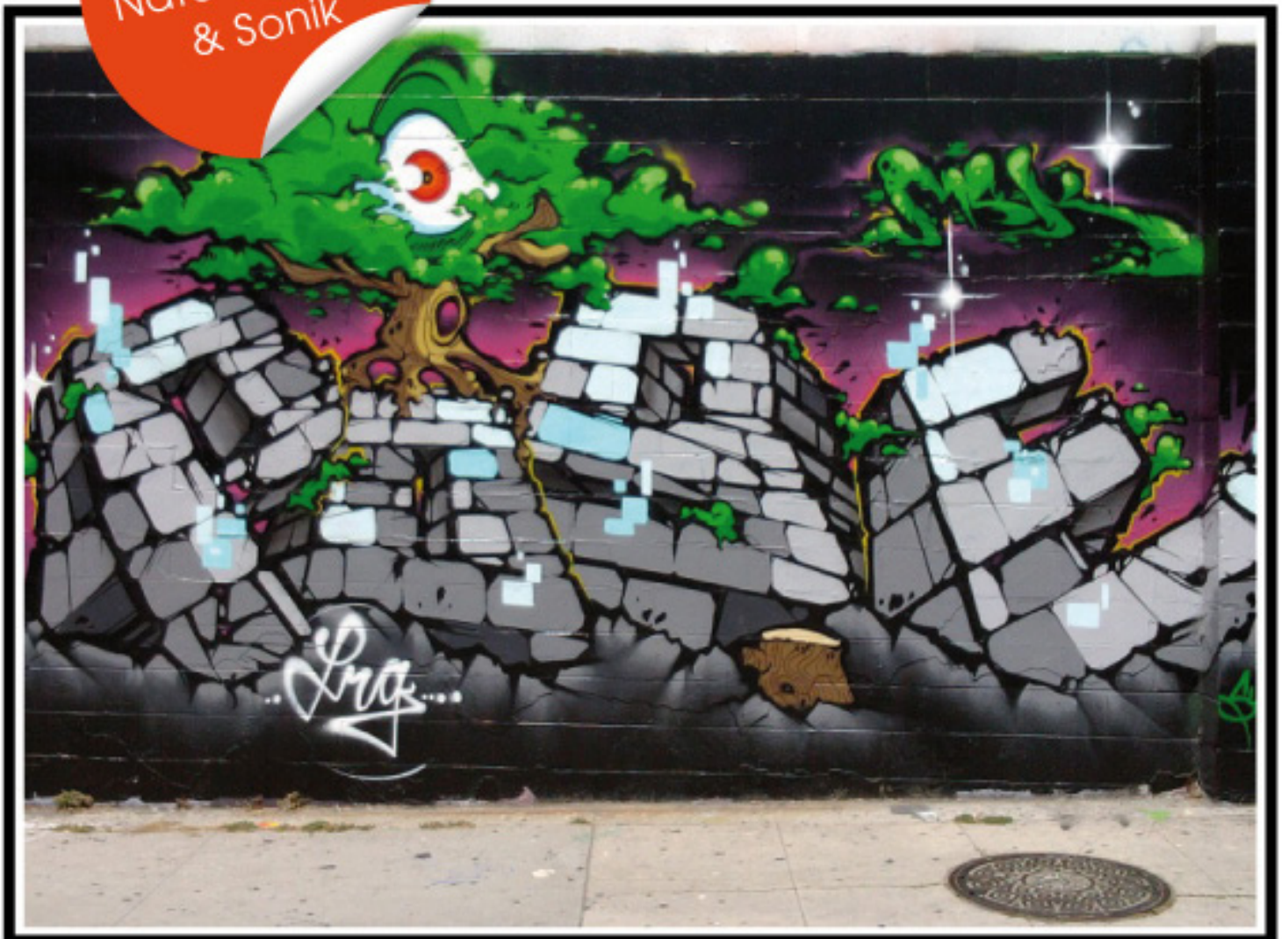


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interview
Nate Van Dyk
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august 2010



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VIENNA



VIENNA



Interview

Nate Van Dyke

interview by Brian C Beavers

BOMBING SCIENCE: HOW'S IT GOING NATE?

N8: It's good, man. I'm in a good mood because I sent my taxes off to my tax lady this morning (late like usual) and I am sitting at a bar with a pitcher of beer, my laptop and this interview. Things could be worse. That'll happen when I find out how much of my slush fund Ol' Uncle Sam wants.

BS: WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?

