

BRUTFORCE



"1888 Vase with 14 Sunflowers," Andrew Hostick, 15.5" x 23.5".

Every Essence and Every Line: Andrew Hostick's Handiwork

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Andrew Hostick makes art from representations of art, skillfully and meticulously drawing pictures of photographs of both famous and not so famous works, revising and reshaping each image into his own colored-pencil renditions that somehow transcend mere appropriation. He uses the images he gleans from magazines to get to places he couldn't go without the creation of new subject matter.

"Subject matter" for Hostick is visual information that he can connect with while also unraveling every essence and every line. A great example is his rendition of Van Gogh's "1888 Vase with 14 Sunflowers" in which Hostick reimagines the whole scene with a new color scheme, a new layout and design. He retraces the painting's fever-dream precision and creates a sketchier, more otherworldly form. The sunflowers in Hostick's

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picture float above the vase like a magician's assistant, and the raw-perfect orange and red-orange he gets from his colored pencils drift into Rothko territory, moving one of Van Gogh's most famous pictures into a new kind of trance, slightly more brittle and yet more ethereal.

That's Hostick's modus operandi in a nutshell: he takes what is there and repurposes it for what isn't there until he finds what he's after. He's very humble about it. The work does not come at you with nostrils flaring, or with a Sherrie Levine satirical smile. Approaching his craft with a workmanlike precision, he utilizes all resources available—including art reproductions and art magazine ads—to create small, vibrant creations that resonate clearly as his own.

Hostick has an old-world, gentlemanly demeanor that comes across as shy rather than aloof. He is just interested in getting back to whatever work is at hand. When you ask him a question he considers his answer earnestly, and answers thoughtfully but briefly, maybe hoping you won't ask him anything else, so that he can get back to what he's working on.



The mural "Thundersky," located outside of Visionaries + Voices.

I met up with Hostick at Visionaries + Voices, an art studio in Cincinnati where he works. Visionaries + Voices supports artists with disabilities in the Cincinnati area, and has been doing so since 2003. They now operate two studios. Hostick told me that his first attempts at making art seriously came when he was in a high school class. He was graded on the portraits and still life paintings/drawings he made. Once he graduated,

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however, he stopped drawing and went to work full-time, mainly at Kroger, where he's been a grocery bagger for over 20 years. He now works part-time, to make time for his drawing.

For 30-odd years, Hostick did not make anything, he said. And then one day about five years back, his case manager from the county introduced him to V+V. I spoke on the phone with his sister, Nancy Ledford, with whom he lives, to get some details: "He did a tour with his caseworker there, and the studio coordinator asked him if he likes to make art, and Andy said yes, so the studio coordinator asked to see an example of his work. So Andy worked with my daughter, who is an art teacher in elementary school, and she helped him find a picture to draw from. It was Van Gogh's "The Starry Night," and once he finished he showed it to the man at V+V, and he just loved it. That made Andy feel really good."

From that initial acceptance came Hostick's practice of coming to V+V twice a week, and looking through piles of old art magazines that had been donated to the studio to find subject matter and to then get to work.

When asked if he has a favorite magazine or artist he likes to draw from, he simply said, "No. I just look through and find something, and then I get started." It usually takes him about 2 weeks to finish a drawing. When probed on what he likes best about drawing, Hostick replies quickly, "When it's done."

Hostick is prolific, and yet his finished products do not seem rushed at all. Each drawing has its own fluid integrity and gracefulness, a style that comes from a sense of completion. And that isn't about verisimilitude or even functional duplication. It's more about Hostick finding a perfect line and scrape— he sometimes draws so hard it punctures the surface he's drawing on—that flows into another line, another scrape, almost like building a nest from bits and pieces he sees in each magazine photograph. He investigates these photos, and that investigation triggers his hand to map out new versions of Van Gogh sunflowers, Picasso faces, Cezanne tabletops, and so on. The new versions heighten the flatness and decorativeness of the originals, and also give off a feeling of release, as if Hostick is finding a new visual language while he scrutinizes art history and contemporary art marketing for more things to draw.



"Wolf Kahn Self Portrait 1956," Andrew Hostick, Colored Pencil on Mat Board, 16" x 12", 2012.

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“Jose Bedia En El Tronco De Un Arbol Una Nina 1999,” Andrew Hostick, Colored Pencil on Mat Board, 18.75” x 12.75”, 2012.

“I like to draw,” he said in our interview. “I stopped for a long time but then I came back to it, and I like it now. Very much.” Hostick has good reason to like what he does. His work made a strong impression at this years’ Outsider Art Fair in New York City. He has representation through Morgan Lehman Gallery in Chelsea.

When I asked his sister if Hostick likes the attention, she said, “He totally understands the importance of his work now. But he doesn’t have a big ego about it. He does not brag. He’s just very eager to draw and to show the drawings to people. He gets a kick out of all of this. He’s very excited.”

That excitement comes through in spades when you take in all of his oeuvre. One of the most interesting and strangely whimsical pieces Hostick has completed is a reinterpretation of a 1975 ABC Photo Archives picture of John Travolta. Somehow Vinnie

Barbarino got into his image shuffle, and Hostick takes full advantage of the banality of Travolta’s studied pose. Hostick’s version comes off like a Francis Bacon tribute, grotesque and elegant at the same time, and the red background in the ABC headshot transforms into a lush homemade crimson thanks to the working and reworking of Hostick’s colored pencil. You see a seriousness erupt and bloom from an image that has no business being serious, and yet through Hostick’s dedication to craft there’s something wonderful going on. It has nothing to do with John Travolta or celebrity: it’s just about the drawing, what Hostick has managed to do, his handiwork overtaking all else.



“Welcome Back Kotter: John Travolta,” Andrew Hostick, 13.5” x 10.5”.