



As I walked into the main building, known today as the George A. Reid Wing, little did I know that my days of feeling like an artistic genius would evaporate as the main entrance doors closed behind me. OCAD University is the first, largest and oldest art institution in Canadian history dating back to 1876. Most of the Group of Seven as well as the more contemporary notables such as Michael Snow, Ken Danby and David Blackwood, to name a few, were also educated there. The foundation interview was conducted by the famous Toronto illustrator, Gerry Sevier who thought I should go straight into third year studies based on the volume and quality of work I had produced by the age of 19 which would have meant that I would only need to years to receive my Bachelors of Arts degree.



I was also introduced to Steve Quinlan, an incredibly Intelligent professor of art focussing on geometric perspective and typography who was also a true teacher. A teacher who cared more about bringing out one's full artistic potential instead of gaining accolades from the faculty. He suggested that I take the full four year program starting with foundation studies so I could have a thorough art education. I thought about it and realized after seeing the quality of art of senior students on display in glass cases that I wasn't an art genius after all. In fact I was no where near the level I saw that day. Once again, I was crushed.

I decided to do the 4 year program of Communication and Design as well as taking some fine art elective courses. I think the AOCD University should have a seventh new name; it has had 6 different names since 1876. I think OCAH University: The Ontario College of Art and Humility University has a nice ring to it.

***“It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that changes men into angels.”***

St. Augustine: submitted by Matis Vermont

I was introduced to a new world of people who were just as enthusiastic about art as I was who shared a common pursuit of achieving excellence in their craft. I remember my first figure drawing class which lead me to the core of my drafting capabilities which was a rude awakening. I had read about the stringent disciplinary standards of drawing by J.A.D. Ingres (French Neoclassical painter 1780-1867) in which he expected precision based analysis on form from his students. No improvising or deviation from the model. My visual consciousness at that time was just beginning to sharpen and I saw the world in a much different way as I made the act of drawing my doctrine of artistic creativity.

***“Drawing is the probity of art. To draw does not mean simply to reproduce contours; drawing does not consist merely of line: drawing is also expression, the inner form, the plane, modeling. See what remains after that.”***

Jean August Dominique Ingres

At OCA, I studied under the instruction of Paul Young who was a hyperrealist draftsman who introduced me to the macro world of rendering textures and the effects of light on subjects with the unforgiving media of carbon pencil. He would have us create a still life in a shoe box and each class and we would bring our coveted boxes to class and make a photo real rendering of the chosen objects ranging from crumpled up tin foil to feathers and Rubik's Cubes. I began researching High Realism and was taken aback by the paintings of Johannes Vermeer (Dutch/Baroque artist 1632-1675). His use of light and mastery of drawing with a dynamic range of pallet gave his paintings an almost photographic appearance.

The famous artist David Hockney wrote a book about a theory that Johannes Vermeer used optics to create the illusion of realism using Vermeer's painting titled “The Music Lesson” as an example. In his 2001 book titled “Secret Knowledge”. Hockney postulated that the uncanny precision of perspective could have been achieved by using camera obscura thus tossing Vermeer's innate technical genius into a controversial fire of ineptitude or compromise.

Sometimes artistic mastery can leave us in a state of disbelief that the painting was created by mere mortal hands. Artist's who know the riggers of tedious hard work and painstaking analysis of a subject to create the illusion of realism have adopted this process to be a necessary edict to assume the title of a realist painter.

I took a course on illustration with Will Davies (1924-2016) who was an incredible draftsmen and painter. He introduced me to the Romantic Period of art of the 19 century. Romanticism was an art movement which peaked in the mid 19th century. One of the pioneers of this era which glorified subjects was Theodore Gericault (1791-1824) who was a prolific painter in his short life. I admired his myriad of subject matter choices which included portraiture, nature, horses and architecture. Making the ordinary, extraordinary on massive canvases. His versatility of subject matter still influences my conceptual considerations when composing a painting.

The Romantic Era peaked in 1850 and the Realist movement began shortly thereafter and spread all over Europe and North America. I discovered an incredible female artist of that era named Rosa Boneur (1822-1899). One painting in particular that stood out from her repertoire was titled “Ploughing in the Nivernais” which was a wonderfully painted genre scene. Her intense, liberal treatment to every element of the painting makes this a true masterpiece and influenced how I finish my paintings right to the edge of the panel/canvas.