N8: I was born and raised in San Anselmo which is in Northern California. It's right north of the Golden Gate Bridge. I now reside in San Francisco with my girlfriend and her four-legged old bitch.

BS: HOW WAS THE ART SCENE THERE?

N8: The art scene in Marin is a little different than it is in SF. In Marin it is more of that crap like paintings of flowers and landscapes. The type of work you can hang above your couch. The scene in SF is pretty different. It's a young crowd and it is aggressively growing. A greater variety of work and subjects fly here in the city. I started showing my work in Marin when I was younger but I got

a lot more attention when I started showing in SF.

BS: WHAT'S THE LATEST AND GREATEST FOR N8?

N8: A new pint of beer, for starters. I mean, I have answered three full questions already. Now to the question. As of now, I am taking a break of full-time video game concept art work. I'm focusing on my freelance, art shows and comic books; MY SHIT! It's been a lot of fun. My focus has been the comic books. I'm currently penciling and inking a five-issue comic book run of Jurassic Park for IDW Publishing. I can now add dino's to the list of things I tend to draw. Chimps, skulls and dino's. It's coming along really well. I should actually be working on it right now but decided to drink beer and do this interview. HA! I'll get back to it. I'm more of a nighttime artist, anyway. All that and some art shows in the works.

BS: POLITICAL, SOCIAL, OR AESTHETIC, WHICH DIRECTION IS YOUR WORK FOCUSED IN, AND IF IT'S ALL OR A FEW, WHY?

N8: That's a great question. I was talking to a friend the other day about how there are generally all these messages in art that other people most likely will never realize. I may draw a chimp with a chainsaw and the monster he just



HACKED UP AND ALL THEY SEE IS THE COOL FACTOR WHICH IS FINE. WHAT THEY

DON'T REALIZE IS IT COULD BE MY COMMENT ON THE DRAG OF SOCIETY AND IT'S NEVER ENDING LINE OF SHIT YOU ARE DEALT AND NEED TO DISPOSE OF ONLY TO MOVE ONTO THE NEXT PILE OF SHIT. A VICIOUS, NEVER-ENDING CYCLE. I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE POLITICAL GUYS. I COULD CARE LESS. AS LONG AS I HAVE THE RIGHT OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION I'M A HAPPY MOTHERFUCKER. THAT AND THE SALE OF BEER BEING LEGAL AND I'M SET. I'D SAY MY WORK COULD BE BOILED DOWN TO SOCIAL AND AESTHETIC DIRECTIONS. I JUST HAPPEN TO FEEL THAT A MAD CHIMP IS AN AWESOME VISUAL AND SOCIAL AESTHETIC. THE WHOLE IDEA BEHIND THE CHIMP IS THAT HE IS THE «EVERY MAN». SO, THERE IS THE SOCIAL ASPECT. HE IS YOU AND I BUT MORE OF A BLACK AND WHITE VERSION. MINUS ALL OF THE GREY INBETWEEN.

BS: WHO WERE YOUR MAJOR INFLUENCES AND WHAT DROVE YOU INTO ILLUSTRATION AND PAINTING?

N8: MY MOM WAS AN ARTIST AS WELL AS HER MOTHER. MY MOM DID MARBLE SCULPTURE AND HER MOM PAINTED OIL PORTRAITS. FROM WHAT I KNOW I AM AT LEAST A FOURTH GENERATION ARTIST SO I WAS ALWAYS AROUND ART. SO, I WAS ALWAYS AROUND ART AS A KID. NATURALLY I DREW WITH CRAYONS AND DISCOVERED COMIC BOOKS AS A YOUTH. ALL I EVER WANTED TO DO WHEN I WAS YOUNGER WAS TO DRAW COMICS. I NEVER REALLY PERSUED «ILLUSTRATION» AS A VOCATION BUT WHEN YOU CAN DRAW AND DRAW JUST ABOUT ANYTHING YOU START GETTING JOBS THAT MAY OR MAY NOT BE AROUND COMICS. COMICS, NATURALLY DON'T PAY ALL THAT WELL BUT ILLUSTRATION GENERALLY DOES. I ACTUALLY STARTED DOING FREELANCE ILLUSTRATION WHILE I WAS STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL. BEFORE YOU KNOW IT I'M MAKING A LIVING AS AN ILLUSTRATOR. I JUST KINDA FELL INTO IT BECAUSE... I DRAW. WHEN I WAS A KID ONE OF MY EARLIEST INFLUENCES WAS JOHN POUND WHO PAINTED A LOT OF THE GARBAGE PAIL KIDS CARDS. MY HEAD EXPLODED WHEN I DISCOVERED THOSE. I DIDN'T THINK THAT YOU WERE ALLOWED TO DRAW LIKE THAT, LITERALLY. THAT WAS ONE OF MY EARLIEST AND BIGGEST INFLUENCES ON MY ART.

