

2006 interview with Jamie Q
by Onya Hogan-Finlay for <http://www.terminus1525.ca>

1) Where did you go to school? Was it a worthwhile experience?

Alberta College of Art... I studied sculpture. It was worthwhile. I met a lot of fantastic people there and learned to really look at things and to think about context and ideas. It also gave me the opportunity to travel. I did an exchange to Australia for one semester of my first studio year. There I got into outdoor installation art, and the whole experience in itself was quite formative. I think it's a valuable move to completely uproot and start again somewhere you don't know anyone. It's good to be adaptable and go anywhere you want, especially for creative souls.

On the other hand, I must point out that you don't need to go to art school to be an artist. But I have to admit that, even though I have spend the last few years "unlearning" some of my education and that the drawings I'm getting into now are more playful and spontaneous, I don't think the best of it would be as strong without the input of the instructors at ACAD. It's definitely beneficial to get advice from other people who have been making stuff their whole lives. If you can do it without a student loan that's even better.

Most important are the people I met at school. They are still my strongest friendships, and the most supportive and inspirational. Some are also on this site: Clement Yeh, and Atom Deguire for example. Atom just got accepted to do his masters at York on a scholarship, which is amazing! Congrats Atom! Clement's first on the waiting list to Concordia, so I hope he gets it and moves to Montreal. They will both be amazing additions to the next generation of art instructors.

2) a) What do you like about transforming found objects?

It's a result of the waste-culture we're a part of. In an urban centre, any observant person can't help but see all the debris we're surrounded with. Some of it I find particularly beautiful, like mechanical parts and pieces of wood. The largest thing I've transformed is a wrought-iron balcony railing, the old kind you commonly see around Montreal. I just don't understand how people can tear this stuff down and replace it with ugly plain mass-produced "up-grades." I suppose those old ones were mass produced too, but there's more cultural value in them—more thought and attention to detail.

Mechanical parts are different. They wear out and rust. But there's still something fascinating about the design, the actual object. I recently found an old encyclopedia article about manufacturing screws, and never realized how much precision goes into these ultra-common objects that hold everything together. Pipes are similar. These things are infrastructure that people don't seem to contemplate.

Anyway, I like highlighting the formal details of objects so that they become something different: aesthetic objects, functioning decoratively instead of just becoming garbage.

b) What do you look for in a found object? Is the original object very important, or is it more the potential you see in a found object that makes it interesting to you?

Those are sort of the same thing to me—the original object and the potential I see it in. For example, I've never really been interested in plastic. There's something about the weight of it that seems insubstantial and cheap, and paint doesn't stick to it as well. It has to do a lot with material and its qualities. There's a quote I like a lot that really explains this well, from David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous*: "mass-produced artifacts of civilisation are, like all phenomena, animate and even alive, but their life is profoundly constrained by the specific functions for which they were built... these artifacts inevitably retain an element of unknowability or otherness, which resides most often in the materials from which the object is made." (p. 64)

I like to think that found objects find me too. Our paths cross and then we interact.

3) Making art with found objects often means collecting everything you find. Are you a pack rat?

Yeah, I come from a long line of pack rats. I'm trying to cut back on this though, and move away from objects into drawing. It's mostly a space issue. I don't want to be responsible for too much stuff! But other people tend to notice the same things I do, so when they see a faucet lying on the curb, they pick it up and bring it to me. Right now I'm trying to get finished with all the clunky objects I have kicking around and make more portable and live-with-able things like drawings and stencils.

4) Why did you create installations that emulate nature?

At first I was taking inspiration from great film-makers like Jim Henson and Tim Burton, whose fabricated worlds are so fantastic! I wanted to build my own environments and was basically doing that on a small scale. But then I started getting obsessed with definitions and terminology... like what makes something "natural" or "artificial" or "fake." I came to the conclusion that there is no difference, that everything is natural and real. It just has to do with human touch and how we alter things.

5) You seem to be handy in different media. What's your favourite? why?

Right now my favorite is sharpie marker! Working for a comic book publisher I've been introduced to a whole new world of art, and there's a lot of overlap with the music I'm into. For example, Mat Brinkman draws these crazy comics that are so funny and also does wacky electronic music in Mind Flayer, with this other guy from Lightning Bolt. Providence, RI seems to be a fun place for sounds. Locally, I like the creative energy coming from Seripop and their associated band Aids Wolf. Those are just examples of this visual/sonic idea-field I'm interested in, but it's so expansive. There are tons of people everywhere doing stuff for fun, and my favorites are brightly coloured, hyper, and don't think too much about it as far as I know. There's no secret meaning, you don't have to be educated to "get it" you just experience it and then do it yourself and hope that more people will do it too, so there's never a dull moment again. Another person I went to school with, Stu Hughes, is into making things like this, which you can check out at <http://crystalbeard.com/>

I recently got a set of 24 different colours of sharpie markers, which are perfect for making visually electric images—lots of dotted lines, cloud letters, zigzags like laser-light shows and fun shapes. I think it would be great to make album art for people into the same stuff.

Oh yeah, and stencils and spray paint are also my favorites. I've recently made a lion-head stencil that I'm really excited about, which I will post on here whenever I get a picture of it. I'm into spraying stencils onto shirts and walls. And the project I'm working on right now is combining the lion-head stencil with sharpie marker. It's for an annual theme-show coming up at the studio collective I'm a part of: The Long Hall. This year the theme is deluxe. I am starting to think that all art should be deluxe.

6) Anything else you'd like to get off your chest? Secrets/revelations you'd like to share...

hmm... secrets.. mysterious! I don't know. Maybe that money, or its equivalents (like social/institutional prestige) should never be a motivating factor in art. I think that a genuine interest and love of creating needs to be at the heart of it all. If you get money and social recognition as a result, that's fine, we all need to eat and keep warm... but then be careful not to lose the integrity. But that isn't really a big secret. Also, boundaries never did any good for anyone. Be open to anything and all forms of expression instead of trying to make a body of work. It's all coming from your head, so it will all have something in common no matter what you do, even if it's painting your living room a different colour or learning to juggle. Who knows where life will take you? You don't need to have gallery shows to make good art.