the process of healing. A process that ends in friends becoming more connected despite horrendous circumstances. Like the Shokunin that you read about earlier in this paper, Dustin was just doing his job, healing people. I was doing mine, healing myself. Through that process we became friends. Now Dustin Duffy takes center stage with his letter to me:



*Thoughts on Carlos - Carlos is a product of perfect timing. Ashley found him a few days old and was missing back feet. We bottle fed him and brought him. He had to have a corrective surgery to fix some bone in his leg that was starting to irritate him (much like you!) and has since lived life not knowing any difference. He gets around, climbs, and lives just like any other cat (although with a little more attitude). He has it rough day in and day out having to get around with no back legs, but doesn't let it slow him down.*

*Thoughts on meeting you - You sir, leave an impression on everyone you meet. I had only been practicing physical therapy for about a year, and had my first student at the time. You were one of the first few patients I had seen with severe trauma, especially to the femur. I think we both learned a ton from each other; I saw how much I can push you guys and how well you can do. I also saw just how much a traumatic event can affect someone psychologically as well. Some days you needed an extra push, or just to see just how awesome you were doing. You worked extremely hard to go from needing a wheelchair to get around to living life perfectly normal.*

*Thoughts on the McNay - This was honestly the first time I had ever been to something like this. I have been to museums (not really knowing what I am looking at), but did I truly know the artist and what they were trying to convey on the canvas. With your work in the McNay, it just made sense. I could picture your family members; I could picture you traveling. The work with the bad thoughts and the blow dryer will always stand out in my mind. I can picture that exact day in therapy. You had been speaking with Victims of Crime and really having a rough time having to replay that night again and again for everyone. I was happy to bring a smile to your face that day and help you deal with that personally and through physical therapy. That picture is a perfect personification of you onto paper, as well as the sun. You went from a very dark time and now have made art something not only can you enjoy, but everyone around you.*

*Thoughts on Kitten Opening and you - This was about as fun as someone can make an art opening. You had kittens up for adoptions and paintings of kittens! You were giving some kittens hope for a new life and showing just how fun life can be. I brought my brother, his wife and their two little girls (and Ashley! My wife). Watching my niece play with kittens and getting to see your art made me wish I could take so many of your paintings home and put them on the wall. That would allow me to see it and remember just how fun that night was. You had a local brewery there with free beer and drink, food trucks with local food and great people. It was amazing to see your surgeon Dr. K and his family, my family, your family and meet all new people over kittens and duomos! There was no judgement on knowing about art, you went in, played with kittens and enjoyed company and amazing art. Being able to see how you could take different stories of animals, whether it be Carlos, friend's cats, or even cats you saved from the highway and put that to canvas was so enjoyable. And everyone*

*who gave a story or picture was able to come out and see just how much their stories and animals can bring joy to other people. Knowing that someone will be looking at a painting or coffee cup of Carlos and getting inspiration or joy gives me the most amazing sense of happiness. I think you set out to bring happiness and a lighter side following your accident, but you are also putting all of yourself into these paintings. And it can absolutely be seen. Whether it is a signature sun, or just plain amazing compilations of color, or your gift for capturing everyday life and how amazing it can be. You make impressions on every person you meet, you also make impressions on everyone that looks at your art.*

*I hope this helps a little.*

*– Dustin Duffy*

### ***Where the Paintings Came From – Friends***

This series of kitten paintings was sourced through the internet. I wanted to use technology in my image making and choice making process. I thought of this as an extension of a piece I saw at Yale years ago where an MFA candidate had simply displayed Facebook on a lap top as her graduating thesis statement. I used Facebook to source kitten photographs of friend's kittens.

As an extension of my process, friends would send me pictures of their kittens along with permission to make portraits. Thus I used relational art and relational media as an art form. I integrated the series of works into weekly teaching at the Hausmann Millworks, again practically applying theory and practice into everyday life. As I drew the first painting "Carlos", I remembered Picasso and his ephemeral portraiture. The drawings made with a light bulb. The drawings that were there but then gone. As I drew "Carlos", I wanted to paint just enough. Enough to capture the purity of the image Dustin sent to me. Just enough so the drawing could be seen as almost not finished. As real as James Lee Byers looking for

perfection or Julian Schnabel believing that he channeled Picasso, I was making this drawing work.



Fig. 34 - The Russell Family with “Baby Ollie”, an image sourced from text messages and Facebook for project (Chris Russell has a studio at The Hausmann Millworks)



Fig. 35 - Rex Hausmann & Paul Martin, “Bro Montana”, 2015, acrylic and paint on canvas, (3) canvas of varying sizes

One piece for the kitten project was a collaboration with a close friend, Paul Martin.