BS: WHERE DO YOU DRAW YOUR INSPIRATION FROM?

N8 (BREAK FOR REFILLING BEER): I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE GUYS WHO SCOUR THE WEB FOR ARTISTS. THERE ARE THOSE GUYS I LIKE WHO CONTINUE TO INSPIRE. THERE ARE A LOT OF GUYS WHO DO ART ON THE COMPUTER KNOW AND I DRAW ALMOST NO INFLUENCE FROM THOSE GUYS. I STILL GET INSPIRED BY THE SAME GUYS I ADMIRERD 15 YEARS AGO. I CAN OPEN A CALVIN AND HOBBS BOOK AND BE HUMBLED IN THREE SECONDS. I'M INSPIRED BY A LOT OF MY

FRIENDS. I THINK I GET MORE INSPIRED BY THE ART WHEN I KNOW THE ARTIST BEHIND IT ALL. WHEN I GREW UP I WAS REALLY INSPIRED BY SIMON BISLEY. NOW THAT I AM BUDS WITH HIM AND HAVE STORIES FOR DAYS WITH THAT GUY FOR DAYS I HAVE GROWN AN EVEN DEEPER APPRECIATION FOR HIS ART. I GUESS I DRAW MOST OF MY INSPIRATION FROM LIVING AND THE OWN DEMONS IN MY HEAD. FROM LIFE. SOUNDS CHEESY BUT IT'S TRUE.

BS: ARE THERE ANY ARTISTS OUTSIDE OF YOUR REALM THAT YOU ADMIRE?

N8: I'LL GIVE THIS ANSWER TO ONE MAIN ARTIST. I COULD LIST DOZENS BUT THIS ANSWER BELONGS TO JEAN LEON GEROME. 'NUFF SAID!

BS: WHAT IS YOUR OVERALL MESSAGE? IS THERE SOMETHING YOU'RE TRYING TO CONVEY?

N8: «LIFE SUCKS, DRINK WHISKEY». HA! JUST KIDDING. I GUESS IF I HAD TO PEAR IT DOWN TO ONE MESSAGE IT'S THAT LIFE IS A CONSTANT STRUGGLE. YOU MAY GET PASSED ONE HURDLE BUT THERE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER ONE WAITING FOR YOU. LIFE JUST AINT ALL THAT EASY.

BS: HOW DO YOU STAY UNIQUE AND STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF AS AN ARTIST?

N8: ANOTHER GREAT QUESTION. I REMEMBER TRYING TO FIND A STYLE WHEN I WAS YOUNG. TURNS OUT THAT STYLE HAPPENS WHEN YOU TRY THE LEAST. THERE WERE A LOT OF ARTISTS I STUDIED WHEN I WAS YOUNGER AND COPIED BUT WHEN I STOPPED HEAVILY LOOKING AT THEIR STUFF AND LOOKED ON THE INSIDE IS WHEN I BECAME WHO I AM. I GET A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO MARVEL OVER MY BLACK AND WHITE WORK. A LOT OF THAT WAS LEARNED BY LOOKING AT COMICS BUT THE EXTRA BIT OF IT THAT HAS MADE IT MY LOOK IS WHAT CAME FROM INSIDE.

BS: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE MEDIUM TO WORK IN AND WHY?

N8: PEN AND INK. I LOVE HOW STARK IT IS. I LOVE THE CHALLENGE OF CREATING THE ILLUSION OF GREY WITH A PEN AND BRUSH. PEOPLE MAY RESPOND TO A PAINTING WITH BLUE IN IT BECAUSE THEY LIKE THE COLOR BLUE BUT I FIND THAT THE PEOPLE WHO LIKE BLACK AND WHITE THE MOST ARE ARTISTS AS WELL AND THAT'S FINE BY ME. I LOVE DETAIL. I'M A SELF-CERTIFIED OCD PEN AND INK DETAIL WHORE. I MAY TAKE 8 DIFFERENT PENS AND BRUSHES TO CREATE ON PIECE. MAKING A DRAWING WITH ONE BALLPOINT PEN IS A CAVEMAN WAY OF THOUGHT. VIVA LA PEN AND INK.

