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ShawN ShawN

👤 Written by [OnlineArt Admin](#)

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Interview with ShawNshawN

OA: What is your favourite film of all time?

SS: One of my favorite films of all time is *The Shining* by Stanley Kubrick. The original was written by Stephen King. What stands out in my mind is the play of isolation, increasing madness and supernatural possession. The little boy, Danny, in the movie has an imaginary friend who acts out the fear of this massive hotel that is possessed and has many mysterious murders over its long history. The hotel was built on Indian burial grounds and has the

motives throughout the hotel in the carpeting and decor. The scale of the hotel and life there alone is well captured by the scenes of Danny riding his Big Wheel through the corridors of the hotel and the scene of Jack, the husband, throwing a ball against the walls of a room as he stirs in boredom and writer's block. Besides the slow build-up in terror, mystery and later horror, Kubrick was able to take a popular novel based on a possessed hotel and blend of natural break-down of human nature in isolation with the illusion of a possessed hotel, which drives a fine line begging the question: was Jack delusional or possessed? *The Shining*? Of course, I have painted a work dedicated to *The Shining*, "Overlook Hotel, 1970".

OA: What music are you currently listening to and why?

SS: Right now I generally listen to electronic music streamed on www.di.fm. My brother introduced me to the station and I actively use it to paint my work with. I originally got into House dance music in Chicago and later Trance as a bartender in Germany. Another genre of music to paint by is very aggressive rock and metal even to stir the rawest emotions into the passion of the painting. Just the other day I was painting a piece inspired by Tool, which I hadn't really heard before while painting. In my youth and even now, one of my favorite bands is Nine Inch Nails. I grew up with my mother always crying over lost jobs with her flawed personality driving her failure, so this type of depressing, suicidal music really pierces my soul and allows me to relive those memories. The weird thing is after listening to NIN, I feel happy inside from releasing the inner demons to rage awhile. I think I'll play some today while I paint.

OA: Which living artists do you most admire and why?

SS: I would say Shephard Fairey. He took his art to the streets to get the visual feedback of what was working and didn't in his work. At the same time, he strove to address the littered landscape of advertising: billboards, subway ads and bus stop ads to subvert them to his OBEY campaign, which exposes the hypocrisy of police chasing down graffiti artists while protecting advertisers to shout their message to the masses. He is endless with corporate money. Another interesting angle was how he repackaged various political posters in new ways to expose or even make fun of the propaganda, which is basically repeated, unchallenged, with message. I do have mixed emotions of using dictators such as Saddam Hussein, Stalin or Lenin posters with a neutral message. I lived in Communist Poland a year and saw how an autocratic regime tarnishes the masses, belittles opponents and smashes political opposition with jail, prison or even death. I don't believe these types of leaders should be positioned neutrally. In my work, I actively pursue rebellion against these types of regimes like in China and Russia currently.

OA: Which deceased artist do you most admire and why?

SS: This is a tough choice. So much great art and artists. One that sticks in my mind was Picasso. He evolved over several painting styles: blue period, pink period, cubism and later social realism. This is the essence of an artist, to continually explore and push the limits of art. He even painted a massive piece dedicated to the fascist bombing of Guernica during Spain's Civil War, which precluded the coming in WWII. He kept this painting out of Spain until Franco, the dictator, died, which was a very, very long time. In essence, he outlived Franco barely to keep this treasure out of Spain until democracy returned. Clearly the reality is Franco would likely have destroyed the work, since he used Nazi airpower to win the war. Like any artist, he was flawed in his relationships and I believe he went astray painting the socialist style after cubism. This paralleled the art world in closed Communist countries, which I find disturbing with a tinge of the gulag attached to this propaganda style. Another reason to respect Picasso and why he is so famous, he lived in the great art capitals of his day: Paris and later New York City. One of the reasons he became famous is simply by being where the action is. He showed complete devotion to his talent and otherwise secondary, he lived for the art world. People reward this.

OA: Which exhibition that you have visited made the greatest impact on you and why?

SS: Easy. The Guernica. Picasso painted this right after the bombing of civilians in Guernica, the first major air raid, capturing the cruelty of modern air warfare in a massive scene all in black and white. It was kept out of Spain until the fall of Franco, which gets to the heart of being Spanish -- respect and honor to the land. The painting was right in his maximum successful period of cubism, so is beautiful in this light as well as capturing the horror of war. I have seen it several times while studying art as a student living in Spain. It is the essence of painting, to capture the audience, expose injustice, have an amazing story and even a story of keeping it out of the country until Franco's death. You can literally feel the arch of the Civil War with this painting and the paintings life outside of Spain as an emigre as well. Art should change the world in many cases does not, this work did.

OA: What is the question you get asked most frequently about your work and how do you answer it?

