

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

My Dog Sighs answers Culture: So What?!?

My Dog Sighs · Wednesday, December 4th, 2013

Culture: So What?!? Each week, we'll be asking thought leaders from all walks of life to answer the question: What is Culture and Why Does it Matter?

This Week's Thought Leader: [My Dog Sighs](#) – internationally acclaimed street artist who is widely credited as being the founding father of the Free Art Friday movement. See full bio below. Photo above courtesy of [Jack Daly](#).

It's about the misfits and mavericks that step outside the accepted norms

Culture for me growing up was the name of the Sunday paper supplement that no one in our family ever read. It was the bit with dusty artists, sterile museums, ballet dancers and reviews of classical music. Artistic experiences that were irrelevant to a working class household happy with the mediocrity fed to us through the mainstream television. Unwittingly I was bound on a trajectory in which culture and I were destined to remain strangers.

Then I thought I had found culture. I discovered subculture. Punks and skinheads, graffiti writers and hippies, those fascinating groups with their sartorial identikits and idiosyncrasies. I tentatively stepped into their worlds, fascinated by their visual presence, their rebellious plumage. The way they pushed the aesthetic boundaries made me bristle with excitement. Yet for all the energy and aggression from the pioneers, the mass of followers seemed bound to follow unwritten rules regarding dress code, customs and social behavior. You must look like this, think like this, paint like this. Their culture was 'a way of life': safety in numbers, pack mentality. Individualism, self-expression, limited to a painting-by-numbers palette.



My Dog Sighs specializes in making art out of recycled materials

At that point I realized that for me culture was not external, but internal. Culture was my interaction with the world. Ironically it was the rejection of 'traditional' culture that led me into street art. Starting out, no galleries were interested in my work, and conforming to their demands left me feeling unfulfilled. I stumbled upon street art and realized that here was a cultural space within which I could express my ideas with no one telling me what I could do and how I should do it.

However I was too old to be territorial pissing so found myself approaching my street work in a different way. Creating melancholic paintings out of tin cans and found materials that were then left out on the street to fend for themselves; personified deities from societies waste; small acts of

altruism; my FreeArtFridays.



This urban gallery offered the control that those white lit spaces sought to deny. A freedom to find myself as an artist. To express, discover and experiment without fear.

I became, unwittingly at first, part of a community of street artists that pushed back at these creative boundaries. Questioning the world around them, throwing the rule book away, stepping on toes and doing it their way. And I am beginning to realise that my 'Culture' is about those misfits and mavericks that step outside the accepted and look at it with fresh eyes; those that are on the forefront of new ideas: those that are willing to take on the accepted norm. Whose work make the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. These people are my cultural icons, this is my culture.

And what of those dusty artists in the Sunday supplements I felt so irrelevant in my youth? Where is their place? Through my own experiences seeing culture in action, all around me, I realize now that they were the brave ones who were willing to overstep the boundaries of their time.

And I tip my hat to yesterday's mavericks.

See My Dog Sigh's creative process in action:

[embedvideo id="iZa5ZBpR9rg" website="youtube"]

This entry was posted on Wednesday, December 4th, 2013 at 9:40 am and is filed under [Lifestyle](#), [Visual Art](#)

You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. You can leave a response, or [trackback](#) from your own site.