BS: ALTHOUGH BOMBINGSCIENCE IS MORE GRAFFITI-ORIENTATED,



YOUR WORK HAS A VERY STRONG, BOLD, AND GRITTY FEEL TO IT, SIMILAR TO GRAFFITI. DO YOU DERIVE ANY STYLES, MEDIUMS, OR TECHNIQUES FROM GRAFFITI?

N8: Yes, I DO. I ACTUALLY HAVE A BIT OF HISTORY WITH WHEATPASTING. I KNOW MY WAY AROUND A SPRAY CAN BUT I LIKE THAT YOU CAN PUT HOURS INTO A DRAWING AND PASTE UP A POSTER IN SECONDS. I DON'T GO POSTERING AS OFTEN AS I USED TO BUT I HAVE GOTTEN SOME FAME FROM WHAT LITTLE OF THAT I HAVE DONE. REALLY GOOD GRAFF ARTISTS ARE A RARE BREED. THE COLOR COMBINATIONS AND TALENT IN THE WORLD OF GRAFF IS SOMETHING THAT DESERVES ATTENTION. I'M BUDDIES WITH SABER AND THAT GUY HAS A BEAST OF A BRAIN. GREAT GUY TO KNOW AND TALK ART WITH. I LOVE THAT KID AND THE TIMES I'VE SHARED WITH HIM.

BS: A LOT OF TIMES ARTISTS CAN LOSE THEIR WAY OR GET A BLOCK ON SOME CREATIVE PROCESSES, AND NEED TO GET THEIR JUICES FLOWING. WHAT KEEPS YOU HUNGRY, WHAT KEEPS YOU GOING?

N8: MAN, I GET BLOCKED ALL OF THE TIME. FOR ME, IT'S NOT A LACK OF IDEAS AS MUCH AS IT CAN BE A LACK OF DRIVE. IT'S ALL TOO EASY TO GET BURNT OUT. YOU CAN SPEND DAYS BUSTING NUTS ON A PIECE AND THEN YOU WAKE UP THE NEXT DAY AND YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO RECREATE THAT LAST PIECE ONLY BETTER. WHAT KEEPS ME GOING IS THAT I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE I WOULD BE DOING. THIS IS WHAT I DO. I DRAW. I THINK WHAT KEEPS ME REALLY GOING IS LOOKING AT OLDER WORK I'VE DONE AND KNOWING THAT I COULD DO A BETTER VERSION OF THAT PIECE TODAY. IT'S ONE OF THE SAME THINGS THAT KEPT ME DRAWING AS A KID. ASIDE FROM DRAWING AND ENJOYING IT I NOTICED I WAS BETTER THAN THE REST OF MY CLASS AT IT. YOU HAVE TO SEE SOME SUCCESS AT WHAT YOU DO NO MATTER WHAT IT IS. BE IT DRAWING OR BE IT THAT YOU BEDAZZLE A JEANS JACKET LIKE NOBODY ELSE. YOU NEED SOME REWARD.

BE IT ON THE INSIDE OR FROM YOUR PEERS. ASIDE FOR THAT... I FEEL LIKE I'VE GOT PEOPLE WAITING TO SEE WHAT I MAY DO NEXT AND I BEST BE DELIVERING IT.

BS: AS FAR AS BEING ABLE TO PICK-UP NEW AND EXCITING FREELANCE OPPORTUNITIES, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS YOUR GREATEST ASSET? EXPOSURE? SELF-PROMOTION? WORD-OF-MOUTH?

N8: HAVING A WEBSITE. I'M NOT A GREAT SELF PROMOTER. I'LL TELL YOU RIGHT NOW THAT 95% OF MY FREELANCE GIGS COME TO ME THOUGH E-MAIL. I DON'T GO LOOKING ALL THAT MUCH. I TURN DOWN A LOT MORE THAN I ACTUALLY DO. I GET KIDS ASKING ME HOW I LANDED GIGS LIKE LEVI STRAUSS AND CLIENTS LIKE THAT. TRUTH OF IT IS THAT CLIENTS LIKE THAT COME AFTER A LONG

SNOWBALL OF GIGS. I DREW A FLYER FOR A BAND WHICH LED TO THIS AND THAT AND SO ON. YOU DON'T JUST TEXT LEVI STRAUSS AND ASK FOR WORK. YOU EARN IT. IF YOU WANT TO GET INTO THIS LIFE START WITH A WEBSITE (NOT A FUCKING DEVIANTART SITE BUT A REAL FUCKING SITE) AND IT GOES FROM THERE. IF YOU GET CERTAIN JOBS IT'S BECAUSE YOU HAVE THE CHOPS. SIMPLE. AS. THAT.