We created the piece “Bro Montana” together in his studio based on another kitten photograph and used as the background the backpack that reminded me of my grandfather’s black and red

checkered jacket. This project then extended further than the gallery space as presented by Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery*.



Fig. 36 - Paul Martin and myself painting “Bro Montana Tryptic” for The Kitten Project at The Hausmann Millworks

*"Unshadowed, white, clean, artificial, the space is devoted to the technology of esthetics. Works of art are mounted, hung, scattered for study. Their ungrubby surfaces are untouched by time and its vicissitudes. Art exists in a kind of eternity of display." (O'Doherty, 15)*

This is a living and breathing conversation not a hermetically sealed white box where the individual artist is wrestling with themselves. This is Duchamp's chess game. This project and coffee cup lead to something. Something as simple as a thank you. Leaving in its path more than ink spilled on a page, but an act actively helping others in society in daily life through a story. A real narrative lived out as life moves along.



Fig. 37 - Dustin Duffy petting a kitten with his wife Ashley Duffy (to the left) in the gallery space.

Once the series of kitten paintings was finished, an exhibition called *The Kitten Project* was created and exhibited at Musical Bridges around the World in San Antonio, Texas the summer of 2015. Instead of keeping paintings hanging on the wall, the paintings became attached to a kitten adoption day enlisting the help of a local nonprofit, SnipSA to handle the kittens and the crowds. The gallery space was challenged to become a practical use of space. An action as real as Chris Burden challenging the foundations of the LACMA museum when he literally unearthed the foundations of the museum.

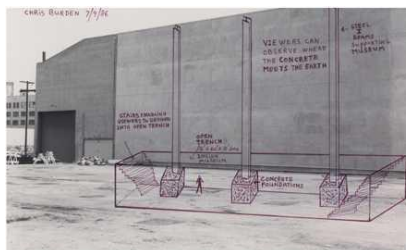


Fig. 38 - Chris Burden, *Exposing the Foundation of the Museum*, 1986, Marker on black and white Photograph

The chief painting of the show was “Carlos” referencing Dustin and Ashley’s cat. At the opening Dustin and Ashley were in attendance with their niece who enjoyed playing with kittens. Dustin enjoyed three of his favorite things in the world: craft beer, Ashley and cats. This set of actions was a thank you to Dustin for helping me learn to walk again. Dustin’s niece enjoyed the kittens. Because of the show, three kittens and a puppy found new homes. The overarching concept being: if paintings didn’t sell, at least a kitten could find a home. Art itself can be the catalyst for effecting society and even kittens. This action is just as real as Jeanne Claude and Christo’s saffron colored *Gates* project flowing in New York City’s Central Park.



Fig. 39 - Dustin and Ashley Duffy's niece petting a kitten at the opening of The Kitten Project.

But where does the fascination with kittens really come from and how does it loop into the incident? I go back to a wheelchair as real as Matisse’s, where I spent a considerable amount of time watching the sun rise every day and sharing great moments of joy with my brother’s new kitten Sweet Pea. I’m telling you Olafur Eliasson’s *Weather Project* at the Tate has a whole new meaning. Eliasson tried to manufacture the sun in the gallery space of the Tate Modern in London, no need to try, just look out the window! As the kitten played and

grew, I myself healed. The kitten's actions were so simple and so innocent that the reality I was facing in my wheelchair—the bullet in my leg—started to fade, and true healing began. Inevitably the kitten was the subject of many drawings that now as of 2016 influenced the work that would come out in The McNay's 60th Anniversary Gala and the projects I would create for the next two years. Some of those sketches are now hanging along with the painting at a children's hospital, Clarity Child Guidance Center in San Antonio, Texas helping youngsters heal every day. The drawings are an acquisition as part of a philosophical extension of an autobiography displayed around the children in the hospital. Saying to the children, this is someone who went through a traumatic experience like you did and this is how he coped with the situation. Art again, encouraging others. Relational Art taking on a whole new meaning void of the gallery. Art living in everyday life.

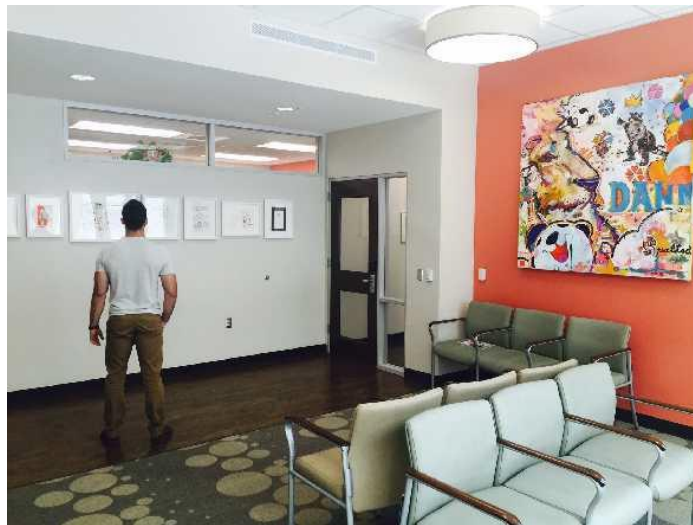


Fig. 40 - Rex Hausmann, Drawings & painting *D'Annon Art Supply* (2010) at Clarity Child Guidance Center, San Antonio TX