SS: Usually it is about the process as I work in three different styles: Free Form Abstract, Architectural Abstraction and Political Pop. One version of my abstract I use pure metal tools on wood panels similar to how Gerhard Richter paints his massive abstracts. I have a passion of finding where the paint will tear and combine. The second style is Architectural Abstraction. This style developed from my more architectural style I first used into a highly structured 30 degree, 60 degree and 90 degree style with various planes and color fighting for dominion in the work. My third style is Political Pop, currently my favorite to explore. Each work has a distinct message and story. These works deal with political injustice, crimes against humanity and an artist's struggle to change the world through art. One of my largest works "303 S

deals with the rise of Charter 08 in China and the imprisonment of Liu Xiaobo for merely crafting a declaration of rights. It has all the 17 points of the petition to the government covering political freedom of expression, religion, etc. all in 76 hanzi, which alludes to 1776, the year of US declarative independence. Along the frame I have most of the 303 signatures, about 900 hanzi characters. Keep in mind I speak no Mandarin, so this was really challenging work. Now over 13,000 people have signed the writer won the Nobel Peace Prize and was rewarded with 11 years in prison. I plan to keep this of China until the fall of Communism there.

OA: What / who inspired you to be an artist?

SS: There are many people. My mother took me to several art classes in my youth and was an excellent musician in her own right. In college, I was inspired to be taught under the late Tom Thomas. He would paint his own contemporary art right in class, so we could immediately leap frog to the latest style he later did. He organized great art competitions for the students with outside competition, so we learned the world of art very intimately. Additionally, his model would paint in class as well, so we saw her erotic paintings, which was one of the best learning experiences. Another inspiration would be Van Gogh who persevered despite his mental lunacy that drove away his own customers, artist friends and gallery. This is amazing to have lived so passionately in your art despite really gaining nothing materially. It is very foolish not to learn how to communicate, but all artists have some flaws, some larger than others.

OA: Can you tell us about where you make your art and what if any the significance of location is?

SS: Currently, I paint at 4th Street Fine Art in Berkeley. It is an artist studio/gallery, which is kind of unique. Most places are either studios or galleries. The advantage here is the ability to learn other artist styles as well as how to market better as a group. Working in a group is crucial for any artist to be able to stay on top of his field, constantly learning and debating the finer points of art making, selling and marketing. The physical space is pretty amazing with windows on 3 sides, so the natural light really pours in, which is important to understand the richness of the colors and subtlety between shades. Close by is an Inland Empire burial ground under a parking lot. The original building was occupied by Brennans, a tavern that was there back in 1958. They got moved down the block. So we likely have some ghosts like in the Shining.

OA: What do you like most about being an artist?

SS: One of the great pleasures of being an artist is exploring the world of art, painting and meeting people. In my current location, we regularly get to meet people browsing and explain how a work is developed. It is very exciting to get behind the scenes with clients on the process. Another great characteristic, is your

leaving a legacy. If you get to a certain level of fame in your lifetime, your work will literally live for as long as your work is talked about and discussed. I believe this is very important to impact your world for as long as possible. What better way to live than enrich your descendants long after you have lived your own life?

OA: What is your greatest achievement as an artist to date?

SS: I believe being part of the Peace Project is my highest achievement for an artist show. This project was based on the wish to raise awareness of the ravages of war on civilians and try to make a difference through art and charity. One project helped distribute 10,000 crutches to victims of Sierra Leone's war. As an artist, my work travelled to 8 major US cities: Oakland, Culver City, Chelsea, Dallas, Beverly Hills, Malibu, San Francisco, and Long Beach. Another great project I worked on was Adult Day Services twice for art donations to serve the Oakland community of elders in their final years. Another great achievement was my invitation to go to the Art Dubai festival, which unfortunately I turned down due to the expense of flying. My first solo art show was in Miami, which was the most exciting to see my work up in a gallery so far away in North America. Fine Art.

OA: What are your plans for the coming year?

SS: I likely will continue working with the Peace Project, Adult Day Services and other art charities that help reach to the community. So far as an artist, I have done a show in LA, which was my first physical tour of my work. That was fairly exciting meeting new clientele in a completely different art market. It definitely opened my eyes up to the possibility. My goal this year is to be in several galleries outside the San Francisco area. I also want to have some major art sales as well and gain income from it.

Biography:

ShawNshawN – Art of the Real

I grew up moving from city to city, state to state and finally country to country. I have learned new languages, new cities and new friends every few years. I am home everywhere and nowhere.

In 1989, I saw the Berlin Wall fall behind the Iron Curtain in Poland, seeing the destruction of communism into true market capitalist freedom. The fall of fear had finally defeated the police state terror. I also saw surreal theatre posters, which reflected the horror of the Holocaust, multiple border wars and the political situation of Poland geographically.

From the Communist statues, architecture and propaganda I learned fierceness in design, the power of art and false idealism leading to impoverished grey life for all the people. Freedom is a major theme in my work.

as well as focusing on turning points in history.

In the 1990s, I got my start painting academically at Indiana University. I had the chance to study r professor Tom Thomas do his latest abstracts right in class, which greatly influenced my first style: stretched me to redefine art -- the true purpose of an artist.

In Spain, I studied masters like El Greco, Bosch, Velasquez and Goya in the world renowned Prado year and studied Islamic art on site in various medieval cities as well as classic Roman ruins. In Geri partied in the lively techno scene after the euphoria of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In Belgium, I withn birth of the Euro, which is now unraveling.

In 2000s, I relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area and witnessed the continually growth and dea new companies in constant motion. It leaves a mark of constant change, thin family ties and immi culture I have been familiar with my whole life.

Links to artist portfolio:

- Website: www.shawnshawn.co
- [303 Signatures interview](#)

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