BS: WHAT SORT OF UPCOMING PROJECTS DO YOU HAVE IN THE WORKS?

N8: LIKE I MENTIONED, I'M DRAWING THE JURASSIC PARK COMIC SERIES. ASIDE FOR THAT IT'S ART SHOWS HERE AND THERE. I JUST SENT A PIECE OFF TO BERLIN YESTERDAY FOR AN ART SHOW LATER THIS MONTH. THERE ARE ALSO A NUMBER OF OTHER PROJECTS I'M NOT ALDUD TO SPEAK OF JUST YET. SOME EXCITING THINGS. BEST WAY TO KEEP UP

WITH MY LATES IS TO GO TO MY BLOG. I TRY TO UPDATE IT PRETTY OFTEN.

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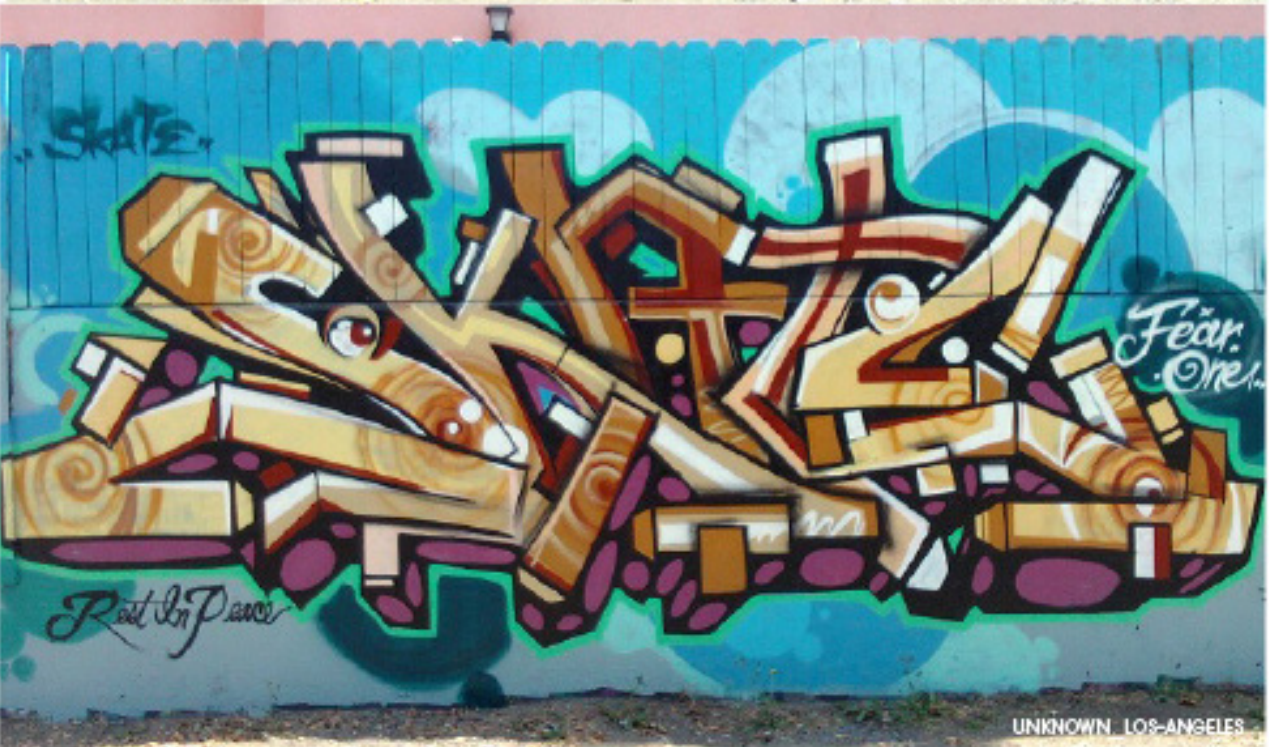