Just like Renoir's "Child with Cat" (1887) on exhibition in Musee d'Orsay a small kitten smiling in the hands of the lady with enjoyment, the studio practice would stretch past the sketchbook and the gallery into real life hopefully leaving the world a little better.



Fig. 41 - Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Detail from "Child with Cat", 1887 in Musee d'Orsay

Now on to the coffee cup. Putting a kitten on a coffee cup is more than just a Thomas Kinkaid print. It is an action, an action as real as any Fluxes happening. In making a coffee cup, you are putting something into being that is so simplistic, the existence of the object itself demands explanation as to why it is being taken seriously in a museum or gallery context. As an artist you are putting into being something with a story attached to it much like the 1936 fur-lined coffee cup of Meret Oppenheim. A story as real as Joseph Beuys deciding to cover his head in honey and gold leaf while trying to explain art to a dead animal.

### ***The Price is Right and Government Institutions***

Something that became of interest to me was the value of a gift. Much like the anti-matter pieces by the French artist Yves Klein. Of interest was saying thank you to all the



people who helped me get back to health after getting shot. A few months after I began to heal, I tried to send flowers to some of the institutions that helped me get better. The flowers were returned due to the cost being over \$50, and social services could not accept gifts exceeding that value of \$50 because of their state funding status.

I received a call one day from the police agent who was handling my case who said sheepishly, “We were waiting for you to get better so that we could ask you to design a coffee cup for the office. We had heard that you were an art student, and we looked up your website everybody loved your art work. And not only your art work, your positive outlook on life through this experience. We were wondering if you could design a coffee cup for the police department?”

In response to this experience, I figured that a coffee cup costs \$5.53 to produce—well under the \$50 cap for government agencies. So, if I were to send a coffee cup, perhaps to the people in the government agency, they could accept the gift and see it daily. The little Carlos smiling with the thought of a new day. This request would only take two years to facilitate. Again I go back to Duchamp playing chess and a two-way conversation.

The coffee cup will be presented first at an exhibition hosted by Public Art San Antonio across from San Antonio's City Hall at Plaza de Armas in July 2016. The show will have all of the kitten paintings from the *Kitten Project*. The coffee cups with “Carlos” will be present and given to the San Antonio Police Department and later to The Savannah Police Department with a personal thank you from myself and my family for their acts of daily service.



Fig. 42 - The Public Art San Antonio proposal that has been accepted by the city

There will be donuts presented at the coffee mixer, Shipley Donuts, a South Texas tradition, Krispy Kreme, a Southern tradition, and Dunkin Donuts, an East Coast tradition. Each donut shop representing a different part of the U.S. I have spent time in. What could go better with a cup of coffee other than a donut? The donut has been a personal icon of some interest representing the simple joys of everyday life. Much like watching the sun rise or petting a little kitten while in a wheelchair. Small simple pleasures that the French call *Joie de Vivre*.



Fig. 43 - Giselle Diaz and Alex Diaz at the windows at Neimen Marcus  
Rex Hausmann: Window Project, 2013

### *The Donut*

The donut first started presenting itself in my work in my travels to New York City in 2006 when a friend of mine from San Antonio moved to New York City with his wife to attend Columbia University. The last thing I did after crashing on the Cowan's couch, sometimes for weeks on end, was get a box of sprinkled donuts from Dunkin Donuts across from their apartment. Ever since those visits, the pink-iced goodness of life materialized in a number of different settings. In a larger format painting at the Neiman Marcus windows to the donut tires in the SCAD pad Atlanta or The Cloister at Sea Island. Again, the smallest things becoming larger than life.



Fig. 44 - Rex Hausmann, *The Donut Tire Coffee table* at SCADpad 2014, SCADpad 2014 (The Donuts will make an appearance in this project *The Kitten Project* as well, only in the edible tangible form.)

The action of giving the coffee cup will give me some kind of closure that I need. A sense of peace in saying thank you in a real tangible way. In closing the end of the journey, art is not just a static object but an experience. The journey, the metaphor, the story and the boxer all form one great story that ends in a life well lived, not only for ourselves but for others.

Ending in Every Day is Amazing.

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