MAVS_LOS-ANGELES



UNKNOWN_LOS-ANGELES





SIREN_PHILADELPHIA



OTEK_MONTREAL



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DABS_ LOS-ANGELES



AUGOR_ LOS-ANGELES



VIPER_ ATLANTA



9TEEN_ MIAMI



Interview

Sonik a.k.a Caleb Neelon

Interview by A. Mohammad

BORN IN 1976 IN BOSTON AND BASED IN NEIGHBORING CAMBRIDGE, CALEB IS AN ARTIST, WRITER, AND EDUCATOR. CALEB'S PAINTINGS AND INSTALLATION ARTWORK HAS APPEARED IN SOLO AND GROUP SHOWS IN VENUES IN AMERICA AND EUROPE, AS MURALS ON WALLS IN KATHMANDU, REYKJAVIK, BERMUDA, CALCUTTA, SAO PAULO, AND ACROSS EUROPE, AS WELL AS IN DOZENS OF BOOKS, MAGAZINES, AND NEWSPAPERS AROUND THE WORLD. HE IS CO-AUTHOR OF THE THAMES AND HUDSON BOOK *GRAFFITI BRASIL* AND *STREET WORLD* FROM THAMES AND HUDSON, ABRAMS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL CO-EDITIONS, AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR OF THE CHILDREN'S BOOK, *LILMAN MAKES A NAME FOR HIMSELF*, AND A COLLABORATOR ON NEARLY A DOZEN OTHER BOOKS. HE IS AN EDITOR AT THE POPULAR CULTURE HARDBOUND BI-MONTHLY *SWINDLE*, AND HAS BEEN A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO *TOKION*, *PRINT*, *JUKTAPOZ*, *ON THE GO*, *LEMON*, AND MANY OTHER MAGAZINES AND JOURNALS. HE HAS LECTURED AT SEVERAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES AND FESTIVALS, AS WELL AS HARVARD LAW SCHOOL, BATES COLLEGE, NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY, AND HIS ALMA MATER, THE HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION. HE HAS WORKED WITH MANY INTERNATIONAL CORPORATIONS AS A CREATIVE CONSULTANT, WRITER, AND ARTIST. A MONOGRAPH OF HIS WORK, *CALEB NEELON'S BOOK OF AWESOME*, IS DUE OUT FROM GINGKO PRESS LATER IN 2008. HE DISLIKES WINTER WEATHER.

BOMBING SCIENCE: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DOING GRAFFITI? HOW DID YOU START?

CALEB: I STARTED IN THE EARLY 1990s AS A BORED AND CREATIVE TEENAGER.

BS: WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE NAME SONIK?

CALEB: IT WOULD BE CONVENIENT IF THERE WERE A BETTER STORY OF MY GRAFFITI NAME'S ORIGIN, BUT THERE ISN'T. IT'S JUST SOMETHING I SELECTED AS A TEENAGER. I'M NOT PARTICULARLY ATTACHED TO IT; MY NAME IS CALEB NEELON. SONIK DOES HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING A WORD THAT ANYONE IN THE WORLD CAN PRONOUNCE EASILY, LIKE SONY, OKAY, OR TOYOTA. SINCE 'CALEB' SEEMS TO BE HARD FOR A FAIR CHUNK OF THE WORLD TO PRONOUNCE, IT'S HANDY TO HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE.

BS: HOW DID YOU START DOING MURALS?

CALEB: WELL, I WAS FASCINATED WITH MURALS SINCE I WAS A LITTLE KID. I KNEW I WANTED TO PAINT MURALS BEFORE I KNEW HOW GRAFFITI WORKED, SO ALMOST AS SOON AS I STARTED TO PAINT GRAFFITI, I TRIED TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO MELD THE TWO.

BS: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE THINGS TO WRITE ON?





CALEB: SOMETHING NEW. SOMETHING THAT ISN'T A WALL IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE THAT GETS PAINTED EVERY FEW DAYS. BUT HONESTLY, I HAVE NOT BEEN ANYTHING CLOSE TO AN ACTIVE STREET PAINTER FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS. I MISS IT.

BS: ANY FAVORITE PAINT? MARKERS?

CALEB: WHATEVER IS AVAILABLE.

BS: HOW WOULD YOU INTERPRET YOUR STYLE? WHO INFLUENCED YOU AS YOU STARTED UP YOUR STYLE?

CALEB: THROUGH MY TEENS I REALLY DIDN'T HAVE ANY WRITER FRIENDS OR PARTNERS, SO I WORKED ALONE. EVEN AFTER I STARTED TO MEET MORE AND MORE PEOPLE, I'VE PAINTED BY MYSELF MORE THAN WITH PARTNERS THROUGH THE YEARS, AND

I THINK THAT'S DEFINITELY HAD AN EFFECT ON WHAT I DO – OR PERHAPS MY LACK OF HAVING A SET OF STEADY PARTNERS HAS KEPT MY WORK COOKING IN ITS OWN POT. THAT SAID, I'VE ALSO KNOWN A NUMBER OF PEOPLE THAT HAVE INFLUENCED, INSPIRED, OR OTHERWISE BEEN A CATALYST FOR SOMETHING TO CLICK IN WHAT I DO. SOME OF THEM ARE PEOPLE I'VE PAINTED WITH, SOME HAVE BEEN FRIENDS WHO I NEVER GOT AROUND TO PAINTING WITH. OS GEMEOS WOULD BE AN EXAMPLE OF THE FORMER, ESPO THE LATTER.

BS: HOW DID YOU START GOING GLOBAL?

CALEB: MY FAMILY MADE TRAVEL A PRIORITY, SO I WAS FAIRLY ACCUSTOMED TO GOING WHEREVER. BUT WHEN I REALIZED THAT I COULD PAINT WHEREVER I WENT, IT LIT A FIRE UNDER ME AND CREATED AN URGENCY AND PURPOSE TO GOING EVERYWHERE



I COULD. HOW I DID IT FINANCIALLY EARLY ON WAS TO LIVE EITHER WITH MY MOTHER OR LIKE A BUM ON MY BUDDY'S COUCH, NEVER HAD A CAR OR APARTMENT OR SERIOUS GIRLFRIEND TO MAINTAIN, AND WOULD WORK FOR A FEW MONTHS, BUILD UP A BIT OF MONEY, TRAVEL SOMEWHERE, THEN COME BACK AND START AGAIN. I HOPED THAT EVENTUALLY PEOPLE WOULD START FLYING ME AROUND TO PLACES, AND IT SORT OF HAS. I HAVE A CAREER, HOME, DOG AND WONDERFUL LONG-TERM GIRLFRIEND, SO PRESENTLY, HEADING OFF FOR MONTHS AT A TIME AND RETURNING BROKE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE, SO IT TAKES A LITTLE MORE PLANNING.

BS: HOW HAS GRAFFITI INFLUENCED YOUR CAREER?

CALEB: IN MORE WAYS THAN I COULD POSSIBLY LIST HERE. I'LL TRY AND LIST A FEW, AND BEGIN BY SAYING WHAT I DO, WHICH IS WRITE BOOKS AND MAGAZINE ARTICLES, TEACH, AND MAKE ARTWORK IN

BOTH FINE ART GALLERY AND COMMERCIAL CONTEXTS. WHEN I WAS 19 AND BEGAN TO WRITE FOR MAGAZINES LIKE 12OZ PROPHET AND ON THE GO, THEY WERE THE ALL-IMPORTANT FIRST PUBLISHED PIECES THAT ANY ASPIRING WRITER (THAT'S WRITER OF TEXT, NOT GRAFFITI) NEEDS. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT WASN'T BULLSHIT WORK: THERE WERE FAR FEWER SOURCES OF WRITTEN INFORMATION ABOUT GRAFFITI THEN THAN THERE ARE NOW, AND SOME OF THE PIECES I GOT TO WRITE, LIKE THE BRAZIL AND OS GEMEOS FEATURE I DID FOR 12OZ HAD THE TASK OF INTRODUCING VERY IMPORTANT ARTISTS AND MOVEMENTS TO THE WIDER WORLD. I'M INCREDIBLY THANKFUL FOR THOSE OPPORTUNITIES. AS AN ARTIST, GRAFFITI GAVE ME A WAY TO ROAM AROUND THE WORLD AND DO MY THING IN A BIG CREATIVE COMMUNITY THAT'S GONE ON TO GREAT THINGS. WHEN I WANTED TO STEP BACK FROM WHAT I WAS DOING A FEW YEARS BACK, I DID MY GRADUATE DEGREE WITH THE EXPRESSED PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION OF WHAT AND HOW YOUNG

PEOPLE LEARN VIA GRAFFITI. RIGHT OUT OF GRAD SCHOOL I GOT TO WORK ON THE GRAFFITI BRASIL BOOK AND SWINDLE MAGAZINE. SINCE THEN, THE WRITING AND ARTWORK I'VE DONE HAS ESSENTIALLY KEPT THAT SAME PROGRESSION, BUT I'VE TRIED TO KEEP BROADENING MY OWN SUBJECT AREAS. SO WHILE A LOT OF WHAT I WORK IN OR WRITE ABOUT NOW HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH GRAFFITI, GRAFFITI WAS IN A WAY THE POINT OF ACCESS FOR IT – AND JUST AS IMPORTANT, AN ASTONISHING NUMBER OF THE PEOPLE I WORK WITH HAVE A BACKGROUND IN GRAFFITI AS ONE OF THEIR COMMON THREADS.

BS: AS AN EDUCATOR, CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW YOU INCORPORATE GRAFFITI INTO YOUR LESSON PLANS? SOME EXAMPLES? DO THE STUDENTS GET REALLY INTO IT?

CALEB: I'LL EXPLAIN ONE EXAMPLE HERE. ONE PROJECT THAT I DO FAIRLY OFTEN IS A LETTERING WORKSHOP WITH MIDDLE-SCHOOL-AGED KIDS, ROUGHLY AGES 11-13. I TEACH KIDS HOW TO DRAW VERY BASIC BLOCK AND SOFTIE LETTERS WITH A VARIETY OF 3Ds: STANDARD BOX 3D, VANISHING POINT 3D, AND DROP SHADOW. THESE ARE BASICALLY EXERCISES IN PERSPECTIVE, AND IN MANY WAYS I FEEL THAT DRAWING LETTERS LIKE THIS OFFERS A BETTER DEMONSTRATION OF UNDERSTANDING OF PERSPECTIVE THAN DOING ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS, WHICH IS OFTEN HOW PERSPECTIVE IS TAUGHT. DRAWING LETTERS IS AN ABSTRACT EXERCISE; YOU CAN'T COMPARE THE R YOU DREW TO A 'REAL' 3D R, WHEREAS YOU CAN COMPARE THE BUILDING YOU DREW TO A REAL BUILDING. IF YOU UNDERSTAND HOW 3D WORKS ON AN ABSTRACT LEVEL AS IN LETTERING, YOU ARE THAT MUCH FARTHER AHEAD THAN IF YOU LEARN IT ONLY ON A LEVEL THAT CAN BE VERIFIED BY COMPARING WITH A REAL LIFE EXAMPLE. AND, OF COURSE, KIDS ALMOST UNIVERSALLY THINK THAT GRAFFITI IS THE COOLEST THING EVER, SO THEY ARE EAGER TO LEARN.

BS: AS THE CULTURE OF GRAFFITI SPREADS EVEN MORE RAPIDLY, HAS THE CULTURE OF GRAFFITI CHANGED? HAS IT HAD ANY

ADDITIONS? MOREOVER, HOW THE GRAFFITI SCENE IN THE WIDER WORLD DIFFERENT FROM BOSTON?

CALEB: I'M WORKING ON A PROJECT NOW WHICH INVOLVES INTERVIEWING A LOT OF OLDER NYC PIONEER WRITERS, SOME OF WHOM HAD QUIT WRITING BY THE TIME I WAS BORN – 1976. AND IN TALKING WITH THESE PIONEERS OF THIS GREAT MOVEMENT AND ART FORM, IT'S CERTAINLY HARD NOT TO SEE HOW GREATLY THE CULTURE HAS CHANGED. BUT YOU CAN'T ROMANTICIZE AN ERA YOU AREN'T LIVING IN OR RECREATE ONE, YOU CAN ONLY BE A RESPECTFUL STUDENT OF HISTORY AND DO THE BEST WORK YOU CAN IN THE ERA IN WHICH YOU LIVE: THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE DOING AND THAT IS WHAT THE BEST OF TODAY ARE DOING. BOSTON, LIKE ANY CITY, HAS ITS GRAFFITI-SPECIFIC PECuliarITIES AND INSULAR ELEMENTS, AS WELL AS A HISTORY THAT WAS SHAPED BY ITS WIDER URBAN HISTORY AND DEMOGRAPHICS. AND AS I WRITE THIS, IT'S SNOWING. Oof.

BS: WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ON THE BIG QUESTIONS «IS GRAFFITI VANDALISM OR ART»?

CALEB: IT ISN'T A BIG QUESTION.

BS: DO YOU HAVE ANY LAST COMMENTS BEFORE ENDING THIS INTERVIEW?

CALEB: I WOULD LIKE TO PLUG MY NEW BOOK. CALEB NEELON'S BOOK OF AWESOME IS A NEW RELEASE FROM GINGKO PRESS, AND IT IS A COLLECTION OF THE ARTWORK I'VE DONE IN GALLERIES AND IN THE STREETS AROUND THE WORLD FOR THE PAST DOZEN YEARS.

BS: SHOUT OUTS?

CALEB: FERDINAND.





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